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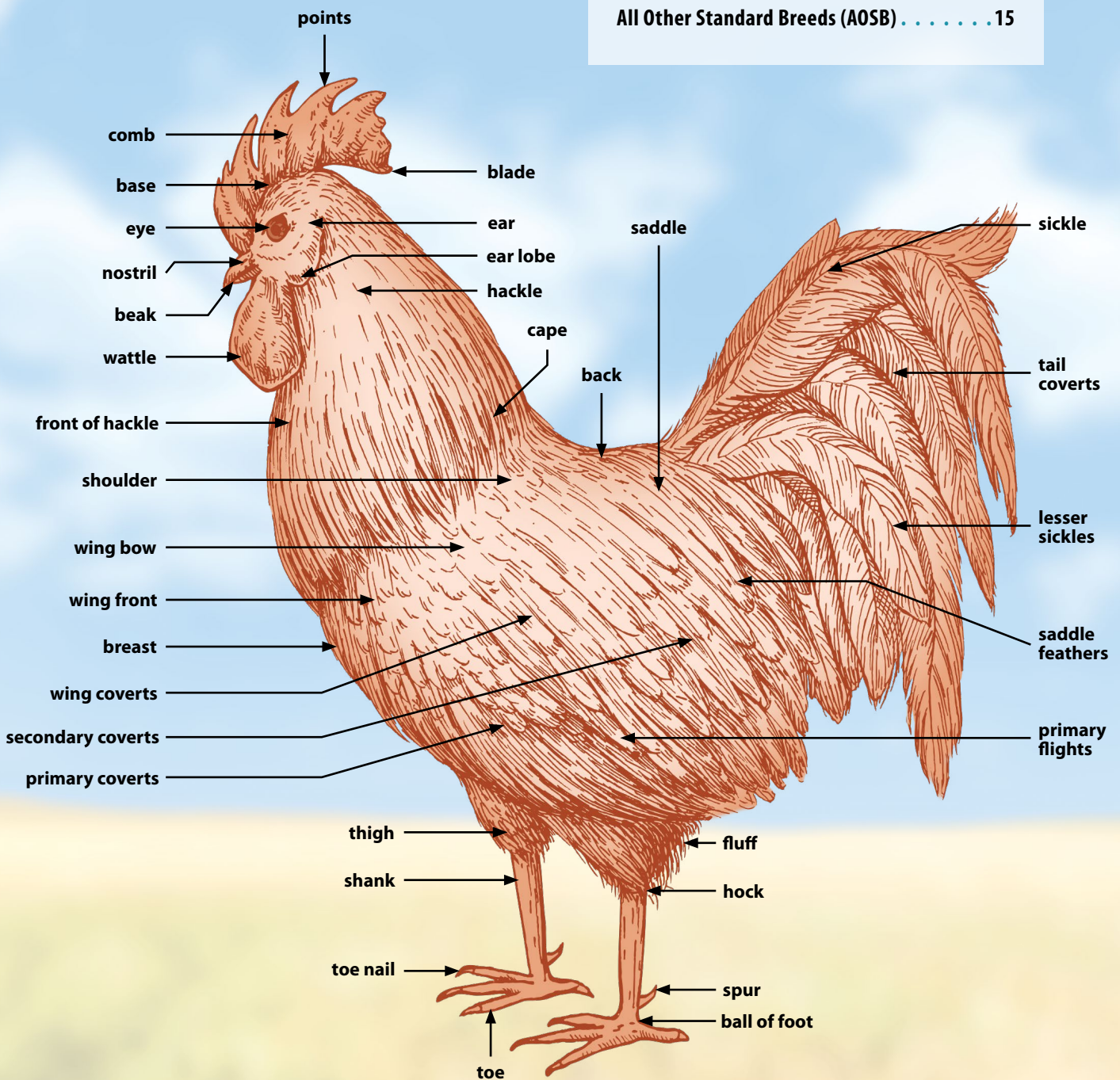
— *breeds & varieties* —

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Chickens exist in many colors, sizes, and shapes. There are more than 350 combinations of physical features. In order to be able to identify and classify each of these, we have established a system of designations known as classes, breeds, varieties, and strains.

A **class** is a group of breeds that share some common characteristics. In the United States, large fowl are grouped according to the geographic area where the breed was developed. The class names themselves indicate the region where the breeds originated, such as Asiatic, Mediterranean, and American. The breeds of chickens in this publication are arranged first according to their class, and then alphabetically by breed name within each class. Lesser-known classes, breeds, and varieties are at the end of the guide.

Breed refers to a group, each of which possesses a given set of physical features, such as body shape or type, skin color, carriage or station, number of toes, and feathered or nonfeathered shanks. If such an individual is mated to one of its own kind, these features should be passed on to their offspring.

A **variety** is a subdivision of a breed. Differentiating characteristics include plumage color, comb type,

and presence of a beard and muffs. Examples exist in almost all breeds. In Plymouth Rocks, there are several colors including Barred, White, Buff, and Partridge. In each case, the body shape and physical features should be identical. The color is the only difference, and each of these colors is a separate variety. Another example is the Leghorn breed, where most varieties exist in Single Comb and Rose Comb with all features other than comb type or color being identical.

Strains, or lines, are families or breeding populations possessing common traits. They may be subdivisions of a breed or variety or may even be systematic crosses. However, a strain shows a relationship more exacting than that for others of similar appearance. Strains are the products of one person's or one organization's breeding program. Many commercial strains exist. Such names as DeKalb, Hyline, Babcock, and Shaver are organizations that have bred specific strains of chickens for specific purposes. Most of the breeds and varieties we know in the United States today were developed between 1875 and 1925. During that time the emphasis throughout the poultry world was on breeds and varieties. Success was

measured in terms of the excellence of individual birds. As the commercial egg and poultry meat industries developed, the emphasis changed from the individual bird to the average for the entire flock. This caused some breeders to adopt intensive selection programs based on the performance of certain outstanding families, while others worked with breed crosses and crosses of strains within a given breed. Today the commercial poultry industry is based almost 100% on the strain approach. However, foundation breeders are constantly looking for additional material for gene pools. This must come from fanciers and hobbyists who maintain the various breeds for personal and esthetic reasons rather than strictly for the production of meat and eggs.

The American Poultry Association (APA) issues a book called the *American Standard of Perfection* (available at www.amerpoultryassn.com). This book contains a complete description of each of the more than 300 recognized breeds and varieties. Such things as size, shape, color, and physical features are described and illustrated in detail.

Common comb types



Single



Pea



Rose

Bantams

Bantams are the miniatures of the poultry world. The word *bantam* is the general term for the more than 350 kinds of true-breeding miniature chickens. They exist in almost every breed and variety that we see in large chickens. In addition, there are some kinds of bantams that have no large counterpart.

The term “banty” or “bantie” is often used to describe any nondescript, undersized chicken. This is misleading. Bantams are not just small mixed-breed chickens but are complete miniatures raised primarily for exhibition, a purpose for which they excel. The American Bantam Association (ABA) issues a book of standards for bantams and licenses persons qualified to judge them at exhibitions.

Bantams have the same requirements for shape, color, and physical features as do the large fowl. They should weigh about one-fifth of their larger counterparts. They should be referred to by the name of their breed and variety plus the word *bantam*, such as *Buff Cochin Bantams*.

Bantams are kept for their beauty, for exhibition, as pets, or as companion animals. Their wide array of shapes, colors, and personalities gives them broad appeal. However, they can also be quite useful for the production of eggs, and their meat is fine grained and nutritious. Often bantams can be kept in areas too small for regular chickens. They are, in fact, the “compacts” of the poultry business.

This publication will focus on only large fowl that have been recognized by the APA. For more information on

bantams, consult the books *Bantam Standard*, produced by the American Bantam Association (available at www.bantamclub.com/aba), and *Bantams*, produced by the University of Wisconsin-Extension (available at <https://learningstore.uwex.edu>).

Hatchery stock vs. breeder/show stock

This publication focuses on many of the Standard Breed chickens recognized by the APA. As you choose a breed, the goals you have for your birds may affect where you choose to obtain your stock. In general, there are two sources: hatchery-type breeders and exhibition breeders. The two groups typically have different views of their birds. Hatcheries' breeder stock is usually highly productive and will have many of the traits needed for the breed. However, a higher-production bird will be kept over a bird that might more closely fit the standard for the breed. On the flip side exhibition breeders generally will sacrifice production to meet the specifications for the breed standard.

Both groups are great sources for birds, but one type of source may be a better fit for your goals than the other.



Bantam fowl (top and bottom) and large fowl (center) have the same requirements for shape, color, and physical features.

American Class



Black Jersey Giant male

Jersey Giant

Varieties: Black, Blue, White.

Standard weights: Cock—13 pounds, hen—10 pounds, cockerel—11 pounds, pullet—8 pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: A very heavy meat-type fowl for heavy roaster and capon production. Fairly good layers. The dark-colored pigment from the shanks tends to move up into the edible portion of the carcass, which has hurt the Jersey Giant in commercial circles.

Origin: Developed in New Jersey in the late 1800s at which time there was a demand for heavy fowl for capon production, particularly for the New York market. Size was a prime consideration.

Characteristics: Jersey Giants are the largest breed in the American Class. They should be rugged, with an angular shape, single comb and black (with willowish tinge) shanks in the Black variety and dark willow shanks in the White variety. The Jersey Giant will go broody but is not the best choice for incubating and brooding because of their size. Their tendency to grow a big frame first and cover it with meat later makes them a poor fit for today's conditions. The meat yield is disappointing until they are 6 months or older. The Jersey Giant used to be more widespread, but no fowl with black plumage or dark or willow shanks has ever remained popular in this country for long. However, good specimens do have an appeal, mainly because of their size.



New Hampshire Red male

New Hampshire Red

Varieties: None.

Standard weights: Cock—8½ pounds, hen—6½ pounds, cockerel—7½ pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: A dual-purpose chicken, selected more for meat production than egg production. Medium heavy in weight, it dresses a nice, plump carcass as either a broiler or a roaster.

Origin: New Hampshires are a relatively new breed, having been admitted to the Standard in 1935. They represent a specialized selection out of the Rhode Island Red breed. By intensive selection for rapid growth, fast feathering, early maturity, and vigor, a different breed gradually emerged. This took place in the New England states—chiefly in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, from which it takes its name.

Characteristics: They possess a deep, broad body, grow feathers very rapidly, are prone to go broody, and make good mothers. Most pinfeathers are reddish buff in color and, therefore, do not detract from the carcass appearance very much. The color is a medium to light red and often fades in the sunshine. The comb is single and medium to large in size; in the females it often lops over a bit. These good, medium-sized meat chickens have fair egg-laying ability. Some strains lay eggs of a dark-brown shell color. New Hampshires are competitive and aggressive. They were initially used in the Chicken of Tomorrow contests, which led the way for the modern broiler industry.



Barred Plymouth Rock female

Varieties: Barred, Blue, Buff, Columbian, Partridge, Silver Penciled, White.

Standard weights: Cock—9½ pounds, hen—7½ pounds, cockerel—8 pounds, pullet—6 pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: Meat and eggs.



Single Comb Rhode Island Red male

Varieties: Rose Comb, Single Comb.

Standard weights: Cock—8½ pounds, hen—6½ pounds, cockerel—7½ pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Plymouth Rock

Origin: Developed in the United States in the mid to latter part of the 19th century. The barred variety was developed first. It was noted for its meaty back and birds with barred feathers brought a premium on many markets. Most of the other varieties were developed from crosses containing some of the same ancestral background as the barred variety. Early in its development, the name Plymouth Rock implied a barred bird, but as more varieties were developed, it became the designation for the breed.

Characteristics: Plymouth Rocks are a good general farm chicken. They are docile and normally will show broodiness. They possess a long, broad back; a moderately deep, full breast; and a single comb of

moderate size. Some strains are good layers while others are bred principally for meat. White Plymouth Rock females are used as the female side of most of the commercial broilers produced today. They usually make good mothers. Their feathers are fairly loosely held but not so long as to easily tangle. Generally, Plymouth Rocks are not extremely aggressive, and they tame quite easily. Some males and hens are big and active enough to be quite a problem if they become aggressive. Breeders should be aware of the standard weights and not select small or narrow birds for the breeding pen. Also note the wide, straight back. This is a definite breed characteristic and should be maintained. Common faults include shallow breast, high tails, narrow bodies, and small size.

Rhode Island Red

Use: A dual-purpose medium-heavy fowl; used more for egg production than meat production because of its dark-colored pinfeathers and its good rate of lay.

Origin: Developed in the New England states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, early flocks often had both single- and rose-combed individuals because of the influence of Malay blood. It was from the Malay that the Rhode Island Red got its deep color, strong constitution, and relatively hard feathers.

Characteristics: Rhode Island Reds are a good choice for the small flock owner. Relatively hardy, they are probably the best egg layers of the dual-purpose breeds. Reds handle marginal diets and poor housing conditions better than other breeds and still continue to produce eggs.

They are one of the breeds where exhibition qualities and production ability can be successfully combined in a single strain. Some "Red" males may be quite aggressive. They have rectangular, relatively long bodies, typically dark red in color. Avoid using medium- or brick-red females for breeding because this is not in keeping with the characteristics of the breed. Also, don't breed from undersized individuals or birds with black in their body feathers (called "smutt"). Black in the main tail and wing feathers is normal, however. Most Reds show broodiness, but this characteristic has been partially eliminated in some of the best egg production strains. The Rose Comb variety tends to be smaller but should be the same size as the Single Comb variety. The red color fades after long exposure to the sun.



Silver Laced Wyandotte female

Wyandotte

Varieties: Black, Blue, Buff, Columbian, Golden Laced, Partridge, Silver Laced, Silver Penciled, White.

Standard weights: Cock—8½ pounds, hen—6½ pounds, cockerel—7½ pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: Meat or eggs.

Origin: United States. The Silver Laced variety was developed in New York State and the others in the north and northeastern states in the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century.

Characteristics: Wyandottes are a good, medium-weight fowl for small family flocks kept under rugged conditions. Their rose combs do not freeze as easily as single combs and the hens make good mothers. Their attractive “curvy” shape, generally good disposition, and many attractive color patterns (varieties) make them a good choice for fanciers as well as farmers. Common faults include narrow backs, undersized individuals, and relatively poor hatches. Also, it is not uncommon to see single-combed offspring come from rose-combed parents. These single-combed descendants of Wyandottes should not be kept as breeders.



Buckeye female

Less popular breeds in the American Class

Buckeye: A dark red, muscular bird with pea comb, closely held feathers, and broad shoulders. Buckeyes produce a brown egg. No varieties.

Chantecler: Developed in Canada as a dual-purpose farm chicken, they have muscular bodies, small combs (pea) and wattles, and lay brown eggs. Varieties: Partridge, White.

Delaware: A nearly white, rapid-growing, dual-purpose fowl developed to figure into broiler crosses, with single comb and brown eggshells. No varieties.

Dominique: The oldest breed developed in the United States, they are indefinitely barred black and white, have rose combs, are relatively small, and have tightly held feathers. Dominiques are a medium-sized, dual-purpose breed that lays a brown egg. No varieties.

Holland: Developed in the 1930s and '40s in an attempt to provide a medium-sized fowl with good meat properties that laid white-shelled eggs. Varieties: Barred, White.

Java: A large-breed, angular bird that was a common farm chicken in the U.S. in the 19th century. Javas possess single combs and lay a brown egg. Varieties: Black, Mottled.

Lamona: Lamonas have single combs, appear short legged, and are one of the few chicken breeds with red earlobes that lay white-shelled eggs. Variety: White.

Rhode Island White: They are the white form of the Rhode Island Reds. A dual-purpose chicken that lays a brown to dark-brown egg. Variety: Rose Comb.



White Chantecler male

Asiatic Class



Light Brahma female

Brahma

Varieties: Buff, Dark, Light.

Standard weights: Cock—12 pounds, hen—9½ pounds, cockerel—10 pounds, pullet—8 pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: A very heavy fowl for the production of heavy roasters or capons. Fair egg layers.

Origin: The ancestry of the Brahma traces back to China, although much of their development took place in the U.S. between 1850 and 1890.

Characteristics: Good Brahmas are beautiful, stately birds. Their large size and gentle nature combined with intricate color patterns makes them favorites for the country estate. The Brahma's appearance in the showroom never fails to command the admiration of one and all. These qualities have made them a favorite with exhibitors and fanciers. Brahmas do go broody and are fairly good mothers. Their small comb and wattles, together with profuse feathering and well-feathered shanks and toes enable them to stand cold temperatures very well. The relatively slow rate of growth and long time required to reach maturity have caused Brahmas to be passed by as a commercial fowl.



Black Cochon female

Cochin

Varieties: Barred, Black, Blue, Brown, Buff, Golden Laced, Partridge, Silver Laced, White.

Standard weights: Cock—11 pounds, hen—8½ pounds, cockerel—9 pounds, pullet—7 pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: Mainly an ornamental fowl, but their ability as mothers is widely recognized and Cochins are frequently used as foster mothers for game birds and other species.

Origin: Cochins came originally from China but underwent considerable development in the U.S. and now are found and admired in many parts of the world.

Characteristics: Cochins are literally big, fluffy balls of feathers. They are mainly kept as an ornamental fowl and are well suited to close confinement. The profuse leg and foot feathering makes it desirable to confine Cochins on wet days and where yards become muddy. This keeps the birds from becoming mired or collecting balls of mud on their feet. They exhibit extremely persistent broodiness, are good mothers, and are intense layers for short periods of time. Because of their feathering, it is necessary to clip some of the feathers or resort to artificial insemination to obtain good rates of fertility.



Black Langshan male

Langshan

Varieties: Black, Blue, White.

Standard weights: Cock—9½ pounds, hen—7½ pounds, cockerel—8 pounds, pullet—6½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: A general-purpose fowl for the production of meat and eggs. The general shape of the Langshan makes them better suited to roaster and capon use than as fryers.

Origins: Langshans originated in China and are considered one of the oldest breeds.

Characteristics: Langshans enjoyed considerable popularity in the U.S. during the latter part of the 19th century. However, today they are primarily an exhibition fowl. They appear to be very tall, with long legs and tails carried at a high angle. They are active and quick. The black variety has a deep greenish sheen when viewed in the proper light. Many other breeds were created using Langshan blood in the foundation matings. They are a good general breed; females go broody and make good mothers. Their feet and legs are feathered but not as fully as the Cochins or Brahmas. Long legs and narrow body conformation leave much to be desired as a meat bird by today's standards.

English Class



Australorp male

Australorp

Variety: Black.

Standard weights: Cock—8½ pounds, hen—6½ pounds, cockerel—7½ pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: Generally a very good egg producer with a fairly meaty body of intermediate size.

Origin: The Australorp was developed in Australia from Black Orpington stock. It is smaller than the Orpington with a trimmer appearance.

Characteristics: Australorps have intense beetle-green sheen on the black birds, dark eyes, deep bodies, and are very active. They are one of the best dual-purpose fowls, having gained attention in the 1930s and '40s by being one side of the successful Austra-White cross. This cross of Australorp and White Leghorn became the successor to purebred breeds on many Midwestern farms. Broodiness was a problem with the cross, and some markets discounted the tinted eggs they laid. Therefore, it soon fell victim to the inbred hybrid crosses of Hyline and DeKalb. Australorps are good egg producers and hold the world's record for egg production with one hen having laid 364 eggs in 365 days under official Australian trapnest testing.



Dark Cornish female

Cornish

Varieties: Buff, Dark, White, White Laced Red.

Standard weights: Cock—10½ pounds, hen—8 pounds, cockerel—8½ pounds, pullet—6½ pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Light brown.

Use: Developed as the ultimate meat bird, the Cornish has contributed its genes to build the vast broiler industry of the world. Its muscle development and arrangement give excellent carcass shape.

Origin: Cornish were developed in the county of Cornwall, England, where they were known as “Indian Games.” They show the obvious influence of Malay and other oriental blood. They were prized for their large proportion of white meat and its fine texture.

Characteristics: The Cornish has a broad, well-muscled body. Its legs are of large diameter and widely spaced. The deep-set eyes, projecting

brows, and strong, slightly curved beak give the Cornish a rather cruel expression. Good Cornish are unique and impressive birds to view. The feathers are short and held closely to the body, and may show exposed areas of skin. Cornish need adequate protection during very cold weather as their feathers offer less insulation than can be found on most other chickens. Because of their short feathers and wide compact bodies, Cornish are deceptively heavy. Due to their shape, good Cornish often experience poor fertility and artificial mating may be an option. Cornish are movers and need space to exercise and develop their muscles. The old males get stiff in their legs if they do not receive sufficient exercise. The females normally go broody, but because of their very minimal feathers they can cover relatively few eggs. They are very protective mothers but are almost too active to be good brood hens.



Buff Orpington female

Orpington

Varieties: Black, Blue, Buff, White.

Standard weights: Cock—10 pounds, hen—8 pounds, cockerel—8½ pounds, pullet—7 pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Brown to dark brown.

Use: A heavy dual-purpose fowl for the production of both meat and eggs.

Origin: Orpingtons were developed in England at the town of Orpington in County Kent during the 1880s. They were brought to the U.S. in the 1890s and gained popularity very rapidly due to their excellence as a meat bird. As the commercial broiler and roaster market developed, the Orpington lost out partly because of its white skin.

Characteristics: Orpingtons are heavily but loosely feathered, appearing massive. Their feathering allows them to endure cold temperatures better than some other breeds. They exist only in solid colors, are at home on free range or in relatively confined situations, and are docile. Hens exhibit broodiness and generally make good mothers. Chicks are not very aggressive and are often the underdogs when several breeds are brooded together. They are a good general-use fowl.



Speckled Sussex female

Photo: Leela Olson

Sussex

Varieties: Light, Red, Speckled.

Standard weights: Cock—9 pounds, hen—7 pounds, cockerel—7½ pounds, pullet—6 pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: A general-purpose breed for producing meat and/or eggs.

Origin: Sussex originated in the county of Sussex, England, where they were prized as a table fowl more than 100 years ago. They continue to be a popular fowl in Great Britain, and the light variety has figured prominently in the development of many of their commercial strains. Sussex is one of the oldest breeds that is still with us today in fair numbers.

Characteristics: Sussex are alert, attractive, and good foragers.

They have rectangular bodies; the speckled variety is especially attractive with its multicolored plumage. Sussex go broody and make good mothers. They combine both exhibition and utility virtues but are more popular in Canada, England, and other parts of the world than in the U.S.

Less popular breeds in the English Class

Dorking: A good, general-purpose fowl for producing meat and eggs. It was developed for its especially fine-quality meat. Dorkings have five toes and are one of the breeds to have a red earlobe and lay a white-shelled egg. Varieties: Rose Comb: Cuckoo, White; Single Comb: Colored, Cuckoo, Red, Silver Grey.

Red Cap: A rare member of the English class, these are characterized by having a large rose comb. They are one of the few breeds with red earlobes that lay white-shelled eggs.

Mediterranean Class



Blue Andalusian female

Andalusian

Varieties: Blue.

Standard weights: Cock—7 pounds, hen—5½ pounds, cockerel—6 pounds, pullet—4½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: White.

Use: An ornamental fowl with fairly good egg-production potential.

Origin: Developed initially in Spain, the breed has undergone considerable development in England and the United States.

Characteristics: Andalusians are small, active, closely feathered birds that tend to be noisy and rarely go broody. Andalusians are a typical example of the unstable blue color we see in the poultry industry. It is the result of a cross of black and white. When two blues are mated, they produce offspring in the ratio of one black, two blues, and one white. These whites and blacks when mated together will produce mainly blues. Andalusians are beautiful when good, but the percentage of really good ones runs low in many flocks because of this color segregation. Hence, they are not widely bred and never in large numbers.



Rose Comb Light Brown Leghorn male

Leghorn

Varieties: Rose Comb: Black, Buff, Dark Brown, Light Brown, Silver, White; Single Comb: Black, Black Tailed Red, Buff, Columbian, Dark Brown, Golden, Light Brown, Red, Silver, White.

Standard weights: Cock—6 pounds, hen—4½ pounds, cockerel—5 pounds, pullet—4 pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: White.

Use: An egg-type chicken, Leghorns figured in the development of most of our modern egg-type strains.

Origin: Leghorns take their name from the city of Leghorn, Italy, where they are considered to have originated.

Characteristics: A small, spritely, noisy bird with great style, Leghorns like to move about. They are good foragers and can often glean much of their diet from ranging over fields and barnyards. Leghorns are capable of considerable flight and often roost in trees if given the opportunity. Leghorns and their descendants are the most numerous breed we have in the United States today. The Leghorn has relatively large head furnishings (comb and wattles) and is noted for egg production. Leghorns rarely go broody.



Single Comb Black Minorca female

Minorca

Varieties: Rose Comb: Black, White;
Single Comb: Black, Buff, White.

Standard weights (Single Comb Black): Cock—9 pounds, hen—7½ pounds, cockerel—7½ pounds, pullet—6½ pounds.

Standard weights (all others):
Cock—8 pounds, hen—6½ pounds, cockerel—6½ pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Chalky white.

Use: Developed for the production of very large chalk-white eggs, the Minorca is today principally an exhibition fowl.

Origin: Developed in the Mediterranean area where they take their name from an island off the coast of Spain. Development may have been as an offshoot of the Spanish breed.

Characteristics: The largest of the Mediterranean breeds, they are long, angular birds that appear larger than they are. They have long tails and large wide feathers closely held to narrow bodies. Minorcas have relatively large combs and wattles. Good Minorcas are stately, impressive birds and can give a fair return in eggs, although in recent years they have not been intensively selected for that purpose. They are rather poor meat fowl because of their narrow, angular bodies and slow growth. Minorcas rarely go broody, are very alert, and are fairly good foragers.



White Faced Black Spanish male

Photo: Mike Miller

White Faced Black Spanish

Varieties: None.

Standard weights: Cock—8 pounds, hen—6½ pounds, cockerel—6½ pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Chalky white.

Use: An egg production-type bird that has, in recent years, had very little selection for that purpose.

Origin: Coming from Spain, it arrived in the U.S. via the Caribbean Islands. Spanish are the oldest breed of chickens existent in the U.S. today. At one time known as "The Fowls of Seville," they were very popular in the South during the Colonial period.

Characteristics: The large area of snow-white skin surrounding the face and wattles makes this breed unique. Actually this is an overdeveloped earlobe. Its color offers a marked contrast with the black plumage and the red comb and wattles. They are considered non-broody and hold their feathers close to their body contours.

Spanish are active and noisy. Many individuals are below recommended weight, and at this time, most of the population is highly inbred.

Other breeds in the Mediterranean Class



Single Comb Acona female

Ancona: Resemble Leghorns in shape and size. They are small, active, alert, and black with white-tipped feathers evenly distributed. Anconas are noisy, good foragers, and considered non-broody. They were once a prime egg-producing breed but today are mainly kept as an ornamental fowl. Varieties: Single Comb, Rose Comb.

Sicilian Buttercup: A small, spritely breed from Sicily, their chief distinguishing feature is their cup-shaped comb. Sicilian Buttercups are non-broody, lay a fair number of small eggs, and are kept strictly as ornamental fowl.

Catalana: The Buff Catalana is a medium-sized bird noted for its hardiness. It is not well known in the United States but is widely distributed through South America. Catalanas come closer to being a dual-purpose breed than any of the other Mediterranean breeds.

Continental Class

The Continental Class is broken into three subgroups: Northern European (NE), Polish (P), and French (F).

Hamburg (NE)

Varieties: Black, Golden Penciled, Golden Spangled, Silver Penciled, Silver Spangled, White.

Standard weights: Cock—5 pounds, hen—4 pounds, cockerel—4 pounds, pullet—3½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: White.

Use: An ornamental fowl capable of laying fair numbers of relatively small eggs.

Origin: Hamburgs carry a German name but are generally considered to have originated in Holland.

Characteristics: Hamburgs are active, flighty birds. They are trim and stylish with delicate features, and are wild in nature. They forage well and are capable of flying long distances. Although good egg producers, their eggs are often very small.



Silver Spangled Hamburg male and female



Welsummer female

Photo: Rachel Turgasen

Welsummer (NE)

Varieties: None.

Standard weights: Cock—7 pounds, hen—6 pounds, cockerel—6 pounds, pullet—5 pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Dark brown.

Use: Welsummers are primarily a laying-type fowl and produce a large dark-brown egg.

Origin: This Northern European breed gets its name from the Welsum Village in Holland.

Characteristics: These birds have very distinctive markings and coloring. While they are considered to be in the light bird class, these are big-bodied birds that will lay a good number of dark-brown eggs. Welsummers are a non-sitting fowl.

Other Northern European breeds

Barnevelder: This breed was developed in the Barneveld region of Holland and has a distinctive double lacing in the plumage. These birds have yellow skin and are good layers of dark-brown eggs.

Campine: Existing in two varieties (Golden and Silver), the Campines are a fairly small, closely feathered breed with solid-colored hackles and barred bodies. They are chiefly an ornamental breed but will lay a fair number of white-shelled eggs and are non-broody. They are thought to have originated in Belgium.

Lakenvelder: An old German breed best known for its color pattern (black hackle and tail on a white body). They are quite small, non-broody, lay white-shelled eggs and are rather wild and flighty.



Non-Bearded White Crested Black Polish male

Polish (P)

Varieties: Bearded: Buff Laced, Golden, Silver, White; Non-Bearded: Black Crested White, Buff Laced, Golden, Silver, White, White Crested Black, White Crested Blue.

Standard weights: Cock—6 pounds, hen—4½ pounds, cockerel—5 pounds, pullet—4 pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: White.

Use: A strictly ornamental fowl.

Origin: Probably Eastern Europe, although they are so old that their history has been obscured.

Characteristics: Polish are an unusual and beautiful breed. They have a crest (some also possess a beard and muffs). They are small, tightly feathered birds and are fairly active despite restricted vision due to their large "head gear." They need plenty of space to avoid damaging each other's crests by picking. Ice forming in their crests from drinking water can be a problem in cold weather. Sometimes their crests restrict vision and cause them to be easily frightened.



Salmon Faverolle male

Faverolle (F)

Varieties: Salmon, White.

Standard weights: Cock—8 pounds, hen—6½ pounds, cockerel—7 pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Light brown.

Use: General-purpose fowl. Winter laying was one of the original purposes of the breed.

Origin: They were developed in Faverolles, France as a composite breed of Houdans, Dorkings, and Asiatic fowl.

Characteristics: An interesting breed that combines a beard and muffs with a single comb and feathered legs and feet. Faverolles are a medium-sized breed and fairly loosely feathered, giving them a rather large appearance. They also have a fifth toe on each foot and while chiefly ornamental, do possess some utility characteristics as well.

Houdan (F)

Varieties: Mottled, White.

Standard weights: Cock—8 pounds, hen—5½ pounds, cockerel—7 pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: White.

Use: An ornamental fowl that is also a good egg producer and fairly good as a meat bird.

Origin: Houdans originated in France where they enjoy a good reputation as a high-class table fowl.

Characteristics: Houdans possess a crest, beard, and muffs and have five toes on each foot. Their rectangular bodies are set on fairly short legs. They are one of the better ornamental breeds for general utility use. Because of their crest, they require plenty of space as well as feed and water containers that prevent them from getting the crest wet and dirty, especially in cold weather. Because of the fifth toe, baby Houdans often walk with a skipping gait.

Maran (F)

Varieties: Black Copper, Wheaten, White.

Standard weights: Cock—8 pounds, hen—6½ pounds, cockerel—7 pounds, pullet—5½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Very dark reddish brown.

Use: General-purpose fowl, mainly prized for extremely dark-colored eggshells. Also has a fine-textured meat.

Origin: Marans originated in France along the marshy areas along the Atlantic coast. It is named after the port town of Marans.

Characteristics: Marans are known for their egg color and size. The birds themselves are medium sized and have a rugged farm bird appearance. In the United States there have been two types of Marans imported: the French type that the APA recognizes, which have lightly feather shanks and toes, and the “English” type, which has a clean leg. For exhibition purposes the lack of feathering on the leg is considered a disqualification.

Other French breeds

Crevecoeur: A very rare, crested breed. Solid black in color, Crevecoeurs are strictly an ornamental fowl.

La Fleche: A very rare breed with a pair of spikes in place of a conventional comb. La Fleche are black, of medium size, and very active. They are strictly an ornamental fowl.

All Other Standard Breeds (AOSB)

The Continental Class is broken into three subgroups: Games (G), Orientals (O), and Miscellaneous (M).

Old English Game (G)

Varieties: Black, Black Breasted Red, Blue Breasted Red, Blue Golden Duckwing, Blue Silver Duckwing, Brown Red, Crele, Golden Duckwing, Lemon Blue, Red Pyle, Self Blue, Silver Duckwing, Spangled, White.

Standard weights: Cock—5 pounds, hen—4 pounds, cockerel—4 pounds, pullet—3½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: White or light tint.

Use: Old English Games are strictly an ornamental fowl.

Origin: Old English Games are the modern-day descendants of the ancient fighting cocks. They are associated with England, but their heritage is almost worldwide and they have changed little in shape or appearance in more than 1,000 years.

Characteristics: A small, tightly feathered bird, Old English Games are very hardy, extremely active, and very noisy. Old English have figured in the development of many other breeds. The mature cocks should be dubbed (have the comb and wattles removed) with a characteristic cut. This is in keeping with their heritage. Old English hens usually show broodiness but are so small and aggressive as well as defensive that they are not always the best choice as mothers. Old English are capable of considerable flight and may revert to a feral (wild) state in some areas. They are the domestic breed most similar to the wild jungle fowl in appearance.



Black Breasted Red Old English Game male



Black Modern Game male

Modern Game (G)

Varieties: Birchen, Black, Black Breasted Red, Brown Red, Golden Duckwing, Red Pyle, Silver Duckwing, Wheaten, White.

Standard weights: Cock—6 pounds, hen—4½ pounds, cockerel—5 pounds, pullet—4 pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: White or light tint.

Use: A strictly ornamental fowl.

Origin: Modern Games were developed in Great Britain.

Characteristics: A tightly feathered bird with long legs and neck, which give it a tall, slender appearance. The males of the Modern Games should have their combs and wattles removed to enhance their long, slim shape. The feathers of Modern Games should be short, hard, and held very close to their bodies. They do not stand cold weather well because of their short feathers and need plenty of exercise to maintain muscle tone.

Malay (O)

Varieties: Black, Black Breasted Red, Red Pyle, Spangled, Wheaten, White.

Standard weights: Cock—9 pounds, hen—7 pounds, cockerel—7 pounds, pullet—5 pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: Brown.

Use: Strictly an ornamental fowl.

Origin: A very old breed coming from Asia, they have changed little in modern times.

Characteristics: Malays are very tall and appear bold and perhaps cruel due to their projecting eyebrows. They are closely feathered with short feathers and carry their bodies inclined upward with tail low or drooping. They are rugged and have a reputation for vigor and long life. They require exercise to maintain muscle tone and hardness of feather. Most hens will go broody but are not a good choice because their long legs don't fit easily in a nest.



Black Sumatra male

Sumatra (O)

Varieties: Black, Blue.

Standard weights: Cock—5 pounds, hen—4 pounds, cockerel—4 pounds, pullet—3½ pounds.

Skin color: Yellow.

Eggshell color: White or light tint.

Use: Strictly an ornamental fowl.

Origin: They come from the island of Sumatra.

Characteristics: Sumatras are a distinctive fowl that look less like domestic poultry than other chickens. They have rather long tails carried low enough to appear drooping. They have multiple spurs on each leg, dark purple faces, and a high degree of greenish luster on jet-black plumage.



Wheaten Shamo female

Other Oriental breeds

Aseel: This is one of the older breeds and originates from India. These birds have an upright carriage. They are tightly feathered and heavily muscled birds. Aseels grow slowly and can be very aggressive with other birds, especially in confined areas. They lay a light-brown egg and come in three varieties: Black Breasted Red, Dark, Spangled, Wheaten, White.

Cubalaya: A hardy bird developed in Cuba, they resemble a Sumatra in shape. Cubalayayas exist in three varieties: Black, Black Breasted Red, and White. They should be considered a strictly ornamental fowl.

Phoenix: These are an ornamental fowl with extremely long tail feathers, and actually have multiple feathers in the tail area. These birds are descendants of the Japanese Onagadori. Phoenix

requires special management and facilities to maintain and accommodate the tail feathers. Varieties: Silver, Golden.

Shamo: The Shamo, like the Modern Game, is very tall—almost vertical—in stanchion and muscular. They have very short, hard, tight feathers and a very ancient expression. Shamo is the foundation for many of the oriental/Thai fowl. Varieties include Black, Black Breasted Red, Dark, and Wheaten.

Yokohama: This is another long-tailed breed with many of the same characteristics as the Phoenix. However, the Yokohama is more pheasant-like in its appearance and has more feather length extending into the saddle area. They come in Red Shoulder and White varieties.

Ameraucana (M)

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

Standard weights: Cock—6½ pounds, hen—5½ pounds, cockerel—5½ pounds, pullet—4½ pounds.

Skin color: White.

Eggshell color: Blue/pastel.

Use: General-purpose fowl for the production of colored eggs and meat quality.

Origin: This relatively new breed was developed in the United States in the 1970s. They were developed from the Araucanas imported in the 1930s. These birds have a nice small pea comb and have beards and muffs.



Blue Ameraucana male

Note that many hatcheries will sell Ameraucanas/Easter eggers. Easter eggers are a cross of Ameraucanas and another breed to get the desired egg color. Leg color is important on this breed, and yellow soles on the feet are considered a disqualification.



White Ameraucana female

Other miscellaneous breeds

Sultan: Sultans come to us from Turkey. They are strictly an ornamental fowl of very distinctive appearance. They are a white bird with a large crest, muffs, and beard, together with profuse feathering of the feet and legs.

Naked Neck: The Transylvania Naked Neck is often called Turken. Some people think it is a cross between a chicken and a turkey because of the unfeathered area on the neck. This skin turns red when exposed to the sun, further paralleling the turkey. However, this is actually the result of a single gene that affects the arrangement of feather-growing tracts over the chicken's body. It can be easily introduced into any breed. Naked Necks have no feathers on a broad band between the shoulders and the base of the skull. They also have a reduced number of feathers on their bodies, but this is not evident until the bird is handled. They should be given protection from extremely cold temperatures

as they have far less insulation than their normally feathered cousins. This characteristic is a novel feature that does not detract from the utility of the bird. Varieties: Black, Buff, Red, White.

Araucana: These fowls were discovered in South America. A few were brought to the U.S. but have been crossed with other chickens so much so that characteristics such as size and shape were dispersed. The trait of laying blue or greenish eggs persisted, and now breeders are attempting to standardize the physical makeup of the population and gain them recognition as a breed. Some of the Araucanas were rumpless and possessed some interesting ear tufts. Probably at some time in the future, these fowls will be developed into an interesting breed with both economic and ornamental attributes. Recognized varieties include Black, Black Breasted Red, Golden Duckwing, Silver Duckwing, and White.



Black Naked Neck male



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