



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Upper Guadalupe River Authority
(830) 896-5445

What to Consider Before You Purchase a Baby Duck or Goose for Easter

The Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) urges parents to give serious consideration to the long term commitment of owning a duck or goose before purchasing them as pets for Easter. Though these animals are cute and cuddly as babies, they quickly turn into less charming adults and often end up being released into the wild where they can pollute our waterways.

Please consider the following prior to purchase. If you purchase a duckling for Easter, you will have a full grown duck by summer. Ducks can live for over 10 years and once they have imprinted on humans they can not survive in the wild without assistance. What was once a cute and fuzzy gosling or duckling will be a full grown goose or duck in about 30 days. During this time, they not only increase in size, but may also change in temperament. Geese especially, can become aggressive towards humans and can pinch and peck if provoked.

Also, before bringing a duck or goose into a home with small children, you should know that these animals may pose a health risk to humans. Young birds often carry the harmful bacteria Salmonella. Children can be exposed to the bacteria by simply holding, cuddling, or kissing the birds. Children are most susceptible to infection because they are more likely than others to put their fingers into their mouths and because their immune systems are still developing.

It is not the goal of UGRA to discourage the purchase of baby ducks and geese, but to discourage the release of unwanted adult ducks and geese into our waterways. In the weeks after Easter, when the cute and fuzzy ducklings become large and noisy ducks, some people decide they no longer want their pet and release it in the wild. Although it is against the law to release any animal in a City of Kerrville park or recreation area, many people abandon their duck or goose in these areas. The domesticated ducks and geese are not equipped to live in the wild, forage for food, or avoid predators. The birds often congregate in large flocks and rely on people to feed them.

Although it has become a popular activity to go down to the park and feed the ducks, the unnaturally large duck population is actually polluting the river. Large flocks of domesticated ducks congregate in small areas of shallow water where they are commonly fed. Duck droppings accumulate here and increase the concentration of fecal bacteria. Water quality testing indicates that the duck waste elevates bacteria levels and sometimes makes the water unsuitable for swimming – especially during the summer when there are warm water temperatures and low flow rates. Please do not feed the ducks already in the park so perhaps they will spread out to other areas of the river and not concentrate in one place. If the waterfowl disperse, the water quality in this section of the river can improve for the enjoyment of all.

If you have a duck or goose that you no longer want, PLEASE DO NOT RELEASE IT. Consider finding a new home for the animal or contact Kerr County Animal Services at (830) 257-3100 for assistance. There is no fee to surrender a duck or goose to Animal Services and the animals will not be euthanized. More importantly, consider if you are able to give the animal a permanent home before you purchase it.

Let's Keep *Our* River Clean