



"DOWN & FEATHER TRIVIA"

1. **WHAT IS DOWN?**

A single unit of down is called a cluster. It is a 3-dimensional spherical plume comprised of a quill point (with no quill shaft) and many thousand filaments which radiate from it. A down cluster has the overall appearance of a ripe dandelion pod.

2. **WHAT IS THE SOURCE?**

Down comes from the underbody of waterfowl such as geese and ducks. Landfowl such as chickens and turkeys do not produce down. Down clusters grow under the outer protective layer of feathers, and are most numerous on the breast area.

3. **WHAT IS A FEATHER?**

Feather, the principal covering of birds, is of flat, two dimensional construction. It has a hard, tubular quill shaft from one end to the other. Feathers have a series of softer fibers on each side of the quill shaft.

4. **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DOWN AND FEATHER**

First of all, they are two completely different structures. A down cluster has an identity all its own. It is not a young small feather, and will never develop into a feather.

A down cluster has a quill point but no quill shaft. Although a down is lighter than a feather, it's three-dimensional structure allows it to trap more air and therefore has more "loft" or insulation.

5. **HOW CAN DOWN BE SO LIGHT, YET INSULATE SO WELL?**

Because of its three dimensional structure and ability to "loft", each down cluster traps more air for its weight than any synthetic. Every ounce of good down has about 2 million fluffy filaments that interlock and overlap to form a protective layer of non-conducting still air that keep warmth in and cold out. Because of its resilience, you can scrunch it up or flatten it out. All it takes is a good shake for it to fluff up and bounce back to the form that keeps you cozy and warm.

6. **HOW IS THE BEST DOWN CHOSEN?**

Down is washed, chemically cleaned and separated into different grades by blowing. The air currents in a sorting machine send the best down drifting up to the highest bin, to be graded as the finest quality. Down of lesser quality and feathers then fall into the lower bins.

7. **WHICH BIRDS PROVIDE THE BEST DOWN?**

Generally speaking, the best down is formed by the biggest clusters. And the biggest clusters come from the larger, more mature birds. Geese are normal larger birds and usually provide the best quality down. Large, mature ducks provide good quality down too, but under a microscope, goose down plumes tend to be stronger, last longer, and have more filling.