

# Keeping and breeding those wonderful spruce grouse.

From: Snyder's grouse and waterfowl park Dan and Silene Snyder

NPIP approved facility

[www.GrouseParkWaterfowl.com](http://www.GrouseParkWaterfowl.com)



Franklin spruce grouse male

Canada spruce grouse male

We are going to discuss the way we approach keeping spruce grouse ALIVE and WELL for many years. We have some birds that are going on 6 years old. Some people will say that grouse are impossible to keep alive and that they will die of sickness. They would be right and wrong. Grouse are far from impossible but believe me they do get sick. Every bird we own has been sick at least one time in its life. No different than people, you just have to know what to look for. We find that preventing health problems is more effective than trying to treat them after the fact. Here are some of our recommendations from many years of trial and error!

## Aviaries:

I would recommend that you keep your spruce grouse in **separate** pens during the non breeding times. A good space for a single spruce 4'X6' we have them in 4'x4' spaces but I will not build that small of a pen anymore. We prefer our new pen design 5' wide X 8' long X 6' tall under a solid metal roof. They get plenty of sun light through the walls. Below the metal, we have 2<sup>nd</sup> layer of shade cloth. Leave about 8" of free space so they can not hit the metal roof.

Please look on our web page under the aviary section to get some photos. These pens, which we are describing, are all Vinyl coated welded wire about 2-3 feet off of the ground.

We breed both on wire and on the ground. A good size for a ground pen is about 10'X 20' for 1 pair of spruce grouse. A good wire pen size is 4'x 6' per bird

We feel it is always a good idea to be able to separate them if one of them starts to chase the other one.

They are very sensitive to stress caused from chasing. We keep most all of spruce in single pens

During the winter months. Here are some photos



Front view of 10'X20' breeding pens



Front view of main grouse breeding area

Please go to our web page <http://snydersgrousepark.com>



Inside a 10'X20' breeding pen after the spring



Inside a 12'X16' breeding pen



Sooty blue grouse male in his breeding pen



A view of 5 wide 'X8'long X6' tall wire pens

Look under AVIARIES you will see many photos of both ground and wire pen designs. We also sell blue prints for both designs. And we custom make and design aviaries upon request. We have food catcher boxes for sale along little giant feeders and water bowls. Every thing we use on our farm is for sale in our online store.



Wire covered box to catch spilt feed

## Diet:

We believe that the diet is the most important aspect of keeping spruce grouse healthy and happy!

We feed Mazuri maintenance tag #5643 which is a 12 % protein from September 1<sup>st</sup> till April 7<sup>th</sup>.

Then we feed Mazuri breeder tag #5639 , a 20 % protein, for the rest of the summer

We feel the higher protein helps them go through there molt much better.

When you order your Mazuri feed you should allow 2 -6 weeks for the order to arrive. We had Mazuri Change from a long pellet to a round extruded form which allows for better digestion and give better droppings.



Canada spruce grouse feeding on jack pine      young Franklin spruce grouse male eating jack pine

We also feed a lot of natural feed all year long.

We feed Jack Pine tree branches until about the end of April. Larch is a very important food to spruce grouse. We add Larch needles when they are green and big enough for them to eat

As soon as there are fresh blue berries leaves on the plants we feed those as well.

In some years of heavy snow pack, we go to grocery store and buy cilantro leaves out of the produce department, cut them up very small .They love them. Dandelion leaves and clover cut up very fine also will work in the summer time to supplement their diets.

If you do not have jack pine or larch, don't worry you can use Scotch pine, spruce needles even fir trees will work?



Franklin spruce grouse feeding on jack pine Black grouse was eating aspen and willow leaves

We have started feeding cut up cranberries year round as it has multiple benefits! Because it is very acidic, it helps keep bacteria a bay. You will notice, if a bird does not greet you at the door for their treat, then you have plenty of time to treat them for problem. Since the cranberries are wet this is where we add Vionate, which is a multi vitamin. A very small amount goes a long way.

**Watering:** Make sure to add 1 shot glass full of Apple cider Vinegar (with the MOTHER, not distilled) to 1 gallon of water to prevent Sour Crop.

## Health and Veterinarian's care

If we feel that a bird is off and we know what is wrong with them say Coccidiostat, Enteritis or Sour Crop

How do we know?

Signs of Coccidiostat: Yellowish to white chalky liquid droppings.

Signs of Enteritis: Clear wet liquid dropping. Also, a dead give away, is when they have their head tucked behind there shoulder.

Signs of Sour Crop: Liquid will start to form in crop and digestion stop and they will eventually will Die From choking

We will use Neo Med 325 (Neomycin sulfate). Put a very small amount on there cut up cranberries.

Most of the time they will still eat them, if they don't, simply catch the bird up and force feed them the berries one time. After that mix Neo Med 325 in water , ¼ tea spoon per gallon of water, 8 days on, 5 days off, 8 days on again. By then you should have happy healthy bird.

If you suspect your birds has Capillary worms then we put 1 drop of Ivermectin 1% Sterile Solution per pound of body weight. Put this on their tongue. Care should be taken not to give to much, as it can shut down their breathing.

For mites, we put 4-5 drops on the back of there neck.

I would recommend that you work with a local vet the first few times. You will want to do

Fecal floatation, then you will know EXACTLY what your bird has and then it is easy to treat.

The fecal floatation runs about \$10.00 per floating.

I would recommend using a vet with discretion. If you loose a bird and your gut feeling tells you that you could have saved that bird, then have them look at it. They should be able to tell you what caused the death then you will know for the future.

If your bird is perfect one day and dead the next, trust me you will spend a bunch of money \$150-\$250.00 and they won't find out why the bird died. Just mark heart failure in your records and move on, it is a lot cheaper.

We would also recommend that you contact you state vet and become NPIP approved. You will then be able to do your own blood testing. It is much more affordable!

## Construction of Ground Pens for Breeding

A good size pen would be 10'X 20'. We take 4'tall black Anti Site Barrier and install it all the way around the aviary so that nothing can disrupt them from the ground.

The first step is to clean the ground. We always mow the grass as short as possible. Put a heavy coat of lime down on the ground. Then we install heavy construction grade road paper or weed barrier and duct tape the seams, and then staple it to the edges of the side walls. You are trying to make an envelope for your sand. If you have trees or bushes, make sure you tape around them good.

Now the fun begins!! Start adding your sand to about 6' deep, it will settle to a bout 4', more or less. Put some fresh cut logs in the pen.

We put fresh cut logs in the pen every spring. We do not use logs for more than a year unless they are cedar because of bacteria. You will then install the perch and feed and water bowls.

Spruce grouse love to nest under a log, so take two logs about 16" long and put a longer one over the top. Put some brush such as pine boughs to conceal the nest.

Now you can add your birds and enjoy best displaying of all the grouse. The same information would apply to breeding on the wire.

## Breeding:

Both the Franklin Spruce and Canada Spruce grouse will breed on the wire and the ground. They are more enjoyable on the ground. I will discuss how to breed them both ways. We typically allow the male to be in the breeding pen first for maybe a week to 10 days first, it is very important that your male **Gains his confidence** and starts to strut before you introduce the hen. We feel this is the most important step in breeding your spruce grouse. In the wild the male always set up a territory and the hens are attracted to the males.



Canada male after 3 days has started to display



Franklin spruce grouse on my wife, Silene



The same male 5 minutes later

Both the Canada and Franklin spruce grouse will not tolerate you messing with their nest. If they see you messing with their nest, they will most likely stop their laying for the season. I would recommend having some dummy eggs to replace them. Just let them lay their eggs in a nest! Some times you must intervene before she is done laying. A good reason to intervene is the temperature. Say it is very hot out as it can be in mid May, then I would go out right at dark MAKE SURE she does not see you And make the switch.

I have been blowing out infertile spruce eggs now a while have a pretty Good collecting of infertile blown eggs which I then filled with 2 part epoxy they have a similarly Weight and perfect color match. It works the best I have found.

We use setting hens to incubate our eggs until about 4-5 days from hatch then finish them off in the incubator.

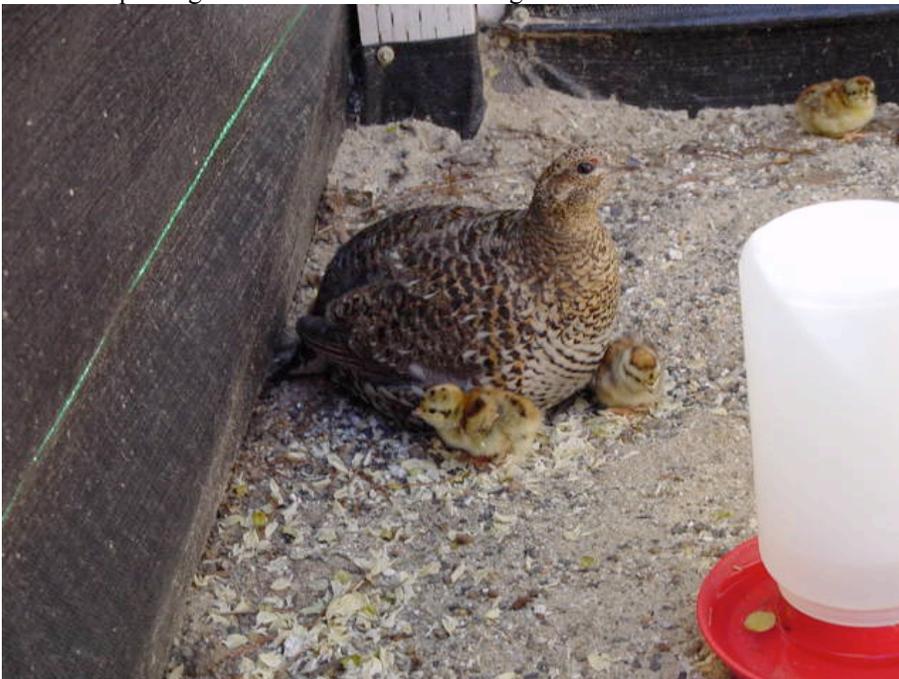
As with any bird 1 pair is not very effective I would recommend 2 or more pairs just because you get a male and a female that does not mean they are a bonded pair. We currently keep 10 pairs each of Franklin spruce and Canada spruce.

Franklin spruce grouse nest on a wire bottom pen





Franklin Spruce grouse chicks in brooder we green moss for them to walk on





Canada spruce hen with 9 newly hatched chicks

## Dailey care and feeding:

A single spruce is given about 1/3 cup feed every morning. We **do not top off feeders ever!!!!** There is no up side the longer the food sits out in the damp air. Every day any food left in feeder is thrown away which are usually only a few pellets. We custom make food catchers that are 11"x11" 1 1/2 "tall 1/2", plywood bottom with a thick coat of exterior grade oil based white primer. A moveable lid made of 1"x1" vinyl coated welded wire, is attached. We empty the waste feed into a 5 gallon bucket marked waste feed. Normally late in the afternoon, we give a small amount cut up cranberries as a treat. They have come to love and enjoy this food. This is a great way tame down your grouse. Once they are in the routine they will eat out of your hands. **Cleaning your feed bowls is also very important!** We clean once a week we pull them and scrub them in water. Not as bad as sounds. As for water bowls during the winter months we use heated pet bowls we scrub them in place with bleach water. Keeping in mind that they are zip tied in place not easy to remove. Every 3 days or as necessary, some birds are cleaner than others.

During the non freezing months, we use small black 1/2 pint plastic containers that are made for welded wire pens. We put them on the outside of the pens so they can not walk in there water supply .When tempters start to climb in to the mid 70\* we **add apple cider Vinegar to the water 1 shot glass full per gallon of water.** Works very well to stop. The bacteria called Sour crop which is deadly to grouse.



**Out side water bowl works well**

We go along and change the summer water bowls twice a day and replace them with clean ones we have hundreds of them. We are going to install a dish washer in our new shop building this coming summer. Cleaning the wire bottom pens with a wire brush is important to remove dropping build up and spray with text roll very simple.

If your birds are on the ground we rake up every few days and put the waist into a bucket. Then we take the dropping to the garden pile. We use step pans with text roll or bleach water example we have 4 step pans. On our farm we have boots just for the grouse pens we wash our tools when we are done cleaning

Bio Security is very important.

Hopefully this information will help all you bird lovers. Feel free to contact us if you need more clarification on any of this information.

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