
Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 84 Raising Backyard Ducks

Show Notes are at: www.LivingHomegrown.com/84

Theresa: This is the Living Homegrown podcast, episode number 84.

Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown podcast where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, national PBS TV producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.

Theresa: Hey there, everybody. Welcome to the Living Homegrown podcast. I'm your host, Theresa Loe. This podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without the farm and that means that we talk about things like preserving the harvest, raising backyard critters, small space food growing, and other simple ways that you can live a more sustainable lifestyle. As always, if you want to dive deeper into any of these topics or learn about my online canning academy or any of the other things I have cooking up, just visit my website livinghomegrown.com.

I am super excited about today's topic. We are talking about raising backyard ducks. Now, I have covered backyard chickens a lot on this podcast and on my website, and I've done entire episodes on our PBS show on backyard chicken keeping but I have never dove into the topic of ducks because I don't personally raise any ducks, although I want to. I'm really excited about today's guest. I invited on blogger and author Lisa Steele.

Now, if you don't know Lisa, she is a fifth generation chicken keeper who fell in love with ducks back in 2009. She's been raising them, alongside with her chickens, ever since. She is a main master gardener, an aspiring herbalist, and coop to chicken cook. Lisa engages fans worldwide with her easy, fun, and accessible approach to raising backyard flocks naturally. She's actually extremely popular with all of these topics. She inspires both the newcomer and the seasoned flock keeper alike to grab a pair of kitchen shears and head out to the herb garden on their way to the coop. She talks about all of this both on her award winning blog,

Fresh Eggs Daily, which I will link to in the show notes, and her Facebook page by the same name.

Lisa's the author of several books. One of her most popular books is Fresh Eggs Daily: Raising Healthy, Happy Chickens Naturally. She also has Duck Eggs Daily, another book, and this one is about raising happy, healthy ducks naturally. Her latest book is Gardening With Chickens. I'll have to have her back to talk about gardening with chickens because that book just came out when we were doing this interview but I had already scheduled her to do the duck interview, so we're going to have to have her come back. Her writing can also be found in a lot of different publications such as Chickens Magazine, Backyard Poultry, The Farmer's Almanac, Hobby Farm Magazine, as well as hgtvgardens.com and betterhomesandgardens.com or bhg.com.

She's appeared on numerous radio and television programs and most recently, and this was something that was news to me, she is now hosting her own television show called Fresh Eggs Daily with Lisa Steele. I will be sure to link to that in the show notes for this episode. Now as always, you'll remember that I always include links to everything that we mention as well as a full transcript of the show. If you want any of that just go to livinghomegrown.com/84 and I will have links to everything that Lisa talks about.

Now in addition, I also put together a little PDF, a free download that is a duck keeping tip sheet. If after listening to this episode you think oh man, I want to dive in to keeping my own backyard ducks, well I have this free PDF for you. Again, just go to livinghomegrown.com/84 and you can download the tip sheet right there. Also, I wanted to tell you one thing, I didn't notice until after the interview that right when Lisa was talking about raising ducks that are starting to become endangered, you know the certain breeds that are becoming endangered, her voice kind of clipped out and you can't quite tell that that's what she's saying. Just so you know, I have links to the conservancy if you want to perhaps look into a duck breed yourself that might be on the endangered list. Just wanted to give you a heads up on that. Lisa is in Maine, and she was having quite a bit of internet difficulty because she's in a very rural area. The quality of the audio in this podcast is really good but that particular spot right when she says the name of the Livestock Conservancy it clipped out so I just wanted you to know that's what she was talking about.

Okay. If you have any interest at all in raising your own backyard ducks or you're just curious about what would be involved in doing that, then this is the episode for you. Without further ado, here is my interview with Lisa Steele from Fresh Eggs Daily.

Hey, Lisa. Thank you so much for coming on the show today.

Lisa: Thanks, Theresa. I am so excited to be here.

Theresa: Well, me too. I have wanted to meet you for a very long time. We've known each other online for a long time, so even know we're not officially meeting in person I feel like this is the next best thing. One of the reasons I'm so excited to have you come on is because through my work with our PBS show and through my work with Newbie Urban Homesteaders, there's a really big surge in interest on raising backyard ducks. While I have almost a decade of knowledge on backyard chickens, I know nothing about backyard ducks. I'm really excited to learn along with the listeners by having this interview. Thanks for coming on.

Lisa: Well, thank you. I'm excited too because I too have talked about chickens for not as many years as you but close. It seems like backyard chickens are all the rage, but there are really a lot of benefits to raising ducks. We love our ducks so I'm really happy that they're getting focused on.

Theresa: Yeah. They're getting their due. Why don't we start out by having you tell everybody a little bit about what it is that you do.

Lisa: Well, I raise ducks and chickens. We have a farm up here in Maine. We moved from Virginia just a little over a year ago, and we brought our chickens and ducks with us. I write about my chickens and ducks and farm life on my blog and my Facebook page and my books and I do some freelance writing for magazines. I'm just thrilled that I've been able to turn this hobby passion into a career and that so many people are really interested in getting involved in raising backyard animals, not just out in the farms and rural areas but in the suburbs and in neighborhoods and all that. It's just, I think, a really exciting time in general for a lot of homesteady ventures.

Theresa: Absolutely. You're being very modest. You are absolutely one of the

experts in the chicken world. I mentioned in the open about your books. I was really excited when after doing the Fresh Eggs Daily that you came out with a Duck Eggs Daily because that was just so fascinating to me and not a lot of information is out there on ducks. Are you finding that people are becoming more interested though like the way I'm seeing it that people are kind of ... It's almost like ducks are the new chickens.

Lisa: Yes. I most definitely believe that. I actually do a lot of the fairs, The Mother Earth News and Country Living Fairs, and I do a duck talk. I find that while the talks aren't nearly as crowded as my chicken keeping talks, the people who raise ducks or who are interested in ducks are so passionate about their ducks. They just really, really are. I talk to a lot of people who started out with chickens, added a few ducks, and now don't raise chickens at all anymore. They just solely focus on ducks, which I keep telling my husband I want to do as well but my bread and butter is my chicken keeping advice and all that so he said no we have to keep raising our chickens.

Ducks are, I'm sure we'll get into it but there are just so many benefits to raising ducks really over chickens, which a lot of people aren't aware of especially here in Maine where it's colder or in the Pacific Northwest where it's wet, ducks are perfect. Ducks love snow. They love rain. They love sleet. They don't mind any of the inclement weather. Whereas chickens, if it's not sunny and beautiful out they really want no part of it. Our ducks, just they march right out into the snow. They don't even seem to notice it. When it rains they're ecstatic with the rain. There are a lot of parts of the country where ducks actually are better suited to a flock than chickens are, which is kind of funny and I think a lot of people don't think about.

Theresa: No, exactly. People don't think about that. One of the first articles that I ever read that talked about that was one that you wrote where you were talking about ... I don't know it was something like the 10 reasons that ducks are easier than chickens, and I was really surprised. Why don't we start with that. What are some of the advantages of keeping ducks?

Lisa: Sure, okay. Just starting off with ducklings, ducklings are heartier than baby chicks are. They don't tend to get things like Coccidiosis or Marek's, which baby chicks can actually die of both diseases. Ducks don't tend to get them. They have a really, really high metabolism and a very hot body temperature so it's not really ... The pathogens don't have

good luck living in a duck's body. Also, the avian flu, which anyone who keeps chickens hopefully is aware of the avian flu and how it's been devastating to a lot of commercial chicken keepers and some backyard flocks. Ducks actually don't get that either. They can carry it but they don't actually succumb to it. That's another benefit. Ducklings are just more hearty. They don't need the heat as long. They can get outside longer, earlier than baby chicks can and then once they are outside, like I said, they don't care about the weather. Any weather they're fine. They're a lot more cold hearty than chickens are. Ducks also are better layers. Our ducks every winter, our ducks keep laying straight through the winter without any light in our coop or anything. The chickens will slow down or they'll stop. Some of them will stop all together. The ducks just keep laying right through the winter. That's pretty nice too.

Theresa: The thing about the laying the eggs, that was a real surprise to me. They're not as prone to being affected by the length of the days the way chickens are.

Lisa: Right. Everything you'll read in books says that they need the 14 to 16 hours of daylight like chickens do, but clearly they don't because our ducks, every winter, they lay right through the winter. The nice thing about ducks is they sleep on the ground. They don't roost like chickens do, and they don't need nesting boxes. They'll just lay their eggs in a little nest in the straw. They'll lay their eggs just before the sun comes up and then they'll cover them up with straw. By the time you go out to let them out in the morning, they've all laid their eggs and they're not frozen. They're not cold because they're in this little straw nest. That's a huge benefit in the winter because ... Well, probably not where you live but in a lot of places of the country the chicken eggs can freeze if you go to work and then you come home from work and collect eggs that have been laid at 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning they could be frozen.

Theresa: Right. Yes, and then you've lost those eggs. Well, what about also the pecking order? I saw you talk about how if you raise chickens there is definitely a pecking order with chickens, and it doesn't seem to be as prevalent with ducks.

Lisa: Oh, I find ducks more laid back in general. The chickens are always upset about something. It's too hot. It's cold. It's raining. It's snowing. There's a new chicken here. I don't like that she's in my nesting box. I want to sit where she's sitting. The ducks really just, they just wake up in the

morning and they just enjoy their whole day. I've watched my ducks for a long time because we've had them as long as we've had chickens and I really can't tell. There's no alpha duck. In a flock you can tell your alpha hen. She'll push the other chickens out of the way to get treats. She usually is roosting on the top bar or whatever. With the ducks it almost seems like they switch off, like today one's in charge and then tomorrow there's another one in charge who's leading everyone around. I just don't see a pecking order like that at all, which is pretty amazing.

Theresa: That's so interesting. Yes. Well, I'm sure that that makes things a little bit easier when everybody's getting along. Now, what about pest control? I do use my chickens for pest control, but I think I read that you said that ducks are a little bit better at that.

Lisa: Well, ducks same as chickens, they'll run around and eat bugs and spiders and worms and grubs and things. I find my ducks, when they're out foraging, when everybody's out free ranging the ducks really do spend their entire time just looking for an insect larva and they'll drill down into the ground looking for it. The chickens, they do that but then they also take their dust baths or they'll go hop up into a tree and sit on a tree branch or whatever. The ducks are just really hardcore foragers. We have a lot of hostas and hostas get slugs, but our ducks love the hostas. They'll go in there and they'll just clean out all the slugs in your hostas.

Theresa: Ah well, that's why they're so good for the Pacific Northwest because they have such a slug problem, at least I know my friends that live there do. The ducks would be perfect for that.

Lisa: Yes. Ducks are a little easier on your lawn. You know how the chickens will make bowls for their dust baths and they'll scratch up all the roots of your flowers and stuff. The ducks really aren't as destructive for your gardens. They'll trample things. You wouldn't want them in a vegetable garden when you have seedlings, say, or if you just planted a bunch of pansies or something. If you've got established flowers and plants and things they really aren't going to bother the roots like the chickens do. They'll nibble. Once they eat all your slugs they'll probably eat all your hostas too so you have to be aware of that.

Theresa: Yeah. Yeah, that's good to know. Yeah. Don't forget about them in there or you're going to come back to a devastated plant. No, that's good to

know. That does make sense though because they don't have the claws like a chicken does for scratching, so all of their work would be a little bit more on the surface. That makes good sense.

Lisa: They do like to drill holes in the ground but they're small, maybe a nickel size or smaller. They're really great for aerating your soil too. If they're going around your lawn drilling holes like that I don't really worry about that because you figure it's good aeration. They really do, I think, suck out a lot of the larva, bug larva or weed seeds, things like that even before they've emerged from the ground. Yeah. They're good little workers.

It's funny, when you said "pests" I thought you meant like mites and lice and things like that, which can be a problem with chickens. They can get mites and they take dust baths to try to avoid that but that's another good thing about ducks is that they're in the water so much that they don't tend to get external parasites because they would just drown. Our ducks have a kiddie pool that they swim in. In the summer they're swimming every day. They don't really have problems with parasites like that either like chickens do, which is just another benefit of ducks.

Theresa: Yeah. That's really good. Well, let's talk about that for a second. If we wanted to have some ducks in our backyard, what are some of the requirements? I would assume that water is a big requirement to have for the ducks.

Lisa: Well, it's funny because people think that they need a pond or a stream or something for their ducks. Actually, if you're thinking about raising ducks, I think a pond is actually detrimental because once your ducks find it you're going to have trouble getting them off of it at night, and they can't fly. Domestic ducks can't fly so they're really, really vulnerable to predators, just like chickens are, so they need to be locked up at night in a house or a coop or something like that. Yeah. Ours have a kiddie pool. At times we've had them swimming in a horse trough. Really just anything. They're perfectly happy in a kiddie pool just splashing around and that's really easy just to fill up and dump. You don't need a natural water source for them.

Theresa: Well, I have a question on the water. On that, with the water isn't it also an advantage for having that kiddie pool because I was just thinking about this, if you have a pond it might be hard to keep it clean. With a

kiddie pool, like you said, you just dump it out and you can rinse it every day or every other day and it can stay fairly clean.

Lisa: Exactly. Yeah. People have had koi ponds and they get ducks and the ducks just go in, eat all their fish, and then they poop in their pool and all that. It's almost better just to have a kiddie pool for them. They don't necessarily swim. They're not diving ducks. They're not like wild ducks that dive down to the bottom of the pond to eat stuff off of it. They just really want to splash around and play in it. Yeah, a kiddie pool is more than adequate for them.

Theresa: Okay. Then, what about housing? While we're on the subject of housing, can we put our chickens and our ducks together?

Lisa: I've done both. I've had a separate house for our ducks and a coop for the chickens. Right now they're living together because we moved and we just have the one coop. I do have a small duck house that I use for the babies or whatever, but they're sleeping in the coop right now. It works great. You don't even really need a larger coop. Say you have a chicken coop and chickens in it and you want to get some ducks, well the ducks are going to sleep on the floor. It's almost like you can do double duty with your coop without needing a larger one because they're not going to need the roosting bar space. They're taking up floor space where the chickens are not. You've almost got a double decker thing going on. Really you put straw on the floor and they'll just curl up in the straw to sleep, they'll lay their eggs in the straw. You don't even really need a coop. A garden shed, a kid's playhouse, a doghouse you can even adapt really easily into duck housing. You just need a door so a predator can't get in and some ventilation and that's it.

Theresa: Okay. That's pretty easy. I know with the ducks, I guess the trickiest part would just to maybe have the roosting bar on one side for your chickens and the ducks have their area on the other side so they're not sitting under the chickens at night because that might not be too pleasant for them getting pooped on all night.

Lisa: Yes. At first my ducks were smart and they would, like you said, they'd stay on the other side. Then for some reason they started sleeping under the roost, which it's not a smart idea. I put wooden crates ... I have wooden antique cranberry crates and I just lined those up under the roosts, so now the ducks sleep in the boxes. It actually works out pretty

well because then the chickens poop and I just scrape it off the top of the boxes.

Theresa: Yeah.

Lisa: Yeah.

Theresa: That's ...

Lisa: Might have to make ...

Theresa: ... perfect.

Lisa: ... minor modifications.

Theresa: Yeah. Yeah. That would work really well. Okay, it is possible to have chickens and ducks together but if we wanted to we could have them have separate houses.

Lisa: Right. I liked the separate houses. In a way it was kind of double the work because now you're cleaning two, you have to lock up two, and make sure that the doors are shut or whatever. Really having them stay together is fine. If you're in a colder climate it's actually better because you have more body heat, so the more little bodies there in the space the warmer they're going to keep it. Yeah. Adding a couple ducks to your chicken flock, really they can just share the coop. Mine eat the same food too, so you don't even have to feed them separately.

Theresa: Okay. Let's talk about that. With the ducks, you can feed them chicken food. Is there anything that they need that's different from the chickens?

Lisa: Well, adult ducks, layers, they eat the chicken layer feed with the chickens. I do add brewer's yeast to it because ducks need more niacin than chickens do. If they don't get the niacin then their legs and bones don't get strong enough, so I do add brewer's yeast to the chicken feed but that's fine for the chickens too. It's not a problem. They can all eat the layer feed. I do add oats to the feed because if the ducks get too much protein they can have problems with their wings. I don't really measure it out; I just dump a little bit of everything in, so far so good. If you notice there's a problem you could tweak the amounts a little bit more. The oats are fine for the chickens too so it all works out.

The ducklings can also just start on the chick feed. I only keep them on it for two weeks instead of the eight weeks and then I switch them to the grower feed because, again, you don't want to give them too much protein. Ducks grow really, really fast and a high protein feed is just going to make them grow faster and they'll put too much weight on their legs. There's a little tweaking to be done as they're growing but for the most part for adults yeah they just eat the chicken layer feed and the same treats. The chickens go more for seed, grain kind of leftovers or rice or pasta whatever, and the ducks like leafy greens. They like kale and spinach and Brussels sprouts and broccoli and that kind of stuff. I'll keep our kitchen or garden scraps and I'll just toss them out and everybody just eats what they want. That works out perfectly.

Theresa: Yeah. That sounds pretty easy. Well, I know in your book you really do spell out everything for the babies so if anyone is really interested in starting with ducklings, I know you do give all that information in there about how to take care of them. One of the things that I thought was really interesting that you mentioned in your book was that with the ducks that they're not too keen on wilted lettuce, and so what you do is you just throw the lettuce into their pool and it stays moist and stays crisp and then they enjoy just playing around and finding it.

Lisa: Yeah. Ducks are super easy to keep entertained too. In the winter you always read these articles about boredom busters for your chickens, how do you keep your chickens from getting bored in the winter and pecking at each other, and turning into bullies and getting aggressive. Seriously ducks, really all you have to do is give them a tub of water. Period. That keeps them happy. If you really want to make them happy, yeah I'll throw in any kind of greens, corn kernels. Just throw something into a tub of water for them and they will literally, they'll be entertained for hours. It's just amazing how easy it is to keep ducks happy. You're right; it keeps the greens from getting wilted and plus if you throw them on the ground they step on them and they get all muddy and gross.

Theresa: Yeah. That would be easy. Some of the other cute things that I thought was so interesting, in your book you had this section on duck behavior and you know how people are kind of surprised to learn with chickens that there's a pecking order, well I was surprised to learn about having all the ducks in a row. Can you explain that?

Lisa: Yeah. That's, as I say, I spend probably way too much time watching our animals. The ducks do so many funny, quirky little things that I just really wanted to know why. I started researching and of course in writing my book and I just found it really fascinating because ducks do always they walk in a row or what's even funnier is when they walk in a V formation almost like they're flying but they're walking on the ground. Of course when they fly that way it's because of the wind shear or whatever you call it, so only the first one is really ... I don't know. If you're a pilot you get it. Like flying, the wind goes around the V and it's very aerodynamic, I guess you would say, so it's not as much work for everyone to fly like that. They walk like that too, which is really funny because they're walking not flying. They do always walk in a row. Same thing, ducks can ... Their eyes are on the sides of their head so if they look at you they tilt their head so one side of their head is facing you because they can't really see head on. When they walk in a row just the first guy has to scan side to side and everybody else can just look to the sides because they're just checking the flank. They're behavior really is fascinating.

Theresa: Well, the other thing that I thought was so interesting is that they sleep with one eye open or they can sleep with one eye open.

Lisa: Yeah, and that's a huge predator thing. It's funny because ours are in a run most of the time. We have coyotes and fisher cats and stuff so unless I'm outside with them they're in a covered run and they're perfectly safe. Even when they nap inside their run they'll have one ... their head tucked and the eye that's facing the sky will be open so half of their brain can be resting and sleeping and the other half is scanning the sky for hawks or eagles or whatever, which is completely unnecessary because they're in their run. It's just coded into their DNA that they have to be vigilant all the time.

Theresa: Yeah. That's so interesting. You also said something about worm charming, which I had never heard about, with the stomping of the feet.

Lisa: Yeah. It's really funny. When it rains the chickens are all in the coop wet and miserable and huddled together just hating life, you know because you have chickens. The ducks are out in the mud stomping their little feet. I was like, okay it can't be because they're happy. I guess it could be but there's got to be more to this. I started reading about it and found that even wild birds will stomp their feet on the ground because the worms think it's raining and they'll come to the surface so they don't

drown and then the birds can eat them. It's thought that ducks do that same thing to make the worms come to the surface so they can eat them, which is again, they're pretty fascinating little creatures.

Theresa: Yeah. It's kind of like when you can go out there and watch them it's kind of like farm TV. We used to always say that with our chickens that watching the chickens was like farm TV because they're just so fascinating. I imagine that ducks are even more fascinating.

Lisa: They are. Ducks are really funny. I know they don't mean to be but they just ... It's funny to watch them interact with the chickens because you realize just how grumpy chickens are most of the time. You see the ducks, sometimes our ducks will go up behind the chickens and they will literally grab at their tail feathers like they're goosing them, which again you can see where that saying came from because I imagine goose do the same thing. They'll run up to the chicken, goose her, and then run away, run back to all the other ducks, and then the ducks will just quack, quack, quack to each other like they're laughing at the chicken. You just can't help but laugh when you see stuff like that.

Theresa: That is hysterical. I had no idea they did that.

Lisa: Yeah. They get along. I've never had problems. I've had roosters and I've had drakes, male ducks, all living together and I've never had problems with them really bothering each other. I'm not sure they really like each other but they certainly tolerate each other. They live in harmony for the most part but the ducks are definitely in charge. The ducks might not have a pecking order within the duck flock but they are definitely are in charge of the chicken. Whatever the ducks want to do goes and the chickens kind of deal with it, which is pretty funny.

Theresa: That is funny. Well, is there any particular duck breeds that if we wanted to get into this, any particular breeds that you would recommend? For me, if I were to want ducks I would want really good layers but it sounds like pretty much all of them are good layers. What breeds do you recommend?

Lisa: It's so hard because I just love all of our ducks. I've had 11 or 12 different breeds. There's not as many duck breeds as there are chicken breeds. The one downside I think to ducks, well other than the mud they make and the mess with their water, but the one downside is that they don't

lay the pretty colored eggs like chickens do. You can't get blue and green and dark brown. Some ducks do lay like a pale bluish greenish color but most ducks lay white eggs, so you don't have that colorful egg basket. Most of them are really good layers. I just love them all.

I think what's really important is that a lot of the breeds are on the critical list for the Livestock Conservancy, so they're really trying to increase their number and things like Saxony or Anconas it's worth it to take a look at their site. They have a wonderful breeder directory where you can put in your zip code and they'll pop up different duck breeders in your area. Pick some of the not so popular breeds like the Welsh Harlequins or Pekins are pretty popular but some of these other breeds they really do need help. Some of the more beautiful ducks are these endangered breeds. I love our Saxonies. They're like a salmon orange color ducks and then we have Anconas, which are spotted ducks. Magpies, I mean there's just so many breeds that do need the help. Interestingly, again to compare them to chickens, chicken breeds have their own personalities. A Buff has a differently personality than a Wyandotte or whatever. The breeds definitely have distinctive personalities and temperaments. I find ducks all very similar in temperament.

Theresa: Ah, that was actually one of my questions was about the personalities, so pretty much you can't wrong with no matter which breed you pick as far as personality.

Lisa: Right. I do find all the duck breeds very, very similar in personality. They all descended from the Mallard so I don't wonder if that's why they all have pretty similar personalities because they have this one common descendant. Whereas I think chickens came from a lot of different sources to create the different breeds. Yeah. I find all our ducks ... I think it's more ... If you spend a lot of time with them when they're small and you handle them and you do spend time with them and sit with them and talk to them and bring them treats, you're going to end up with a friendly flock. I don't see the huge differences in temperaments like I do with chickens at all. I would say go for the appearance duck you are interested in and then egg color but most of them do lay white eggs.

Theresa: Yeah. Well, I'll be sure to link in the show notes for the conservancy so that people can look and see which breeds might be starting to have trouble and that would be a good place for them to start if they're wanting to do it for that reason. Also, when you were talking about

having good personalities or being okay with people, I know you also mentioned in some of your articles that sometimes a drake will try to do a little bite, like a love bite on you for dominance and that it actually can hurt. What do you recommend if you have a duck that is nipping at you every once in awhile?

Lisa: Well, that's true. I don't find that drakes are as aggressive as roosters. A lot of times people will have roosters and they have little kids and a rooster can do a real damage. They will really attack you. Drakes aren't like that but they do sometimes like to do these love nibbles. They're like little pinches with their bills that can kind of hurt and you want to stop that behavior. You have to discipline them just like you would a dog that's nipping or biting. I find if you just grab their bill gently and just tap on it with your finger, say no, just keep doing that. I've had good luck nipping that behavior, if you want to use the pun. For the most part drakes can get aggressive. I've had to rehome some of them if I've had too many boys because especially when they're young they can be aggressive with each other and start fighting over the girls and that. For the most part I find that the male ducks are far less aggressive than roosters are.

Theresa: Okay, good. That's good to know. Yeah, roosters can definitely be aggressive. Now, two other things I wanted to ask you about was one, how many ducks should we start with and two, do ducks make a lot noise like chickens people are sometimes surprised to learn that chickens actually can be a little bit noisy even if you don't have a rooster. Do ducks make a lot of noise and how many should we have?

Lisa: Okay. That's another good point, while we're talking about the roosters and the drakes. Male ducks actually don't quack. They make a raspy sound. They don't quack; they're not nearly as loud as a rooster would be. Female ducks, when they get excited they can be a little loud. They quack like everyone knows what a duck quacking sounds like, but for the most part they just chitter chatter really softly. I'm going to call it like Morse code because they just kind of quietly talk among themselves. I don't find the ducks loud at all. You're right; a lot of areas won't allow roosters because of the noise. I don't think they realize just how loud chickens can be especially after they lay an egg. That sound is just god awful, that screech. It's awful. I think a lot of people are surprised by how much noise chickens can make. The ducks are pretty quiet. They get excited when they see me coming with treats or if I'm filling their pool or

whatever. For the most part they're pretty quiet.

I would say a minimum of three ducks really get attached. You'll never see a duck by themselves. You know like when you let your chickens out to range, two will be over here, one will be over here, a couple over there. The ducks are always together, all of them. They really, really bond. If you only have say a pair and you lose one, that one duck is going to be just inconsolable, lonely. I would say at least start with three but the more the merrier of course. As many as you can have. You can have three females. You could have a male and two females. If you just wanted to do all boys, like say you don't care about the eggs and you just want a little entertainment and some bug control, you could have three drakes together and without females around they should get along great. They're always on Craigslist or even at shelters, I think. People either abandon them or give them up. If you just wanted the bug control factor, an all boy flock would be great.

- Theresa: Ah well, that's really good to know. I didn't realize that. With roosters, I would assume having all boys would be a disaster, but having all boy ducks you're right they don't have to compete, so they're buddies. They're like drinking buddies.
- Lisa: Right. That's it exactly. If it's just all boys they'll just roam around and eat bugs for you. Duck eggs are wonderful, so I would definitely say female ducks are what you would want to go for because the duck eggs are just so much richer and eggier than chicken egg. Once you start eating the duck eggs, I really don't use our chicken eggs much anymore except for breading cutlets or whatever. For all my baking and if we're just eating eggs straight up, we just prefer the duck eggs.
- Theresa: Fantastic. Yes. I've only received duck eggs from the farmer's market, and they were incredible. Absolutely, I think having the eggs would be the reason I would want to have the ducks. Well, Lisa, I so appreciate you coming on. In closing, is there anything that you would want to give us as advice? Any would be duck owners out there, what would be your parting words for anyone who's considering doing this?
- Lisa: Yeah. I just really enjoy our ducks so much. I think just opening people's minds up to thinking about ducks and do a little reading, do a little research, maybe talk to some people if you know anyone or if there is someone at a farmer's market selling duck eggs talk to them. We just

really enjoy our ducks. I just see so many positives to having a flock of ducks in the backyard. A little reading, a little research, and make sure that it's for you. I definitely recommend it.

Theresa: Awesome. Well, thanks so much for coming on. It's been a pleasure having you on the show.

Lisa: Thank you, Theresa. Thanks for having me.

Theresa: Wasn't that an interesting conversation? I was so glad that I was able to get Lisa on the show. Now, I will have links in the show notes for everything that Lisa talked about. If you are at all interested in getting into ducks in any way, I can't recommend her book enough. If you just want to learn about chickens then her chicken book, *Fresh Eggs Daily*, would be the book for you. I'm going to link to everything that she talked about including her websites and her Facebook page, everything. That will be in the show notes for this episode. Just go to livinghomegrown.com/84 and I will have everything there for you.

That's it for this week. Until next time, just try to live a little more local, seasonal, and homegrown. Take care.

Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown podcast. Visit livinghomegrown.com to download Theresa's free canning resource guide and find more tips on how to live farm fresh without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown podcast.