

## Egg Removal Method

When removing eggs, it is preferable to wait until the female has finished laying all the eggs in the clutch. If eggs are removed prematurely, she will often move her nesting location to a more hidden area and continue laying. Eggs that are cool to the touch with no female sitting on them are not ready to be removed. However, if you return to a nest and find that the number of eggs has not increased for three days, it is safe to remove them. Nesting locations should be visited as frequently as possible, so that changes in the number of eggs can be monitored effectively. Warm eggs, or a nest with a female sitting on the eggs, signal that she has finished laying and that the eggs should be removed.

All nesting females should be approached slowly and gently. It is recommended that gloves be worn, or a soft bag placed over your hand. Gently go behind the nesting female from underneath her webbed feet and take the eggs out of the nest, one or two eggs at a time. Do not be alarmed if the female jumps up or vocalizes. She may touch your hand with her rounded beak, but it won't cause injury. Once you are sure that you have removed all the eggs, you can count them and place them in a bag. Ducks should never be harmed.

## Egg Disposal

Eggs should be frozen or kept as cold as possible to ensure that development has been stopped before disposing of them. Eggs can be discarded in the trash. Eggs should never be disposed of in waterways or down drains. Undeveloped eggs can be fed to dogs or other animals, or donated to a local animal shelter that will accept them. Thoroughly wash your hands after you have finished handling the eggs.

## Public Education

When removing the eggs, members of the public may approach with questions or concerns. Assure them that what you are doing is the most effective and humane way to resolve human-duck conflicts.

Muscovy ducks, like all animals, are protected from cruel treatment under Florida law.

If you have questions, or for more copies of this brochure, please email: [holly@arff.org](mailto:holly@arff.org).

*Promoting respect and compassion for animals in Florida has been the mission of the Animal Rights Foundation of Florida since 1989.*

# Muscovy Duck Egg Collection



## Muscovy Ducks

Muscovy ducks are not native to Florida, but they have been introduced into our communities where they often occur in high densities. These birds can be extremely prolific and local populations can increase dramatically in a short time. As a result, controversies frequently arise between residents who enjoy the birds and residents who don't. In an effort to control the population, some communities have hired trappers. However, trapping is ineffective and provides only a short-term solution. Trappers often employ inhumane methods. They have been observed throwing Muscovy ducks into cages and keeping them on the back of vehicles during the hot summer months – sometimes for a full day or more. Regardless of what the trappers claim, the Muscovies will be killed as the law prohibits the capture and relocation of the birds. Often they are cruelly killed.

In addition to being rounded up by trappers, Muscovy ducks are frequently targeted by people who abuse them. Sadly, Muscovy ducks in Florida have been kicked, struck with arrows, taken for food, beaten to death and shot. They are often accidentally or intentionally hit by cars, and the young ducks can fall down storm drains where they suffer slow and painful deaths. Despite what some people have implied, Muscovy ducks are protected by Florida's animal cruelty statute 828.12.

**Natural pest control.** A Muscovy duck's natural diet consists of a variety of plants and insects, including mosquitoes and their larvae.

## Addling and Egg Removal

Egg addling is a method of population control for Canadian geese. It involves shaking, oiling or freezing eggs temporarily and then placing the eggs back in the nest. While addling eggs has been shown to be effective for Canadian geese, this is not the case with Muscovy ducks. Shaking Muscovy eggs usually does not stop the development and can result in deformed ducklings.

Removing newly laid eggs and freezing them to stop development has been shown to be the most effective and humane method of controlling the population of Muscovy ducks.

Below you will find general guidelines to follow for locating and removing newly laid Muscovy duck eggs. While these guidelines may not apply to 100% of situations, they describe the most commonly encountered scenarios.

### Locating Nests

When you spot a nest of eggs write down its location. Muscovy ducks prefer to nest within vegetation like liriopse, which provides soft protection. They will sometimes nest within prickly vegetation; look for a wide opening that the ducks use to enter and exit. Muscovy ducks show a preference for locations next to a solid surface like a building, wall or fence, or in corners that offer 90 degrees of protection. A human built barrier that prevents the approach of predators on one side but allows the mother a clear view of the remaining angles is ideal. The birds can also sometimes be found nesting in planters, in the cavities of trees, and in tree root systems.



Down feathers are placed on top of the eggs and provide insulation. When a female Muscovy is sitting on the nest, a male might be close by. If you see a male duck sitting outside of some vegetation, it can be a clue that a nest is hidden nearby. When ideal nesting locations are not available, the females can be found nesting out in the open with little to no protection.

### Egg Development

Muscovy ducks lay up to 28 eggs per clutch and they can breed as many as 3 times a year. The eggs lie dormant in the nest prior to the female Muscovy duck sitting on them. A female Muscovy will lay approximately one egg per day and will usually leave the eggs unattended until she has finished laying all of her eggs. Once she has finished laying all the eggs in the clutch, she will begin to incubate the eggs by sitting on them for most of the day. The female will rarely leave the nest during incubation except for brief absences to go relieve herself, to get water, etc.