

# DUCK PRODUCTION

## Introduction



*Over four million ducks are produced in Ireland annually.*

Poultry farming in Ireland is quite a large industry; however, it is concentrated in two main areas – Cavan/Monaghan and Cork/Limerick – with other growers and producers across the island.

Egg production, broiler production and turkey rearing are quite common; however, duck and geese production is less so.

Duck production is carried out largely in Monaghan, with Silver Hill Duck being the largest duck processor in Ireland, located in Emyvale, Co. Monaghan.

On an annual basis, over four million ducks are produced in Ireland.

**Table 1: Set-up costs for an 18,500 duck unit.\***

	€
Building**	230,000
Plant and equipment	117,200
	<u>347,200</u>
Itemised breakdown of plant and equipment	
Slats and beams	37,500
Feeding system	6,000
Drinkers	8,000
Ventilation control	11,000
Slurry scrapers and tank	19,000
Bore hole	3,500
Back-up generator	4,000
Gas tank	5,300
Electrical and plumbing	17,900
Miscellaneous items	5,000
	<u>117,200</u>

\* These costs are only estimates.

\*\* This includes the cost of groundworks.

### Start-up

The market is specialised and should be secured before you begin the planning permission process or invest in a duck enterprise. It is vital to assess the market opportunities which are available for your product. Will you sell a niche product to restaurants? Will you sell to wholesalers? Or do you intend to supply to a processor? Assess how much it will cost to set up and produce your product. **Table 1** gives guide prices on setting up an 18,500 duck unit. How much will you charge? For meat products, will you set up your own processing unit or use an external slaughterhouse? You must register with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) as a producer of poultry meat or duck eggs.

### Marketing

Of the duck meat produced in Ireland, approximately 70% is exported. There is a small domestic market through wholesale retailers and restaurants. Ducks are sold as oven ready or as value-added products. Ducks are reared to 3.5kg at 42 days of age. The expected feed conversion ratio (FCR) is 2.4. This means the bird will consume 2.4kg of feed for each 1kg of weight gain.

# 05: Duck Production

## Housing

Commercial ducks are kept in slatted houses. Day-old ducklings are brooded for the first 10-14 days. They are provided with heat of 32°C on day one. This will reduce over the first two weeks to 22°C. This will be the temperature until the birds are removed from the house. Additional feeders and drinkers are placed in the house for the first week of life. It is vital that ducklings eat and drink as soon as possible once placed. This is critical to the development of the gastrointestinal tract. This will impact on the birds' FCR later in life. These supplementary drinkers and feeders will be removed by day seven.



*Ducklings need to eat and drink as soon as they are placed in the house.*

## Food safety

Ducks go directly into the human food chain and as such, must be produced and processed so that food safety and product quality can be assured. Birds must be prepared for the market in a suitable food premises. Processing involves a fairly intensive workload. To become a food processor, you must register with the competent authority. The local authority veterinary officer will carry out a risk assessment and advise on the activities which can be carried out on farm.

### Salmonella control

A Salmonella control plan must be designed and put in place on the farm. The plan should have details of biosecurity measures for staff, equipment, visitor

access, pest control, and ducks and their eggs. It should also outline disinfection

protocols, operating procedures and bacteriological sampling.



*Ducks go directly into the human food chain and as such, food safety and product quality must be assured.*

### Further information

For further information please contact Rebecca Tierney, Poultry Advisor at:  
+353 (0)49-433 8666  
rebecca.tierney@teagasc.ie

The following resources are also helpful:

- [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie)
- [www.agriculture.gov.ie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie)
- [www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie)

[www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev](http://www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev)



[www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie)

Fact sheet produced by Rebecca Tierney, Poultry Advisor.