



**UPDATE
MARCH 2019**

The first month of autumn is almost done, not that it has made a lot of impact apart from the past few nights seeing the temperature beginning to dip below 10 degrees. The days have continued to be hot, dry and occasionally very windy. Sadly, the Bureau of Meteorology has forecast drier and warmer than average conditions in its Autumn outlook for the region, which means there's going to be no let up from the drought and we'll head into a bleak winter. Of course such conditions continue to take a toll - trying to source reasonably priced feed for the sheep and goats, whose paddocks haven't got any decent feed in them and having to witness the sight of the geese and ducks heading towards the dam each morning only to find it dry still (pictured below right) they have to make do with kidding wading pool substitutes. Thankfully, the guy who gets feed for me can source relatively cheap good quality hay (pictured below left) but it's adding \$500-600 to the monthly feedbill. Easter will make an entire year that I've been buying hay to feed the sheep and goats - usually I've only had to buy it for a few months in winter but such is this drought. I've been here in the town for 20 years and it's never been as dry as it is right now.



The past few weeks have also brought a number of situations to my attention where I am just appalled by the treatment by other humans towards other living beings. Even after spending almost two decades living hands-on with the rescued and unwanted I still am left flabbergasted by some of the stories I hear.

Earlier this month I was contacted by a wildlife volunteer carer who was looking to rehome two

domestic ducklings. A friend of hers rescued the two wee ones (pictured over page left), they were about two-weeks-old, who were dumped in an artificial pond with a community living area in Western Sydney. As she lives in a unit she couldn't provide a suitable forever homes for them and reached out to her friend for help in finding them a suitable placement. Both ducklings are tame, so were obviously pets until they were dumped. What sort of person would cast aside two vulnerable beings in such a manner? There is no way these two would have survived where they were on their own. They are now here growing rapidly and will eventually be introduced to the duck paddock where they will have lots of duckie friends.



Sadly, they weren't the only young duckies to arrive in recent weeks with tales of woe.

A two-week-old Pekin duckling arrived having been bought one week previously by a person who was transferring Queensland ... they had apparently had someone picking him up but they never showed up. Thankfully a neighbour stepped in to offer temporary sanctuary but needed to find a forever home for him so he came down and almost immediately bonded with three slightly older Muscovy ducklings (the four are pictured together above right) who were destined for a petting zoo if they didn't come here. I had to ask myself what sort of person would buy a living being a week away from moving interstate knowing they could not take them with them?

All these incidents show the consequences of people making impulse buys of cute baby animals, without considering the long-term implications - ducks can live for up to 15 years. Approaching Easter I have no doubt there will be compulsive buying of rabbits and chicks - the two animals most associated with the Easter season and who knows what will become of many of them once the novelty wears off.

I received almost 30 requests for rooster rehoming since I last wrote and many of these involved multiple roosters needing sanctuary. Sadly at the moment I cannot take in any more roosters but the requests come in and the audacity of some of these requests.

These are some of the choice bits:

"Hi would you take my Silkie Rooster? He's beautiful but my bedroom window is above the coop. He's 4 months old" My reaction - why did you have a rooster in the first place if he was going to be "too noisy" for you?

Oh and then there's the breeders who want you to clean up the mess they created, yet still intend to keep breeding knowing there is a 50:50 chance any hatched chick could turn out to be a rooster

"I am trying to find a home for my roosters. I have now gone through another season of broody activity, but I am shifting to purebreeds only, as I have a lady that says she can re-home the purebred roosters. I still have roosters from last year I cannot find a home for (4 none pure breeds) and was hoping you can help me."

"Hi Bede I have about 10 unwanted roosters which I'm having trouble rehomeing. As I bred them, they will always have a safe home with me until they find a good forever home. I wanted to enquire your capacity to take them and if I were to bring 2 bags of feed as well? Located in Canberra. I will breed more selectively next season."

But the request that took the cake was the fact that I was contacted by three separate people within hours of one another through text messages, calls and social media messages who are all associated with a pound asking if I could take in a rooster due to euthanised the following day – of course there was not much emotional blackmail attached to any of their requests

Despite the challenges there are some great moments. I was contacted by a woman in Tasmania seeking my advice on how to create space on her property to take in unwanted roosters – her email began: *"Tasmania has an urgent need for a rooster sanctuary and I was wondering if you could share your knowledge on how to successfully set up one We already have 40+ hens and roosters including 3 rescued ducks all free ranging at the moment. I want to set up a separate enclosure for the roosters. I will be getting 2 this coming weekend but if we rescue more, do you have any tips/info you can share to successfully introduce more roosters without major bloodshed."* It was one request I was delighted to respond to.

Into the last week of daylight savings, which means the days will be shorter, already it's still dark at 7am. For the next few months it will just add another little challenge to life running a sanctuary but hey I wouldn't trade it. Until next time.

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