

Hatching Eggs and a Broody Duck



How do you survive hatching eggs and a broody duck? I had no idea what I was getting into the first time one of our ducks decided to brood a clutch of eggs. Here's a recap of the events as they unfolded a few years ago. Since then, every year, at least one of our ducks has decided to set a clutch of eggs. We have had a few successful hatches and quite a few heartbreaks from predators stealing eggs. It is quite an experience.

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For the past month our buff duck hen has been broody. I went away at the beginning of August and when I returned she had made herself very comfortable on a nest of 10 duck eggs. And oh my, was she broody. She would sit there and quack at the top of her lungs, her duck bill wide open. I referred to it as shouting and asked her to please use her indoor voice.

Like clockwork, every day, twice a day, momma would leave the

nest to relieve herself, grab a bite to eat, stretch her wings and take a short swim and grooming session. Then she would shout, all the way back to the nest, letting all the other ducks know how special her task was. This is not unusual behavior for a broody duck with hatching eggs. While she was off the nest, our Buff Drake would stand by the nest guarding it, while broody momma took her break. He wasn't as protective as she was, nor as threatening, but he did guard the eggs from the other ducks. One of our Rouen Hens would join him, from time to time. I was never sure if she wanted to sit on the hatching eggs or if she just wanted to be part of the miracle of life.

Checking for Development

I candled the eggs and sure enough, most of them were developing. The ones that didn't seem to be developing, I left there because I had an idea of what would happen next.



Time went on, and momma did her job admirably. Until last week. Momma started to kick eggs out of the nest. This was what I expected, and upon opening the rejected eggs, there was no developing duckling. Just rotten eggs.

As this week began, I was hopeful that the three remaining eggs would hatch. The expected blessed event was to happen over Labor Day weekend so I was getting excited.

And then....

Then, the worst happened. Momma kicked one of the good eggs out of the nest yesterday. I noticed the nest was not being

sat on. I can't really explain how I knew but it just looked different. Then, I felt the two remaining eggs. Cold as ice. Not even remotely warm. But I was in denial, and left them in the nest. I waited for momma to return to setting but it got dark and I had to go home.

Today, Momma was out hanging out with the other ducks and not quacking up a storm any longer. In fact, she was acting like all the other ducks again! I hoped that meant that the ducklings had hatched and she had them somewhere inside. But when I entered the coop, there were just two very cold, abandoned eggs sitting in the nest. No one was guarding the eggs. They were definitely abandoned. I removed them from the nest.

I had to know. Breaking open the eggs revealed two almost fully ready dead ducklings. Nature took over and for some reason, these little ducks were not fit to hatch out. Maybe they had health problems, maybe momma was a bad momma. We will never know the answer.

Moving Forward

I have had success in the past, hatching out our duck eggs using the incubator. We still have four that we hatched here, and they are healthy and active 15 month old ducks. So I know our duck's eggs are fertile and capable of producing life.

Am I disappointed? Yes, absolutely. This was a tough year as far as bringing babies up here at Timber Creek Farm. Now the disappointment of no newly hatched ducklings.

The good news is, tomorrow is another day. The ducks will start to lay eggs again. The good news on the farm is that there is always beauty to be found. Some days you have to look a little harder for your encouragement.

(This story, with a much happier ending, was the basis for my

latest book. [Margarita and the Beautiful Gifts](#) is available on Amazon and through the shop tab on this website.)

