

Fall Spa Day For The Ducks on the Farm

Fall Spa Day for the Ducks



The ducks of Mezzacello swimming in the pond enjoying life and being “rained on”

Today was an early fall spa day for the ducks at Mezzacello. It is more than just a treat it is a near necessity on an urban farm. This is because ducks are very delicate and ironically hardy creatures. They have very specific ecological and dietary needs. It stands to reason that if you can meet those two needs somewhat regularly, they will thrive. It's when you don't meet them that things go awry.

It's All About the Breed and the Niacin (AKA Vitamin B3)

The ducks I raise at Mezzacello are a very specific breed of duck. [They are big and gentle](#) and love eating bug pests. They have a lot of benefits and history as well. This breed was developed by a breeder in the early 20th Century. An Austrian Jew who lived in the Saxony region who crossed the Rouen Breed of duck with the Peking Breed of duck to create a new breed.

This new duck became known as the Saxony Breed of duck. But there is one problem and it's a big one. The Saxony's [do not deal well without Niacin](#). All ducks need Niacin, but this cross between two ducks has amplified that fact. Therefore one has to be ready to solve this crisis. But first you have to understand the crisis.

In a perfect world, these ducks would live in the large pastures of the Saxony region. This is good, as they need constant access to ponds, waterplants and specific insects that are high in B3. On an urban farm, like where I live, there isn't a lot of Niacin. So I have had to make adjustments. Like the aforementioned "Fall Spa Day".

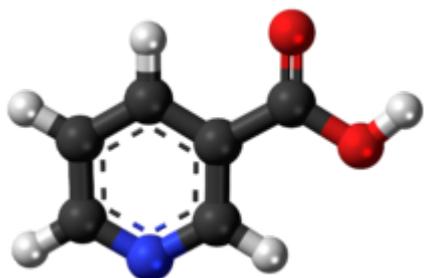
Winterizing the Saxony Ducks

During spring – early fall the ducks and the chickens can forage around the ecologies of Mezzacello for all of the bugs they can gobble up. It's good for the farm, the insect population, and the ducks. Things go south in fall when the bugs go dormant. I cannot let the ducks live in the pond. It is actually against city code. So as a compromise I give them spa time. Time to swim and dive, and munch on all the lovely pond plants (which surprise! are high in niacin) and I even spray them with "rain" from the hose. They love it and it keeps them happy and healthy.

It's also really good for the fish, the plants in the pond and for the biofilter attached to the pond. The aqueous wastes the

ducks produce helps to manage the Ph of the water. This in turn is good for the plants. The ducks love to nibble on the leafs of the plants once again seeking that precious niacin, and the act of cutting actually helps the plant divide and grow. It's a win win situation. I will let the ducks swim late into the fall. Then I will alter their diet.

Manufactured Niacin



Niacin molecule

As late fall progresses I alter the diets of all the poultry at Mezzacello. I add wheat germ to their feed, I add peas to their diet, and I feed them dehydrated mealworms – which they LOVE! All of these foods are high in niacin. This breed of duck is niacin deficient so as a result I really have to do this.

The fact of the matter is that with low niacin the birds slowly start to die. Their nervous system shuts down, they lose the ability to lay and their energy levels plummet. It is an easy fix, but you have to catch it early. So niacin spa days are an important part of the duck's social calendar. And it makes for a great photo!