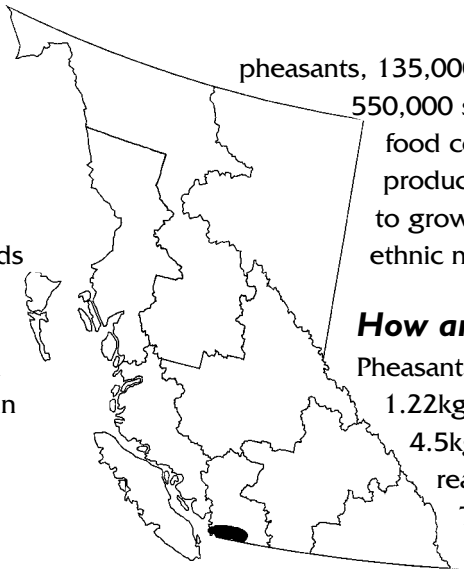


Game Birds



Interesting Facts

A quail egg can be 1/3 the weight of the laying hen's body.

What are game birds?

Game birds are traditionally wild birds that are raised in captivity for food consumption. Pheasants, quail, partridge, squab (baby pigeons) and silkies (bantam chickens) are raised in BC.

Where are game birds produced in BC?

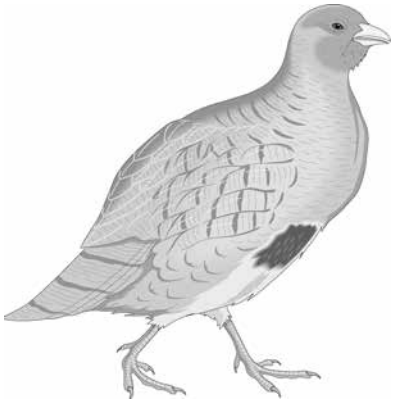
Most game birds for commercial sale are raised in the Fraser Valley close to the only processing plant in the province.

How many game birds do we produce?

Annually, BC produces approximately 19,000 pheasants, 135,000 quail, 9,000 partridge, 550,000 squab and 500,000 silkies for food consumption. Squab and silkie production and consumption continue to grow rapidly, reflecting demand from ethnic markets.

How are game birds produced?

Pheasants have a dressed weight of 1.22kg. They convert feed at a rate of 4.5kg per kg of body weight and reach market weight at 20 weeks. The birds are fed high-quality rations to ensure good quality meat. Partridge and quail are raised in conditions similar to broiler chickens. They are small birds that require little floor space. They consume 3.5kg of feed per kg of body weight gain. Quail are ready for market in seven to seven and a half weeks. At maturity the birds weigh 0.2kg eviscerated.



Partridge



Quail

Squab are the young offspring of pigeons. Pigeons produce 10 squab per breeding pair per year. Each squab weighs 0.45kg dressed weight. The pigeons eat high quality grain and when raising their young they only partially digest it. They then regurgitate it as "pigeon milk". Squab production is labour intensive.

Silkies are bantam chickens. Silkies have a dressed weight of 0.74kg and convert 3.5kg feed per kg of body weight gain. They lay only 120 eggs a year when mature compared to 290 for a commercial laying chicken.

How are game birds used?

Game birds are produced for their meat. They look like small roasters when they are cooked. In restaurants, the larger game birds, such as pheasants, may be served as quarters or halves. Sometimes only the breast meat is served, particularly in the case of quail and partridge. Quail eggs are boiled and pickled.

Some pheasants are produced for use on non-agricultural hunting reserves. Some quail are raised for feeding falcons and other hunting birds.

Meat of silkies is used as a medicine in Asian communities.

What happens to the game bird after it leaves the farm?

The farmer can sell the product to a processing plant that wholesales it to hotels, restaurants, institutions and retail outlets. Some farmers may have access to a processing plant where birds are killed. They pay the processing plant to process the birds, then take the birds back and sell them themselves. It is important with these new niche markets (direct farm marketing) to maintain a constant supply and consistent quality.

What challenges does the game bird producer face?

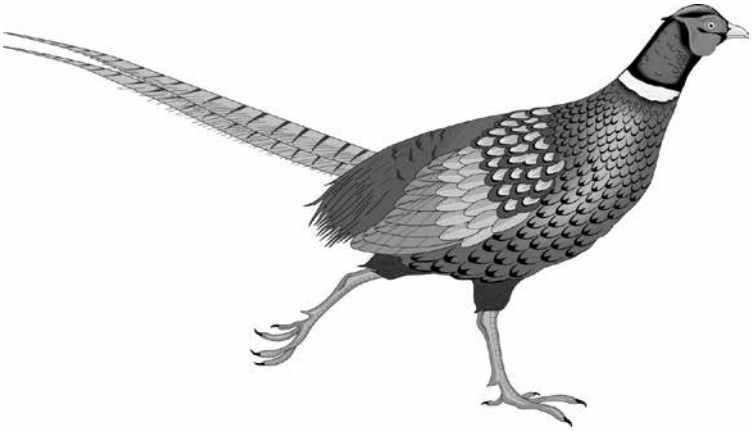
All game bird producers are faced with competition from low-cost imported product from the United States. There are no supply management systems or border controls on the amount of product that can be imported, so markets tend to be cyclical. As a result, most producers are hesitant to expand their operations using borrowed capital. Competition among producers for existing markets in BC is intense.

Who is involved in the game bird industry?

- Game bird producers
- Feed companies
- Equipment suppliers
- Processing plants
- Provincial and federal meat inspectors
- Specialty market distributors

Contacts and other resources:

BC Specialty Birds Association



Pheasant