Quick Tips

Handling your birds the right way keeps both them and you safe. This guide covers basic tips and how to hold different types of larger birds.

Head First

Guide birds in and out of the cage head-first, supporting them from underneath as you lift.

Secure Wings

Hold wings against the body to prevent flapping and injury.

Handle Gently

Support the breast; avoid grabbing wings or legs only unless using a proper hold.

Breathe Easy

Never squeeze the chest. Birds need to be able to expand their chest to breathe.

Watch for Stress

Open-mouth breathing, tremors, or regurgitation mean the bird needs a break.

Fun Facts

Bird Bones

Some poultry bones are pneumatic, meaning they are hollow and connected to the lungs and air sacs. These air-filled bones make birds lighter and support efficient breathing.

Cool Legs, Strong Wings

Ducks and geese keep heat in their core, so their legs feel cool even when healthy. Their wings are powerful, but legs are lighter and can injure easily if not supported.

Resources

www.healthybirds.info

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Small Flocks Collaborative

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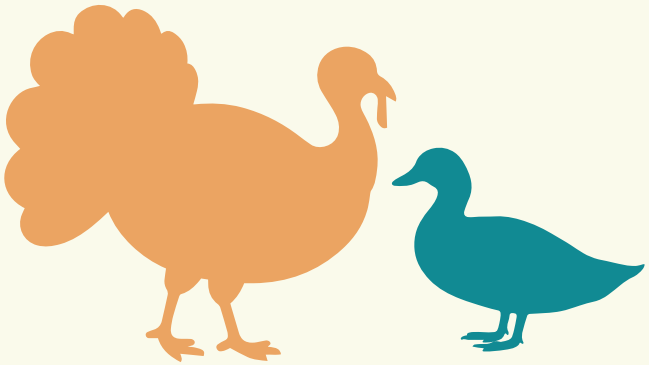
BIRD HANDLING FOR YOUR SMALL FLOCKS

How to properly hold your bigger birds, like turkeys and waterfowl



Use these tips to hold your birds and build a trusting, safe relationship

SMALL FLOCKS COLLABORATIVE

Full support hold with legs, breast, and wings secured with hand

Turkey hold, one arm supports breast and legs, other hand controls wings at the base.

Full support hold with legs, breast, and wings secured with hand.

Heavy Bodied Birds

Heavy-bodied birds like turkeys, meat birds, and peafowl should never be lifted by just the wings or legs. Their weight must always be supported by the body. To pick them up, place one hand over the wings and scoop under the breast with your other arm. You can hold both legs together if needed, but always keep the body supported to prevent injury.

Waterfowl

To handle waterfowl like ducks and geese, **never catch or lift them by the legs**. Their leg joints are fragile and easily injured. Instead, hold them by the body with the wings tucked in and one arm under the body to support their weight and hold the legs. You can also lift them by the base of the wings, using one or both hands at the point where the wings meet the body, but only for a short time and with care. Waterfowl possess powerful wings, so be cautious when handling these birds. Improper handling may result in injury to both the handler and the bird.

Full body support hold, one arm over the top that secures both the wings and supports the breast.

Small duck hold, one hand over the wings and other hand supports breast and legs.

Large duck hold, arm supports body and grips legs while other hand secures wings.

Short-term wing hold, grip both wings at the base for brief control of waterfowl.