

# Down pillows: how they are made and transported

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How often do you think about the process of making something you use daily? Personally, it never crosses my mind, and I'm sure it's the same way for most people going about their day-to-day lives. The manufacturing of down pillows is a fairly difficult and long process. Down pillows are made from cotton, geese and duck feathers, and cloth or leather. These kinds of pillows are commonly used in hotel rooms and homes across the world.

Cotton, today, is picked by harvesting machines and then shipped to the manufacturer to be sorted and made into whatever product it will be going into. The geese and ducks are bred, kept in cages in most places, and will eventually have their feathers plucked to be put into the down pillows. The cloth, used as the outside of the pillow, is made of cotton after it is processed and cleaned, while the leather is made from the skin of cows after being dried out and allowed to hardened for days to weeks at a time.

Geese and duck feathers, most of the time, are removed from the birds postmortem (Kozak, Gara, & Kawada, 2010). However, sometimes the feathers are plucked while birds are still alive. Of course, the feathers removed from live birds generally are of higher quality than those removed after the geese or duck's death. The process of hand-plucking feathers from living birds is actually illegal in the United States, but the law does allow for down feathers that have been shed from live geese or ducks to be used in down pillows as well as other products (Kozark et al, 2010).

Ever wonder why down pillows are generally fairly warm? That's due to the feathers inside the pillow capturing heat from the environment and the

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person laying down on said pillow (Fuller, 2015). Male geese generally have thicker feathers than females do and as a result most of the feathers used in down pillows, and other down-filled products, come from male geese. Goose down is more compression resistant than duck down is and, therefore, is used away more often than duck down is in down products (Fuller, 2015). The density of the goose or duck feathers affects the amount of heat those feathers can hold; a group of feathers with a higher density would be able to hold more heat, while a group of feathers with a lower density would not be able to hold as much heat as the higher density group of feathers (Gao, Yu, Pan, 2007).

Once the feathers are pulled from the animals, or picked up off the ground, they are cleaned and processed into the inside of the pillow via machines. After the down pillows are filled, they are packaged into thin plastic-like bags. I believe that the plastic bags the pillows are placed in are meant to keep it clean and safe while it is shipping from the production site to the places around the world where they will be sold, as well as to protect them from getting dirty or punctured while awaiting purchase at a retail store.

Down feathers are widely used today, and can be found in most bed related products. As a result, geese and ducks are being bred and grown for their feathers, slaughtered, and have their feathers plucked after death. Although the feathers are gathered in a human way, I don't think that raising something just to end up killing it for its resources is okay, but I understand the need to do so. That being said, the manufacturing of down pillows is a need for consumers looking for a comfortable, well made pillow.