Let’s Work Together!

Please note that wildlife experts recommend that, although feeding the Muscovy ducks may be an enjoyable pastime, they are not a domestic animal and should be left to forage for their food naturally.

Muscovy Ducks

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PUBLIC MENACE OR UNFAIRLY MALIGNED?

Muscovy Ducks — a common sight throughout South Florida neighborhoods. They have been blamed for spreading disease to humans and even duck lovers have complained about the problem of duck droppings on the lawns, driveways, patios, and even in their swimming pools. A problem that has now been complicated because water use restrictions prohibit homeowners from hosing off hard surfaces like patios, decks and driveways. What are the facts about these ubiquitous water fowl?

Muscovies are not native to the United States. They have, however, been here for over 100 years when they were imported from South America where they have long been known as “good eating.” Larger than most domestic ducks, muscovies have substantially larger amounts of breast meat. In fact, in many parts of the world and even elsewhere in the United States, they are considered an epicurean delight. If you were to Google “Muscovy duck,” you would come back with over 80,000 responses—and a good portion of those would be recipes!

These ducks are not protected by State wildlife regulations, but they do fall within State animal cruelty laws (Sec. 828.12, Florida Statutes). State law prohibits the relocation of such ducks into native wildlife areas as they may be carriers of diseases which can adversely affect native waterfowl. No public health agency, including the United States Centers for Disease Control, have any evidence that Muscovy ducks or their droppings present any health threat to human beings. The sole exception is when small children, the elderly and those with immune system problems directly handle newly-hatched chicks, when exposure to salmonella can occur.

The Animal Rights Foundation of Florida, among other groups, strongly recommend that people DO NOT feed the ducks. Their natural diet is comprised of vegetation and insects — both of which are abundant in our tropical climate. Humans most often feed these animals bread and similar items. These have no nutritional value for the animals. Additionally, feeding by humans make the ducks reliant on such hand-outs and too lazy to continue foraging for their natural dietary items.

Many pest control companies are certified to spray yard areas to repel the ducks. Basically, it is a substance that smells like the ducks’ natural predators. If you are a do-it-yourselfer, or just want to keep the ducks out of your planting beds, for instance, retail stores, catalogues and websites which cater to ‘outdoors’ enthusiasts sell these sprays as well. Just look for fox or mongoose urine. Be sure to check product labels to find out what effect, if any, these sprays will have on your vegetation.

Several groups, including the Animal Rights Foundation of Florida, recommend that homeowners remove newly-laid eggs. Muscovies are year-round breeders and can lay as many as 24 eggs in a single clutch. A clutch of eggs will hatch in 35 days. There are any number of ways to accomplish this, based on your own sensibilities.

When the nest is empty:

Remove the eggs and throw them in the garbage. Some groups recommend leaving one or two eggs behind because if the female doesn’t have any eggs to hatch, she will begin mating again to prepare for a new clutch. Drawbacks include the smell in your garbage cart if one of the eggs break, and possibly hatching ducklings in the cart if you’re not sure of the age of the clutch.

You can break the eggs within the nest. Drawbacks: Again, not knowing the age of the clutch, you may not like what then becomes visible.

Some advocates recommend vigorously shaking each of the eggs and then returning them to the nest as it will take several days for the duck to realize they are no longer viable. When the female abandons the nest, it is recommended that you remove and dispose of the eggs, or you will have eggs rotting in the Florida sun and they will begin to smell after a couple of weeks.

In order to avoid any of the potential drawbacks, some groups recommend that you remove the eggs, place them securely in a plastic bag and put them in your freezer until the next regularly-scheduled garbage pick-up.