



Donated by Allen & Myra Charleston

WHAT IS AN EMU?



This is an Emu (pronounced E-moo if you are from the United States or E-mew if you are Australian). My birds were hatched in the states, so we call them E-moo. Poe-ta-toe, Poe-tat-o, tater - make your own choice.

Dromaius Novaehollandiae is comprised of three subspecies which are interbreeding in the wild as well as on farms. These are ***Dromaius novaehollandiae novaehollandiae***, ***Dromaius novaehollandiae woodwardi*** and ***Dromaius novaehollandiae rothschildi***.

The emu is originally from Australia and is in the ratite family of birds. There are only 5 birds in the ratite family, the ostrich, emu, cassowary, rhea and kiwi. Ratite is from the Latin meaning raft. This is because of their breastbone, which is flat. There is no breast meat like on a chicken, which has a keel type breastbone. Because of this flat breastbone, ratites do not fly. They have no muscles to support the wings.

When it is about 1 year old, it'll be between 5 1/2 to 6 feet tall and weigh between 80 to 100 pounds. A mature bird, several years old, may weigh up to 150 pounds.



Emus have 3 color stages. It begins with stripes, from the time it's hatched, till it reaches 3 months of age. By the time it's 4 months old it will be a chocolate brown. At 1 year it will begin to change color again, with the neck losing feathers.

The neck will become bluish to indigo and the feathers will be mottled. There is no color difference between the males and females. At 17 months emus can breed. However, many wait until they are 3 year olds. The average female, now this is a nationwide average, will lay 32 eggs in a breeding season. Breeding season lasts about 6 months - October through March in Tennessee.



Emu eggs are a dark green in color and are 10 to 12 times as large as a chicken egg. Most people will tell you that they lay every 3 days, but there are emus that lay sporadically, anywhere between 3 to 5 days. You just have to get out there and look. Emus live a long time. The oldest emu on record is 38 years old - a pet emu in Australia.

I have heard a rumor that there is one living on a farm in the U. S. that is around 42, but do not know for sure. Zoo records in the United States show them living into their 30's. Yes, they are productive throughout this period of time.

Ok, you've got an animal that is productive for over 25 years, if you take care of it. Let's say that instead of 32 offspring, it produces 20 per year. It requires very little space. You can raise 50 emu where you can raise one calf. So you're thinking, ok, so what? What can you do with it?

Currently, emu farming is 'farm to fork'. That means that the farmer raises the bird, arranges the processing and production of products, then sells the products.

These products include: Meat, Leather, Oil Products, Feathers, Claws, Eggs and Bones.