



## Girasol Farm

### Gosling Guide

#### **Basic Care**

**If you have come into possession of a goose** and haven't a clue how to care for it, read on.

Provide it with water and a safe, quiet place to stay. Keep children, pets, etc. away until it has a chance to rest and get used to its surroundings.

**Feeding the gosling is easy**, the best thing is chicken starter purchased at a feed store. **IT MUST BE UNMEDICATED FEED.** In a pinch, you can give it crushed cereal like Cheerios, crushed dog food, crushed dry cat food, cottage cheese, hard boiled eggs, chopped lettuce, canned peas or chopped green beans. They can feed themselves from birth, but may not recognize the food so put a dab on a finger and put it in the bill to get it started. All food should be mixed with a little water for the first week or two. They can drown easily, so only a shallow dish of water should be used, no more than 1/4". Don't worry if you have a tiny baby that won't eat. They are nourished by the egg yolk and don't need food during the first 24 to 48 hours, but will usually drink a little water. You can get a package of Vitamins and Electrolytes at any feed store. If you add a scant teaspoon to a gallon of water, that will help give it a good start. Food and water should be kept available all day up to bedtime. Never give it feed without water.

**If you run out of food, in a pinch**, here are some emergency foods you can try: Lettuce, dry dog or cat food (crush large chunks), spinach, canned vegetables (mixed, corn, peas, green beans), good grain cereals like Cheerios, dandelion greens, worms, crickets or bread. **Bread is not a good diet (this causes Angel Wing birth defects)**, but if you have nothing else, give small pieces...whole wheat is best. Goslings are wary of eating new things, so don't figure it isn't hungry if it won't eat at first. You might even try putting a bit in its bill so it will know it taste okay. It should have food and water available all the time if possible.

**Even temporary housing must be safe from predators.** Please don't leave a outside and unprotected at night even in a fenced in area. Keep it in the garage, a safe storage shed, or bathroom. It will appreciate something soft to sleep on like an old towel.

**Outdoor housing isn't necessary if you diaper it and keep an indoor .** If the is friendly with you, you can probably diaper it with little trouble.

**Geese need to bathe. Swimming water is unnecessary.** The bathtub is fine for an emergency. However, they much prefer to bath outside, especially when they can preen in the sun. A small plastic container like a kitty litter pan or storage box works fine and is easily filled and handled. For a large or two geese, you can get concrete mixing pan at Home Depot, etc. that is easier to dump than a play pool. It is wise to make these decisions right now as you have to plan on the mess that a lot of dumped water makes especially with a goose dabbling in it. Watching a goose swim is very pleasant, but you might be better off with the small container of bathing water. Providing a pond sounds like a great idea and beautiful pictures come to mind, but cleaning it is not an easy chore. Geese form habits easily, so don't start something you might not want to continue. I think people enjoy their feathered kids much more when they keep it simple. When you don't, having a goose can start being a major chore and even cause problems in the family. It isn't the goose's fault. They are very happy with most anything you provide as long as they can keep clean, be well fed and be with you. They are one of the most adaptable creatures on earth.

## **General Information About Goose Care**

**How do I know how old it is?** If it is still all covered with soft down, it is under 2 weeks old. If you can feel prickly little feathers, it is between 2 and 4 weeks; if you can see some feathers it is over 4 weeks, and fully feathered, it is grown.

**What do I keep it in?** A medium dog carrier (the plastic kind with wire door, a plastic storage box, a cardboard box or basket. To make it feel secure, partially cover the top with something like a towel. Put a towel in the bottom as they shouldn't stand on anything slick.

**How do I keep it warm?** Waterfowl babies don't need as much warmth as other birds, but they do need a little extra warmth, especially at night, for the first week to 10 days. This can be provided with a lamp and a 100 to 200 watt bulb set over the container, a heating pad set on low and covered with a towel. You have to cover them to be sure they aren't too hot and always make sure the baby can move away from any heat if it gets too hot.

**How do I bathe it?** As I said, babies can drown easily as they don't have the oil or the feathers for waterproofing for a few weeks. You can put it in a couple of inches of lukewarm water in a sink, but **watch it very closely**, let it bathe, and give it time to preen (clean its feathers) in a warm place. If it doesn't get dry enough, you can gently use a warm (not hot or cold) hair dryer **on low**.

**When can I diaper it?** Baby diapers can be started at a week or two. If it is over 2 weeks old, skip them and get an expandable harness at 4 weeks. These can be found online and ebay.

**What else does it need?** A stuffed toy will be very comforting and give it something to cuddle up with to help keep it warm. Baby waterfowl are not like other birds. You have probably heard that you shouldn't handle a baby bird much. Forget it!! This baby wants and needs to be close to you as much as possible. They need to bond and imprint on you. It will run away when you reach for it, but that is only an instinctive survival move. **Go ahead and pick it up, but snuggle it close to you quickly so it will feel safe.**

**Anything else I should know?** If you have an issue with the animal or cannot keep it DO NOT drop it off at a local lake, it will die. Domesticated animals do not know how to survive on their own. Their parents did not show them what to do to survive. If you are thinking of taking it to an animal shelter, please forget it. It is hard enough to find a vet that knows how to care for them and the chances of an animal shelter taking good care of it are slim to none. You can call Girasol Farm in Temecula at 951-708-1744, they may be able to rescue it. There are also bird sanctuaries in Riverside and Orange Counties.

**If you are not able to keep the baby, go to** [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pet\\_srus.join](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pet_srus.join). Everyone there will try to find a home for it, or at least put you together with a kind and caring wildlife rehabber.

### EMERGENCY ADULT CARE

**If you have a seriously injured bird**, first try to stop any serious bleeding. Clean the wound gently with peroxide, apply Neosporin and bandage it as best you can with gauze and masking tape. Of course, if you don't have those materials available, substitute the best you can.

**If there is no serious bleeding but it is obviously hurt**, it is best to put the bird in a quiet, darkened place for a while to let it rest. Stress is equally as serious as the wounds. Provide water and help it drink if it is unable. Do not subject it to children or several people at a time trying to help.

**If you must take it to a vet** try to find an avian vet, but if the only one you can get to is a regular vet and you do not know if they take geese or not, **DO NOT CALL THEM!** 9 times out of 10, they will say they do not take geese, so don't ask. Take the goose to the vet keeping it as comfortable as possible (a soft towel in a box) and demand that they help it. It is very hard for a vet to refuse especially if there are patients listening. They may not know much about geese, but they can take X Rays, splint a broken wing or leg, stop bleeding, give antibiotics, etc. Go to <http://www.thegoosesmother.com/id15.html> to find avian vets and rehabbers. [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pet\\_srus.join](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pet_srus.join) can be a big help in many ways. You can find a list of veterinarians that have proven to be good with geese. There are several waterfowl rehabbers on the list who will provide advice on how to care for the injury. There may be a good rehabber close to you who will pick up the bird if it isn't yours. It is a very active list so you should be able to get help quickly.