

How to Choose the Ideal Chicken Breed for Your Flock

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE



BY JOHN WHITE | [ChickenCoopGuides](#)

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**Q: Why did the Chicken (okay, it's a Rooster)
cross the road?**

A: To read this book!



About This Book

Whether you're new to raising chickens or you've been raising them for years, I hope you'll find the information in this book helpful.

After a quick overview of basic information about chickens, there are two pages of information on each of 18 breeds of chicken, including the standard information on size, purpose, egg productivity, size and color as well as climate tolerance, personality and breed facts and history. There are also photos of each chicken. Enjoy.

Quotable Chicken Quotes

“A hen is only an egg's way of making another egg.”

~ Samuel Butler

“The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it.”

~ unknown

"Regard it as just as desirable to build a chicken house as to build a cathedral.”

~ Frank Lloyd Wright

“It is better to be the head of chicken than the rear end of an ox”

~Japanese Proverb quotes

"Ain't nobody here but us chickens"

~ Song lyrics, Louis Jordan

"Boys, I may not know much, but I know chicken poop from chicken salad." - Lyndon B. Johnson

“The difference between 'involvement' and 'commitment' is like an eggs-and-ham breakfast: the chicken was 'involved' -the pig was 'committed'.”

~ Unknown



Chicken Basics

The chicken is a domesticated fowl. It's one of the most common and widespread domestic animals in the world. In 2003 there were 24 billion chickens on planet earth, making them the largest species of bird in the world. It only makes sense there are dozens of different varieties of chicken.

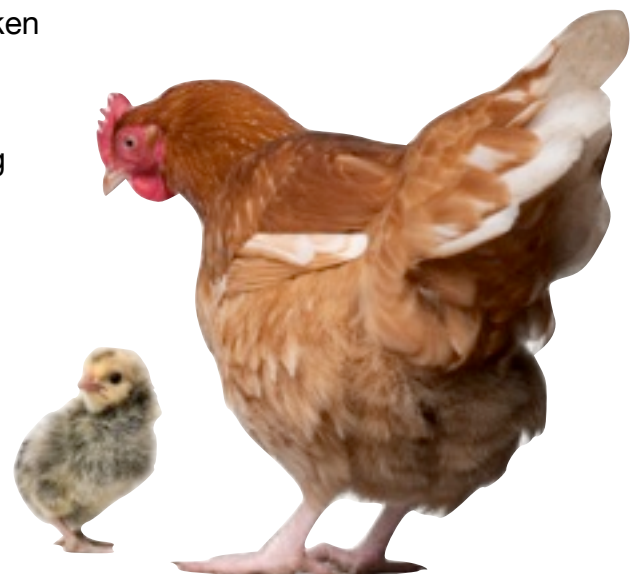
In America, Australia and Canada male chickens over the age of 12 months are called roosters while the British and the Irish call them cocks. Castrated roosters or cocks are referred to as capons, and male roosters under the age of 12 months are called cockerels. Females over a year old are called hens, and under 12 months of age they're called pullets. Chicken is a term used to refer to the meat of the bird, while chick refers to the young of either sex.

Chicken breeds are divided into one of two categories of size: standard or large, and bantam. There are also breeds known as "heavy" breeds because they have thicker bodies, denser feathers, and are better suited for colder climates.

Heritage, or "heirloom" chickens have histories going back hundreds of years. They were the chickens raised on the first farmsteads in this country. These are the Plymouth Rocks; Rhode Island Reds; New Hampshire Reds; Jersey Giants. They tend to be hardier breeds with an innate ability to forage for food rather than just feed. They're also more likely to know how to hide from a hawk or owl!

When selecting a chicken breed, consider the climate they'll be raised in. People select the breed of chicken they want based on a variety of factors. Size, hardiness, personality, color and ability to lay eggs are some of the traits people look at when selecting a breed.

If the chicken will be raised for meat, the size, quality, taste and growth rate are important. If you have children more docile and mellow chickens make a better choice. It's up to you to decide which breed or breeds suits your situation and needs.





Are you raising chickens in the suburbs? An apartment? A farm? In a rural area with open land or in the city in a back yard? Have you raised chickens before? Are you raising your chickens for eggs? Meat? Do you want to produce meat and eggs to sell to others? Will the chickens just be pets for children, or as many “hobby farmers” like to do, just have chickens around the farm for “atmosphere,” or so their place looks and feels more like a farm? Is your chicken going to be a pet? What kind of climate do you live in? Is it mostly hot? Cold? Seasonal?

There’s no right or wrong reason for selecting a breed. Just consider what works for you in terms of what you plan to do with the chickens. Here are some of the traits and qualities you might want to consider:

Class: A chicken’s class refers to their origin. If not known it’s generally referred to as “All other breeds.”

Type: Type refers to whether a breed is a large or standard. Large or standard breeds are larger than bantam breeds. They also produce more meat and eggs. Most farmers who are raising chickens for eggs and/or meat will select the large breed chicken just because it’s more efficient to raise them.

Bantams may be one-quarter to one-fifth the size of a large-breed chicken. Their eggs are smaller, they are less meaty and unlike standard chickens, bantams can continue to fly throughout their lifetime. Bantams tend to be a little more intense but they still make good pets and some farmers like to keep them around their breed chickens for variety, or breeding and showing.

Size: Size refers to the weight of the bird. Small birds generally weigh less than 6 pounds, while medium birds weigh 6-7 pounds and large breeds weigh more than 8 pounds.

Hardiness: Hardiness is a trait that refers to how self-sufficient a chicken may be. Will they forage for food? Many production chickens have had the instinct to forage for bugs, seeds, weeds and even small rodents—things their ancestors who were raised and left to fend mostly for themselves, had to do. Heirloom and heritage chickens tend to be more hardy than other breeds.

Purpose: Chickens can be selected for their laying ability—how many eggs they produce in a day, week, month, or for their meat. Some chickens, particularly heritage or heirloom birds, taste better. Does the chicken produce a lot of meat? Do they taste



good? Do they look good in a roasting pan? Some chickens are “dual purpose” hens meaning they lay a lot of eggs and taste good too.

Egg Productivity: How many eggs does the breed tend to lay in a month?

Egg Color: Eggs range in color from all shades of brown and tan, to blue, green and white, depending upon the breed. There is no nutritional difference among the colors, but many people like the novelty of different colored eggs. **Egg Size: Medium**

Rarity: Rare

Climate tolerance: Unless they're in a controlled temperature environment, not all chickens tolerate extreme temperatures. There are breeds, often referred to as “heavy breeds,” that have denser feathers, thicker bodies and are just better suited for cold climates.

Personality: Fun

Recognized Varieties: What colors does the breed come in? There may be more colors than the standard colors recognized by the American Poultry Association (APA) such as: Black, Blue, Blue Wheaten, Brown Red, Buff, Silver, Wheaten, White.

Breed History: Breed history is a bit about where the breed originated and what year they were recognized as a breed. There is often some bit of information or other background about the breed.

Breed Facts: Breeds are often recognized by certain characteristics, or have certain traits or other information considered “facts” about the breed, such as the fact that Buckeye chickens are the only American chicken breed entirely created by a woman — Mrs. Nettie Metcalf of Warren, Ohio, in 1896. The name "Buckeye" refers to the similarity in color of these red chickens with that of a buckeye nut, and, of course, Ohio being the "Buckeye State.".



Ameraucana



Buff Ameraucana Hen and Blue Ameraucana Rooster or Cock

Breed History: Ameraucana's are similar to Araucana chickens. Both breeds have pea combs and both lay blue shelled eggs, but other than that? They are completely different breeds.

The Ameraucana (popularized as “Americana”) was developed in the USA from the nonstandard “Easter Egger” chicken whose ancestors were South American Araucanas. The Ameraucanas was accepted as an official breed in 1984.

Most hatcheries now sell “Easter Eggers” and not true Ameraucanas. Standard Ameraucanas are rare.

Easter Eggers lay blue, blue-green to creme colored eggs like the Ameraucanas, but are not standard. If you're planning on showing your birds, make sure that you have true Ameraucana or Araucana and not Easter-Eggers. Even though the Ameraucana breed was derived from blue egg laying chickens, they do not have the breeding problems inherent to Araucanas.

Less rare than the Araucanas, they are still quite rare and only available through specialized breeders. They're often confused with Easter Eggers, which are simply

Ameraucana-continued

chickens who can lay blue and green eggs. Easter Eggers do not conform to any breed standard. However, many hatcheries continue to call their Easter Eggers "Americanas" (and other various misspellings) simply because they lay colored eggs.

Breed Facts: Ameraucana traits include full tails, muffs, beards, and slate (blue) or black legs depending on the variety. They're the teddy bears of the chicken world—as in general they're very hardy and sweet. They lay eggs in shades of blue to blue-green.

Class: All Other Breeds

Type: Large Fowl & Bantam

Size: Cock 6.5 lbs Hen 5.5 lbs

Purpose: Egg-laying

Egg Productivity: Exceptional. 250 per year

Egg Color: Blue, blue-green, creme or tan

Egg Size: Medium

Rarity: Rare

Climate tolerance: Cold hardy, all climates

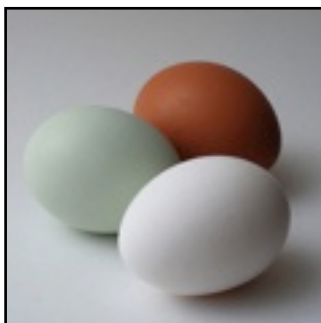
Personality: Fun, calm, curious and friendly or sometimes shy, and standoffish. Adapt well to confinement

Recognized Varieties: Black, Blue, Blue Wheaten, Brown Red, Buff, Silver, Wheaten, White



TIP: The Araucana hen (above) is sometimes mistaken for an Ameraucana.

The gene that produces tufting in the Araucana is lethal. Breeding two tufted birds together results in 50% with tufts, 25% of the brood dying in the shell, and 25% having no tufts.



Ameraucana eggs and chick



American Game



American Game Rooster

The American gamefowl is America's most historic breed. These are the classic, colorful roosters that Americans think of when they're thinking "Rooster." They're just about the most beautiful and colorful chickens you can find. The American Game's comb comes as pea, straight and triple with a combination of each. They're hardy, excellent flyers, good foragers and great for broodiness. Apparently our ancestors thought so too.

The American Game roosters were also the breed of poultry our founding fathers bred for cockfighting. They were used as fighting cocks long before they were ever considered food.

Most of America's most famous political leaders bred, fought and raised American Game cocks for fighting. Abraham Lincoln used to be a cockfighting referee, and his nickname, "Honest Abe," comes indirectly from his honest judging of cock fights. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson also owned American Game chickens.



American Game -continued

Most American gamefowl lines (or strains) consist of Irish Game, Old English, and Oriental Gamefowl. Others contain Spanish strains. After cockfighting was outlawed, the American gamefowl gained in popularity as a show breed.

The most common colorations are "Black breasted red" (dubbed reds), "Wheaten" (dubbed reds), "Silver duckwings" (dubbed greys), "Golden duckwings" (called greys), White, black, brown-red, red quail, gold, pumpkin, and blue (in various forms, this includes splash, blue wheaten, blue reds, etc.).

The American gamefowl are extremely cold and heat resistant, intelligent, and are capable of surviving independently in the wild. Many places have crossbred gamefowl present in the streets/woods. Key West, Guam, and Hawaii are some of the main places known for Spanish gamefowl running wild, with some American gamefowl strains as well. American gamefowl can also be found in the wild in various places in the continental United States, often after escaping or being set free by owners.

American Game Hen

Class: United States

Type: Standard & Bantam

Size: Cock 6.5 lbs Hen 5.5 lbs

Purpose: Ornamental

Egg Productivity: Average 150 year

Egg Color: White

Egg Size: Medium

Rarity: Common

Climate tolerance: All climates

Personality: Aggressive, tough, bold and proud. Handles confinement well, but also does well as free range

Recognized Varieties: All colors





Buckeye



Buckeye Roosters

The Buckeye is a dual-purpose breed chicken with a good meat reputation. They have a deep, lustrous mahogany red plumage, and yellow legs and skin. Thanks to their pea comb, they are very cold-weather hardy. These chickens are the only American chicken breed entirely created by a woman — Mrs. Nettie Metcalf of Warren, Ohio, in 1896. Never wildly popular, the Buckeye, nonetheless, found loyalty among those who raised them and still does.

The name "Buckeye" not only refers to the similarity in color of these chickens with that of a buckeye nut, but to the fact they originated in Ohio, the Buckeye State.

Buckeyes are noted as being the most active of the American class of chickens. They earn their keep, foraging and searching out food and not sitting around waiting on a dinner bell and someone to toss them their daily feed. The hardiness of the breed is not a fluke. Mrs. Metcalf set out to create a breed that wouldn't be lazy, but that could contribute to the farm and provide good meat. Because dark meat represents "fast twitch muscle," which contributes to the foraging and activity levels of the poultry, it also means these birds produce very dark, dark-meat sections when processed.



Buckeye -continued

The Buckeye is highly adaptable, and does well in confinement, or as free range birds. They're very hardy and adapt well to cold climates.

If you're thinking they look somewhat like the Rhode Island Red, you've got a good eye, and you're not alone in thinking that. Mrs. Metcalf heard about the Rhode Island Red (RIR) too. She exchanged eggs and birds with RIR breeders. Her plan was to develop the Buckeye Red as a pea-combed variety of the Rhode Island Red. It's more a marketing story than a breeding story.

After entering the birds as both "Pea-combed Rhode Island Reds" and "Buckeyes," she learned, as most marketers do, that a name is everything. Consumers much preferred "Buckeye" over "Pea-combed Rhode Island Red." Wouldn't you? Same bird, different name.

These birds are excellent mousers and will also hunt down rats if you've got them. They're slow growers, and can be temperamental, but owners generally love their hardiness, personality and meat. They're well suited to small farms and backyard flocks. In 2011, the Buckeye was able to be moved from a "critical" status to "threatened," based on a 2010 census that found almost 2,500 birds.

Class: United States

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 9 lbs Hen 6.5 lbs

Purpose: Dual Purpose

Egg Productivity: Average 150-200 year

Egg Color: brown

Egg Size: Medium

Rarity: Uncommon (threatened status)

Climate tolerance: Very Cold Hardy, all climates

Personality: **Docile.** They tend not to rise too high in the pecking order. Adaptable to free range or confinement. Curious.

Recognized Varieties: Brown only



Young Buckeye



Blue Hen of Delaware



Blue Hen of Delaware Rooster (left) and Hen (right)

The Blue Hen of Delaware is only one of three state birds that is not a native species to the United States of America. It was adopted as the state bird of Delaware on April 14, 1939, and is best known as the mascot for the University of Delaware.

Oddly enough, like several popular breeds, the Blue Hen is not a currently recognized chicken breed, even though its fame and popularity can be traced back to the Revolutionary War in 1775.

According to various legends about the Blue Hen, it got its name and reputation for toughness "The Fighting Delawares" from a regiment of soldiers composed of eight companies representing New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties. Commander and Captain, John Caldwell reported for duty near the outset of the American Revolution in January 1776, bringing some of his beloved fighting cocks with him.

His troops often amused themselves by staging cock fights and the renown of these chickens spread rapidly during the time when cock fighting was a popular form of amusement. The chicken's reputation for ferocity and fighting success grew rapidly, as did Capt. Caldwell's men.

Blue Hen of Delaware-continued

After ferocious battles with the British at Long Island, White Plains, Trenton and Princeton, Caldwell's men were soon nicknamed "Caldwell's Gamecocks."

In spite of their history for ferocity, the Blue Hen is a quite docile breed, having lost their aggressiveness over the years. They tend to be shy, and quiet. All chickens naturally fight, and contrary to popular belief, don't have to be trained to fight. After 3 to 4 months most roosters will naturally fight to the death in a confined area. These are primarily ornamental chickens as they are low egg producers. They do well in confinement or as free range birds.

Despite it's fairly famous history, the Blue Hen is not a recognized breed. However, the University of Delaware has a breeding program to improve the breed.

Class: All other breeds

Type: Large

Size: Cock 6.5 lbs Hen 5.6 lb

Purpose: Ornamental

Egg Productivity: Low

Egg Color: White

Egg Size: Medium

Rarity: Common

Climate tolerance: All climates

Personality: Shy, docile, quiet

Recognized Varieties: Blue, Black and Splash





California Gray



The California Gray is a single comb, clean legged variety that originated in the U.S. It was developed in California during the 1930s by crossing White Leghorns with Barred Plymouth Rocks. Creator James Dryden, a professor of poultry science at Oregon Agricultural college, (now Oregon State University) wanted to produce a dual-purpose chicken that was suitable for both meat and egg production.

The breed is rare, primarily because it was never recognized officially for exhibition. However, this breed was used later to develop the “California White,” a commercial hybrid produced primarily for its meat.

Both the roosters and hens are barred. The roosters are barred with light gray and white stripes. The hens are barred with very dark gray or almost black and white stripes.

California Gray -continued

The color is similar to a Barred Rock but the body style more resembles the Leghorn breed. The chicks (see photo right) are black with a white spot on the top of their head. The abdomen, chest and wing tips are also white.

If you're looking for a high production egg layer, you can't do better than a leghorn, but because the California Gray is a leghorn cross, their egg production is very good. They're known for being good winter layers as well, since that's a time many chickens production can slow.

Because of their egg production this breed does require more protein and calcium than most. Their diet should also be supplemented with bugs, veggies and fruit and even oyster shell if they don't appear to be getting enough calcium.

Even though they're an all-climate bird, their combs can suffer from frostbite in the winter.

Class: United States

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 5.5 lbs Hen 4.5 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: Very Good

Egg Color: White

Egg Size: Large

Rarity: Rare

Climate tolerance: All climates, good winter egg layer

Personality: Active, calm and make good pets. Tolerate confinement and do well as free range also

Recognized Varieties: N/A as breed is not recognized





Delaware



Delaware Hen

George Ellis of Delaware created the Delaware breed in 1940. Originally called “Indian Rivers,” the breed rapidly became known as “The Delaware.”

The Delaware supplied much of the commercial poultry industry, including Perdue chicken, with large, plump broilers as well as jumbo sized eggs, until about the 1950s. For about twenty years the Delaware and the Delaware x New Hampshire cross were the most popular broiler chickens on the Delmarva Peninsula.

Consumers not only like their chicken to taste good, they want it to look good as well. The Delaware’s ability to produce offspring with predominately white feathering was an advantage for commercial producers because white feathers don’t leave dark spots on the skin when feathers are growing in, making for a clean, appealing carcass in the butcher’s case.

Delaware -continued

In spite of all the advantages of the Delaware, commercial producers switched to the white Cornish rock breed in the early to mid-50s and the Delaware became rare, almost to the point of extinction.

These birds mature quickly, produce jumbo eggs, are hardy and do well in all climates, yet in spite of that, they're on the heritage food's endangered food list.

In 1952, the Delaware breed was recognized for exhibition by acceptance into the [American Poultry Association's Standard of Perfection](#).

Not a lot more is known about them other than they were once prolific birds up and down the East coast and prized for their meat and their fast maturity. The U.S. chicken industry considered them a vital aspect of its production for decades as well and they're still an excellent breed for the small producer.

Class: All other breeds

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 8.5 lbs Hen 6.5 lb

Purpose: Meat Production

Egg Productivity: Good

Egg Color: Brown

Egg Size: Jumbo

Rarity: Endangered

Climate tolerance: All, and prefers free range

Personality: Calm, friendly, fast growing

Recognized Varieties:

Delaware Roosters



Dominique



Dominique Rooster (Left) and Dominique Hen and Rooster (Right)

If you ever wondered where the feathers used to stuff mattresses and pillows came from, look no farther. The Dominique, also known as Dominicker or Pilgrim Fowl, was once sought after for their feathers as much as their meat and eggs.

The Dominique originated in the United States during the Colonial era and is considered by many to be America's oldest breed of chicken.

It's believed to be a descendant of the chickens brought to New England from southern England during colonial times.

Dominiques have always been dual purpose poultry. By the 19th century, they were widely popular and were raised across the country, in a variety of climates.

Dominiques are quite distinctive, although they are often mistaken for a Barred Rock. The strongest indicators are the Comb, Plumage, and Colour. The difference in plumage and color is subtle, with Dominiques having more of a soft black on soft white color while the Barred Rock is more solid black on solid white. The Dominique also has a single, rose colored comb.

Dominique -continued

The Dominique also has a rose comb and a heavy plumage. The breed matures quickly, producing eggs at about six months of age.

After the Plymouth Rock breed was developed from the Dominiques in the 1870s, the Dominiques' popularity declined and by the 1950s, they almost became extinct.

In the 1970s, Dominiques were listed in "Critical" status by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy. There were less than 500 breeding birds in North America. Fortunately interest in the Dominique and other rare breeds began to grow and the breed has made something of a comeback. Although rare, and listed on the "heritage watch" list, they're less in danger of extinction, but are still rare.

The hens are calm and personable. The roosters are aggressive, and have been known to kill small cats, minks, snakes and other predators.

Class: United States

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 7-8 lbs Hen 5-6.5 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity:

Egg Color: Brown

Egg Size: Large

Rarity: Rare

Climate tolerance: All

Personality: Hens are calm and personable. Roosters are very aggressive, and have been known to kill snakes, small cats and even mink.

Recognized Varieties: N/A

Dominique Rooster with Single comb



Holland



Holland Rooster in Barred and White

Hollands are a rare breed of large chicken, originally from the United States. They're a dual purpose breed, favored for both their meat and eggs.

The breed started with birds from Holland, and then crossed with Leghorns (thus the great egg production), Lamonas (now quite rare) and Rhode Island Reds, all breeds known for their meat and egg production and quality as well.

Hollands were originally prized for their ability to lay white eggs, as dual purpose poultry generally lay brown eggs. In the 1930s white eggs were considered "better" or "finer" than the coarser looking brown eggs (there is no nutritional difference among white, brown, green or blue eggs) and white eggs were more marketable, bringing premium prices. White egg layers were not as hardy and tended to be too light weight to produce decent meat.

This prompted Rutgers Breeding Farms to set about producing a dual-purpose breed that would lay white eggs – resulting in the Holland.

Hollands have earned a good reputation as being ideally suited to farm conditions, particularly for small and hobby farmers, or for backyard farmers.

Holland -continued

They are good foragers with calm temperaments. With a slow to moderate growth rate, they're not really a production hen, but once grown they produce excellent eggs and meat. They're also strong foragers, meaning they can find their own food, or a significant portion of it, which also improves the flavor of the meat.

Farmers, particularly those with free range chickens, prefer the patterned look of the Holland because a chicken with a pattern is less likely to suffer predation than a white chicken. There are white Hollands, although much rarer than the barred.

These chickens have yellow skin and legs. That means they'll produce a carcass with the skin color most Americans favor.

Class: United States

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 8.5 lbs Hen 6.5 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: Good

Egg Color: White

Egg Size: Medium

Rarity: Rare

Climate tolerance: All climates

Personality: Hardy, good foragers

Recognized Varieties: Barred

Holland Chick





Iowa Blue



Iowa Blue Rooster (Left) and Hen (Right)

Legend has it a white Leghorn mated with Pheasant and the offspring became the Iowa Blue chicken. It's a fascinating legend, but highly unlikely.

Still, it's easy to see how the legend got started. They are one of the more striking New Heritage breeds. Iowa Blues have never been recognized officially by the American Poultry Association, American Bantam Association, or any other breed standard. That hasn't stopped their popularity among those who are dedicated to the breed.

Their numbers remain small, but are growing slowly, thanks to the efforts of breed enthusiasts. Hollands are still listed as "Study" by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy.

Iowa Blue -continued

That designation means there's conservation interest but that the breed lacks the documentation to be firmly categorized.

The breed is not really blue in terms of traditionally blue/slate colored, but the coloring in the feathers has a blue cast (see photo below).

The Iowa Blue is a good forager, and the roosters are very protective and skilled fighters—able to ward off predators like hawks and active flock guardians. They're very aware of their surroundings in free-range situations and unlikely to roam far from home. They make an excellent “homesteader” breed and are a good choice for a hobby farmer or small acreage farm.

Class: United States

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 7.5 lbs Hen 6 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: Good

Egg Color: Lightly tinted brown

Egg Size: Medium

Rarity: Rare

Climate tolerance: All climates

Personality: Hardy, good foragers, can be skittish, but roosters competent hawk fighters

Recognized Varieties: N/A





Java



Java Rooster Black (Left) and Mottled Java Hen (Right)

The Java originated in the United States, even though the name comes from the island of Java. The Java has its beginnings in chickens from an unknown Asian extraction, but it is American through and through. Like the American Game fowl, the Java is one of the oldest American poultry breeds.

Many other breeds have the Java to thank for their origins, but the Java itself is critically endangered.

A large bird, similar in appearance to the Jersey Giant, Javas have a very sturdy and muscular appearance. They're a dual purpose breed well suited for small scale farms and backyard flocks. Homesteaders find them particularly suitable for free range operations, but they do well in confinement too.

Compared to the commercial broilers grown by the poultry industry today, they're slow-growing, although most noncommercial producing farmers won't be bothered by a few extra months.

Java -continued

They produce a large, solid carcass when harvested, as well as a respectable amount of large, brown eggs before they reach harvest size.

This breed is known for being good foragers and for requiring less supplementary feed than most breeds who are allowed to range free.

They tolerate confinement, but do best as a free range bird. They're larger birds, but very docile in temperament, and hardy in inclement weather. They're well suited for all climates too.

Mottled Java Hen

Class: All other Breeds
Type: Large and Bantam
Size: Cock 9.5 lbs Hen 7.5 lbs
Purpose: Dual
Egg Productivity: Good
Egg Color: Creme to brown
Egg Size: Large
Rarity: Rare
Climate tolerance: All climates
Personality: Docile, friendly, calm
Recognized Varieties: Black, mottled and white





Jersey Giant



Jersey Giant Rooster (Left) Rooster and Hen (Right)

The Jersey Giant gets its name for a reason. It's a big bird. Roosters average 13 pounds, nearly twice the size of most breeds. Hens weigh in at a hefty 11 pounds, more than the weight of most roosters of any other breed. They are the largest purebred chicken breed in existence.

Named for their state of origin—New Jersey, as well as their size, these birds were pronounced a breed in 1922 by the APA (American Standard of Perfection). If they resemble Javas, it's because they have Java lineage in them.

Despite their size, which can be intimidating, the Jersey Giant is also a gentle giant, being exceptionally friendly, docile and good with pets, children and people in general. Even the roosters are rarely aggressive.

Once very popular with the meat industry for their high quality meat, they fell out of favor as other, faster maturing breeds replaced them. The intent of the originators was to replace the turkey as the primary poultry breed. Obviously that did not happen.

They do excel as a meat bird, both because of their size and their strong foraging skills.

Jersey Giant -continued

The young birds grow quickly, but it takes about nine months for them to fill out to a harvestable size.

If you're wondering if everything about them is larger, the answer is yes. It takes an average of 2 days longer to hatch out. They also tend to lay more eggs than other large breeds.

The APA standard for the Jersey Giant includes a gigantic frame, single comb, yellow skin color, relatively rapid maturity, good vigor, and fine foraging ability.

Jersey Giants went extinct in Australia, shortly after they were introduced during the 1950s, but poultry farmers still find them desirable, even if they're not widely available.

Class: All other Breeds

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 13 lbs Hen 11 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity:

Egg Color: Light creme to dark brown

Egg Size: Extra Large

Rarity: Rare

Climate tolerance: All climates

Personality: Mellow, friendly, docile

Recognized Varieties: Black, white or blue





Lamona



Lamona Rooster in a New York State Fair Poster and a rare photo of a modern Lamona

A senior poultryman for the Beltsville, Maryland, government station, Harry M. Lamon conceived the idea for the Lamona. Lamon blended the egg and meat producing characteristics from three established breeds Silver-Gray Dorkings, White Plymouth Rocks, and White Leghorns to get the Lamona, but not without some challenges, including the standards he set for the breed.

First, he said, the bird should be a prolific producer of large, white-shelled eggs, something unusual for a dual purpose hen as dual purpose birds usually lay brown eggs. He also wanted the breed to command top prices as a table fowl with fine meat qualities even after egg production slacked off.

Lamona -continued

At maturity roosters reach 8 pounds and hens 6 1/2 pounds. These birds should also have early development, fast growth, and good foraging skills. He was asking a lot, but he wasn't finished. His vision extended beyond just egg and meat production. Mr. Lamon wanted to create a breed to be distinctive in type and able to justify the pride of a true poultry fancier.

The Lamona, he envisioned, would have white plumage, yellow skin, and a yellow beak and legs. He also wanted it to have a larger body than the Leghorn, and a red earlobe so it wouldn't be mistaken for a leghorn.

It took him 16 years to get his unique bird, but Lamon succeeded. Even the Department of Agriculture regarded the development of this new breed as a stunning achievement and so on April 23, 1921 the Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace, approved the recommendation that the breed be named Lamona, in honor of nearly two decades of work by Harry Lamon. In 1933 the Lamona was admitted to the Standard of Perfection.

The breed was thought to be extinct until 2005 when one, and possibly two flocks were discovered by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy. The owners of each of these flocks requested to remain anonymous and neither is prepared to offer any stock at this time.

Class: All other Breeds

Type: Large

Size: Cock 7 lbs Hen 5.5 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: Excellent 250+

Egg Color: White

Egg Size: Large

Rarity: Almost extinct

Climate tolerance: All climates

Personality: Unknown

Recognized Varieties: N/A



New Hampshire



New Hampshire Hen (Left) and Rooster

The New Hampshire breed, like most with a state name, originated in the state of New Hampshire in the United States.

If the breed favors the Rhode Island Red (RIR), that's because it has its roots (genetic) in the Rhode Island breed. In fact, New Hampshire Reds are derived directly from Rhode Island Reds. As with any breed over the years they've changed so much from selective breeding that they've come to be recognized as a new breed.

This selective breeding of the RIR intensified the New Hampshire's early maturity and vigor, as well as excellent egg production traits. The mature birds are a rich chestnut red. Both male and females, both mature and the chicks, are somewhat lighter and have more even coloring than Rhode Island Reds.

New Hampshire -continued

The breed was recognized by the American Poultry Association (ABA) in 1935, so they're one of the "younger" breeds of chicken, although still one of the more popular breeds.

Although they do produce large eggs at a steady pace, these birds are most prized for their meat. They make good broilers or roasters.

New Hampshire Rooster

Class: All other Breeds

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 8.5 lbs Hen 6.5 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: Fair to good

Egg Color: Brown to dark brown

Egg Size: Large

Rarity: Common

Climate tolerance: All climates

Personality: Aggressive with other breeds, bears confinement well

Recognized Varieties: N/A





Plymouth Rock

(or Barred Rock, Rock)



The Plymouth Rock, whose owners and fans refer to as “Rocks or Barred Rocks (after their most popular color), is a dual-purpose, cold-hardy bird. It’s perfect for hobby farmers, people with backyard flocks and small acreages.

John C. Bennett (1804–1867) has been credited with either creating or popularizing the breed. As a breed they became very popular, very quickly and right until World War II, no breed was ever bred as extensively, or kept throughout the U.S. as the barred Plymouth Rock.

Not only was the breed physically attractive, it had (and still has) all the qualities of an outstanding farm chicken: hardiness, docility, broodiness, and excellent production of both eggs and meat.

Like all good egg layers, the Plymouth Rock hens have a deep, full abdomen. Their face is red with red ear lobes, a bright yellow beak, bay-colored eyes, and a single comb of moderate size. Their feathers are fairly loosely held but not so long as to easily tangle. The chicken's bottom feathers are soft and downy, like baby chicks feathers.

Plymouth Rock -continued

(or Barred Rock, Rock)

This is a calm breed, particularly suited for backyard or hobby farmers. They get along well with people and other animals such as pets. The hens are good mothers and easily go broody in the right environment.

They're a larger breed, with the roosters weighing up to 10 pounds and the hens up to 8 pounds. They lay large eggs, but do have decreased egg production in the winter. The name "Barred" is a breed designation as not all colors of Plymouth Rock chickens are barred.

Class: All other Breeds

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 9.5 lbs Hen 8 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity:

Egg Color: Light medium brown with a touch of pink

Egg Size: Large

Rarity:

Climate tolerance: All climates

Personality: Docile, friendly, calm and get along well with pets

Recognized Varieties: Barred, White, Buff, Partridge, Silver Penciled, Blue, Columbian and Black in the US and two additional colors, Light Barred, Dark Barred for Australia and most other countries



Three Day Old Plymouth Rock Chick and (Below) two Barred Rock Roosters





Rhode Island Red



Rhode Island Red Roosters

The very popular Rhode Island Red is a type of chickens originally bred using an infusion of Malay chicken bloodlines in Adamsville, Rhode Island. One of the most popular chicken breeds in America in their day, they were so beloved they became the official Rhode Island State bird.

Although they were once incredibly popular, like many popular breeds they declined as newer breeds came along. Like the small farmer (many of whom still raise Rhode Island Reds) they're a rare breed.

Thanks to those same small farmers, hobby farmers and backyard farmers the Rhode Island Red is making a comeback. Small flock owners recognize they're the perfect breed for limited acreage. They're the perfect package—they lay exceptionally well, they're extremely cold hardy, and hardy. Their meat is particularly tasty.

Rhode Island Red -continued

If you're not certain what type of bird to raise in your climate or plot of land, chances are, the Rhode Island Reds will do quite well.

The Rhode Island White, an entirely different breed and not just another color, has many if not all the same characteristics, but doesn't, for some reason, enjoy the same popularity.

Rhode Island Red Pullets and chicks



Class: All other Breeds

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 8.5 lbs Hen 6.5 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: Excellent 250-300 a year

Egg Color: Light Brown

Egg Size: Large to Jumbo

Rarity: Common

Climate tolerance: All climates but comb is very susceptible to frostbite

Personality: Docile, easygoing, calm, does well in confinement or free range

Recognized Varieties: Red



Rhode Island White



Rhode Island White Roosters

There are two breeds of Rhode Island chicken—the Rhode Island White and the Rhode Island Red. Both originated in Rhode Island in the United States. In spite of their similar names dissimilar coloring they are two distinct breeds. Even though the two breeds are different, efforts were taken to create a brick shaped body like the Rhode Island Red so that the White wouldn't be mistaken for a White Wyandotte or White Plymouth Rock breed.

The breed originated in 1888 through the efforts of Mr. J. Alonzo Jocoy of Peacedale, Rhode Island. He developed the breed by crossing White Wyandottes with Partridge Cochins and Rose Comb White Leghorns. Like many breeds with a Leghorn legacy, they are prolific egg layers.

The Rhode Island White was solidified as a breed by 1903 and first accepted in to the APA's (American Poultry Association) Standard of Perfection in 1922 during their national conference in Knoxville, Tennessee.

The breed is relatively rare, with only 3,000 birds known to have existed since 2003. Even though the Rhode Island Red was wildly popular, the Rhode Island White never gained the same popularity.

These bird are excellent egg layers, especially in winter; and their meat is also reported to be particularly moist, meaty and delicious. Their breasts are deep, full, and well rounded, making them excellent broilers or roasters.

Rhode Island White -continued

It's not easy being in the shadow of bird with a similar name and characteristics, but a different color, but the Rhode Island White still attracts many breeders and owners who appreciate it's incredible egg producing capabilities—some 240 to 300 a year.

Class: All other Breeds

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 8.5 lbs Hen 6.5 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: Excellent, 240 to 250 a year with some chickens producing more than 300 eggs a year

Egg Color: Creme tinted to brown

Egg Size: Large

Rarity: Relatively rare

Climate tolerance: All climates but comb is very susceptible to frostbite

Personality: Pleasant, easy going and friendly

Recognized Varieties: White





Winnebago

NO
PHOTOS
EXIST

Not much is known about the Winnebago chicken other than it's a precursor to the Wyandotte and gave the Golden Wyandotte its distinctive coloring.

In *Principles and Practice of Poultry Culture* (c. 1912) by John H. Robinson (USA), p. 408 the author states:

In "Wyandottes: Silver, Golden, Black, and White" by Joseph Wallace, 1891, Joseph McKeen of Omro, Wisconsin, is quoted as denying that the Winnebagos had been bred a long time in Wisconsin, and claiming that he originated them.

McKeen places the beginning of this work with the Winnebagos "a few years after" 1872 or 1873, and indicates that, at the time he crossed them with the Silver-Laced Wyandottes, they were in a very crude condition.

At about the time when McKeen said he was beginning to make the Winnebagos, the author, then a boy in Galena, Illinois, bought, in the market of that town, two hens called Winnebagos, of a redder ground colour than the early Golden Wyandottes and as well laced as the average



Winnebago -continued

Golden Wyandotte of fifteen to twenty years later. No doubt McKeen owed much more to such Winnebagos than he was willing to admit. "

Joseph McKeen of Wisconsin was the originator of the Golden Laced Wyandotte. In 1880 he supposedly crossed Silver Laced Wyandotte females with a large "Black Red" patterned fowl of unknown origin called the Winnebago. Although

Class: All other Breeds

Type: Large

Size: Cock 7 lbs Hen 6 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: E

Egg Color: L

Egg Size: Medium to Large

Rarity: Extinct

Climate tolerance: N/A

Personality: N/A

Recognized Varieties: N/A

Wyandotte



Top: Golden-Laced Wyandotte hen and chicks. Bottom Left: Silver-Laced Wyandotte hens. Bottom Right: Silver-Laced Wyandotte Rooster

Wyandotte -continued

The Wyandotte is a medium sized bird with a rose comb and clean legs and a most distinctive feather pattern with 17 known colors, although not all are recognized by the APA (American Poultry Association).

The eight colors recognized by the APA which are golden laced, silver laced, white, black, buff, Columbian, partridge and silver penciled.

In bantams the buff Columbian, black breasted red, blue red, lemon blue, barred, brown red, and birchen are recognized by the American Bantam Association. Some countries, like the PCGB (Poultry Club of Great Britain) recognize additional colors.

It's not just the feather patterns that make this breed a favorite among small acreage and hobby farmers. The personality of the Wyandotte has been compared to that of a family dog as they are extremely friendly and quickly learn to recognize, and respond to their owners, following them around, and gently clucking. They're an excellent breed to have for children, or the elderly or first time poultry farmers as they are very docile birds.

Class: All other Breeds

Type: Large and Bantam

Size: Cock 8.5 lbs Hen 6 lbs

Purpose: Dual

Egg Productivity: Good. 200+ a year

Egg Color: Brown or tinted

Egg Size: Medium to Large

Rarity: Recovering

Climate tolerance: All climates but comb is very susceptible to frostbite

Personality: Very friendly and docile

Recognized Varieties: N/A



Three-day old Wyandotte chick.



Resources



The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC), formerly the American Minor Breeds Conservancy, is a nonprofit organization focused on preserving and promoting rare breeds of livestock.

Founded in 1977 through the efforts of livestock breed enthusiasts concerned about the disappearance of many of the US's heritage livestock breeds, the ALBC was the pioneer livestock preservation organization in the United States, and remains a leading organization in that field.

It has initiated programs that have saved multiple breeds from extinction, and works closely with similar organizations in other countries, including Rare Breeds Canada. With 3,000 members, a staff of nine and a 19-member board of directors, the ALBC has an operating budget of almost half a million dollars.

The ALBC maintains a conservation priority list that divides endangered breeds of horses, asses, sheep, goats, cattle, rabbits, pigs and poultry into five categories based on population numbers and historical interest.

The organization has published several books, and works with breed registries and other groups on several aspects of breed preservation, including genetic testing, historical documentation, animal rescue and marketing.

Preservation of genetic material is of special interest to the ALBC, and for a time it maintained a gene bank that was later transferred to the United States Department of Agriculture. It has also developed and published several heritage definitions, including parameters for heritage breeds of cattle and poultry.

Resources -continued

In large part due to the efforts of the ALBC, heritage turkey populations have increased more than tenfold in little over a decade, and several breeds that once stood on the brink of extinction now maintain healthy populations.





The End.



NOTES: