

Although goslings are very hardy, they are very susceptible to cold or rain while young. It is best not to let them out for a few days and do not let them wander far from the buildings before they are two weeks old so that they may be put in, in case of rain.

The gander watches carefully over the mother during the whole time of brooding and shows the greatest solicitude for her. He is a very devoted father, taking great care of the young ones, protecting them and defending them with energy. When the hatch is off, the gander, who, at best, is not very conciliating, may become quite dangerous; he sees enemies everywhere and attacks all who come too near his young family. Sometimes he attacks children and being very strong he may cause them serious injury; therefore it is necessary to keep them away. Sometimes the goose is also very aggressive at that time.

CARE.—During the first few days, goslings should be fed bread crumbs, bran, shorts, cooked mashed potatoes, mixed with milk, chopped eggs, vegetables, lettuce, dandelion or other succulent green food.

When the birds are fairly strong, at about two weeks of age, they may run at large with their mother, but care should be taken to avoid exposure to rain, dew or the hot sun. A goose may lead as many as forty goslings. When they come in at night they should be given a little food as mentioned above.

Artificial rearing is successful.

FATTENING.—Fattening takes about a month. When they come in from the field those that are to be fattened should be given such grains as buckwheat, corn, oats, etc., and water containing a little meal or shorts. Raw chopped beets are also very good. This preparatory diet should be given for about a fortnight.

Young geese from six to eight months old fatten easier and better than old birds. They may be fattened in crates or in pens, the same as chickens. They should be confined in a small, dry, well-ventilated pen which should be kept dark so that the birds will remain quiet. During the first week, oats are given three times a day in small troughs; after the meal the troughs are taken away so that the geese may sleep and digest peacefully. After eight days of this, boiled potatoes and ground grain mixed with curdled milk should be added; five or six days later a little corn or barley flour may also be given. When the meal is over, give a liberal supply of water, milk and water or whey with a little bran or shorts added, for drinking. Towards the end of the fattening period cramming may be resorted to, but it is not absolutely necessary for the finishing of geese.

KILLING.—Geese are killed by sticking in the roof of the mouth with a sharp knife, a quick motion severing the arteries and penetrating the brain. Pluck with care to avoid tearing the skin which, in a very fat bird, is very tender and offers little resistance.

PRODUCTS.—The products are the flesh, the feathers and the down, which is very valuable.

In some districts breeders follow the practice of plucking their geese and ducks twice a year. The usual method is to pluck at moulting time. The last plucking should be done in time so that the feathers may grow again before the cold winter comes. The feathers are ready to be plucked when they come off easily. If not picked at that time, they would drop off and be lost. On the other hand, if picked too early they will not keep well. Feathers and down should be thoroughly dried and kept in a dry and cool place.

Never pluck the flank feathers which hold the wing as the latter would drag on the ground, detracting from the appearance of the bird and tiring him.