



FLYTE SO FANCY
THE HEART OF QUALITY

Choosing Your Chickens, Picking Your Poultry or Finding Your Fowl

Chickens come in all shapes, sizes and nearly every colour of the rainbow, so choosing the perfect poultry can be a tricky thing to do. When deciding, you should ask yourself the fundamental question, what are you looking for in a bird? If it is eggs (and lots of them) then it's probably best to start with a hybrid. If it's for exhibiting or as a pet, than perhaps one of the more unusual Polands or docile Pekins would be best for you. Or if the lawn and flowerbeds are your pride and joy, breeds such as a Brahma which are less likely to dig due to their voluptuous pantaloons might be the hen for you.

Pure Breeds are chickens which fulfil a list of features specific to that bird. The best way to think about Pure Breeds in chickens is the same as a you would Pure Breed dog.

Hybrids are the more commonly known of chickens. Typically more robust, hybrids are a great option if you are new to chicken keeping as they are often more docile, excellent egg producers and rarely do they go broody.

Following is a selection of some of the more popular breeds, which contains a few of our old favourites too.



Arucana

Of Spanish/South American origin they are the only breed to have tufts of feathers over their ears. They lay lots of blue, strong shelled eggs, the colour goes all the way through the shell. All blue egg layers have some Arucana in their ancestry i.e. if you cross an Arucana with a Maran, you get a green/blue egg. This hen will lay somewhere between 170 to 200 eggs a year. Possessing a Tudor style ruff around the face, this hen is lovely to look at, available in many colours but particularly popular in Lavender. These bird comes as both a large fowl or a bantam and its eggs are relatively large compared with its size.



Barnevelder

A large/ medium sized hen it is originally a Dutch bird from Barnvelde. An easy to care for and friendly bird it is particularly attractive in its silver or gold laced form. Available as a large fowl or bantam they are poor flyer due to being a heavy bird are easily contained within a medium height fence. These hens also lay an attractive dark brown egg, sometimes with speckles and you can expect somewhere between 180 to 200 eggs per annum. This breed is susceptible to Marek's disease and so should always be bought from vaccinated stock.



FLYTE SO FANCY
THE HEART OF QUALITY



Brahma

The King of Chickens, the Brahma are a very large chicken, which doesn't always make them suitable for small gardens, although they do also come as bantams. A huge placid bird of Asiatic origin, they are from the Brahmaputra region of India where they were originally known as Grey Chittagongs. Their origins are from jungle fowl and Cochins.

With their famous feathered skirts, they are a primarily an ornamental bird, both calm and friendly and rarely make much mess due to their feathery feet. Their feathered feet can make them susceptible to Scaleg leg, however the huge underskirt of feathers makes them great broody hens. As non-flyers they are easily contained and are easily handled, making them a good hen for children.

They can lay around 120 eggs a year of a medium size, which are often lightly tinted in shade and appearance.



Cochin

A sedate and ornamental bird, with its imposing colours and feathered feet it was originally a utility bird bred for meat and eggs. A heavy bird, soft feathered and with fluffy feet they do not fly well and neither do they do much damage to gardens. Laying roughly 150 to 200 medium sized eggs a year the colours can go from cream to light brown. They are a beautiful large fowl and an excellent broody due to their big duvet of feathers.



Dorking

The Dorking is an old utility breed for meat and eggs, introduced to this country way back by the Romans. A table bird, it was heavily produced around Dorking in the 19th Century, giving it its name, it is easily discernible by its five toed feet. Available as a fowl or bantam, they are a docile bird but do like to free range. The large single combs can suffer from frost damage in the winter, so precautions such as Vaseline should be taken. The cock birds can grow very large, but the hens make excellent mothers laying around 150 to 200 good sized eggs.



Dutch Bantam

This is a true bantam breed, there are no large fowls available. They are an upright and jaunty breed with a short back. The hens tails are a lovely "hand of cards" of feathers. The cock bird is like a large rooster in miniature, in particular he has distinctive white ears. The males can be vocal and somewhat feisty, however due to their size little damage is done.

A breed that is easy to tame, they breed well, produce small white eggs and make great mother hens.



Black Rock

A hybrid of a Rhode Island Red and a Barred Plymouth Rock, it has been bred with free range egg production especially in mind. It is a docile and hardy bird, its thick close plumage is both well proofed against the weather and also mite resistant. It can lay 280+ brown eggs a year and is both long lived and has a long egg production period. They are however known to scratch and dig a lot.

With it's black colouring and fantastic cooper neck markings it is distinctive bird.



Bluebell

A lovely placid blue/grey French Maran hybrid bird, this hen is able to lay around 240 large brown eggs a year. A docile and friendly birds, ideal for free ranging, its beautiful colouring and decoration make it a gorgeous addition to any flock



Speckledy

This is a modern hybrid of Rhode Island Red and Maran descent. Bred specifically for free ranging, it has great feathering and natural foraging ability. Non-aggressive and sociable these birds lay dark brown eggs. Dependable layers of up to 260+ eggs a years they can also make great foster mums.



White Star

The White Star is a hybrid of Dutch origin and is a small and flighty bird. It's vivid red comb comes from it originating from Leghorn stock. This bird is a frugal eater and puts all it energy into laying. As such you can get as many as 320 white eggs a year, however it is not as long lived as other sorts.



FLYTE SO FANCY
THE HEART OF QUALITY



Calder Ranger

A brown hybrid bird, typical of a free-range farm. They will produce as many as 300 to 310 eggs a year. They can also be kept inside if wanted, where egg production could be slightly higher.



Cream Legbar

This is an autosexing breed of hybrid. This means you can sex the chicks by their head colour, male having rougher spots of colour on their heads which spreads across the body. They come from a crossing of Brown Leghorns, Barred Plymouth Rocks and Arucana in the 1930's. With its magnificent little crest atop its head, they are an inquisitive and often times noisy bird. The eggs come in shades of blue through green and this hen can lay 180+ a year. The hens are also superb mothers and will foster well.



Marans

This is a poultry breed famed for the deep glossy brown colour of its eggs. Good pure breed Marans can be hard to find as they have often been mixed with other breeds to give autosexing chicks.

Marans were originally a regional French breed and are a medium to large sized hen. Slow growing and being a of a utility breed the cockerels make great Coq au Vin.

They are a docile bird, that forages well and are quite disease resistant. Available as a large fowl or bantam they lay 150+ large brown eggs per year.



Marsh Daisy

Originating in Lancashire in the 19th Century, the birds rose comb is said to resemble the flower of the marsh daisy. A lightweight slow growing and frugal eater of a fowl, it is however a hardy bird that loves free ranging and forages well. It is a calm bird but can fly well. Its rose comb, green legs and attractive colouring all combine to produce a striking bird.

The eggs are fairly small and lightly tinted and you can expect somewhere in the region of 100 to 150 a year.



Orpington

Originally bred to provide meat and eggs as a utility bird. They were used commercially at one time as brooding hens due to their habit of going broody often.

Soft feathered birds they can go soggy very quickly and do not prosper in damp or muddy conditions. A tame and easily handled bird, even the cockerels are quite docile. Orpingtons lay light brown eggs, around 170 to 200 a year, even continuing to lay throughout winter. Female chicks feather before the males and this is useful commercially for the sexing of the bird.



Old English Game

Descended from the old pit game birds used for cock fighting, they are noisy, active, intolerant of other birds and flighty.

Cockerels can also not be kept together as they will fight to the death. They are a hardy breed that do not like confinement. They are good fliers and given the chance will roost in trees. Available in many colours and both large bird and bantam, the mothers make good brooders.

You can expect 100 to 150 medium sized cream tinted eggs a year from this breed.



Pekin

An ornamental True Bantam, this cuddly ball of feathers can be incredibly tame, especially if there is a treat involved. They lay few eggs themselves, roughly 95 small cream a year and can go broody easily, but are great mothers. This makes them very useful for hatching the eggs of other hens. Long skirts of feathers means they need somewhere to dry off.

These birds were originally known as Cochin Bantams but are now a separate breed. They are great for gardens causing hardly any damage, however they do not do well in wet or muddy conditions owing to their fluffy underskirts. An important characteristic for the breed is that the body is centred forwards with the head lower than the tail. They are a docile breed and can be handled by children with ease, the cockerel however will still be defensive of the hens, as his job.



FLYTE SO FANCY
THE HEART OF QUALITY



Poland

A European breed with a distinguishing “top hat” of feathers, it originally came from the Netherlands and both large fowl or bantams are available. As well as their distinctive head dress they have a bulbous comb called a protuberance.

Although problems like lice can be more common and extra care has to be taken with feeders and drinkers to make sure the crest isn't soiled, it can however be cropped or tied up out of the way. They are easily tamed but can be timid owing to their limited vision due to their crests. They do not like cold or damp conditions and rarely go broody. They lay a white medium sized egg.



Rhode Island Red

One of the most popular breeds of all time, its brown eggs are a favourite for the kitchen, expect up to 300 a year. A utility breed, they enjoy free ranging and are particularly hardy after being bred to withstand harsh New England winters. As a result they are the basis for many modern day hybrid hens. Available as a large fowl or a bantam they can be short tempered with other birds but are easily tamed and friendly to humans. The cock birds are large and can be aggressive, but its deep red plumage and large egg production make it an ideal beginner bird.



Silkie

Available as both a bantam and large fowl, it has fluffy as opposed to feathery plumage, dark skin, blue earlobes and five toes to each foot. Due to its docile temperament it makes an excellent broody bird as well as a mother to its own chicks. Owing to their unusual plumage they are not hardy, they suffer from both cold and damp and can go downhill very quickly if not fussed over. They are also susceptible to being bullied by other hens as they do not particularly stand up for themselves. They can lay roughly 100 eggs a year of a medium to small size and cream in colour, however this is often interrupted by them going broody.



Sussex

This is a dual purpose utility breed originating in England from Roman times. Available as a large fowl or bantam, the breed also comes in many different colours.

These birds are alert but docile and highly adaptable, happily free ranging they are great foragers but will also thrive in confined conditions. They are also incredibly tame, loving people. The cock birds are large and aggressive, tasty too having been used as a basis for the modern hybrid broiler birds. The hens go broody and make great mothers. They lay 240 to 260 medium/large brown eggs a year.



FLYTE SO FANCY
THE HEART OF QUALITY



Welssummer

Originally from the village of Wellsumm in the Netherlands this bird comes in both a bantam or a large fowl. Technically it is a light breed however it is a good sized bird that is a good forager and loves free ranging. The hen is friendly and easily handled and if desired, can be kept in confinement. The hens do go broody however do not make good mothers. The chicks of this breed are autosexing.

It lays large dark eggs, around 160 a year, some can be mottled with brown spots.



Wyandotte

Originating in the United States, this breed is available as both a bantam or large fowl. A medium sized bird with a rose comb, it will be happy both free ranging or will thrive in run conditions. They are a vocal bird but also very, very friendly. Wyandotte hens make very good mothers but almost always go broody once her clutch is laid, they require extra care during this time as they can stay inside all the time, even to the point of not feeding. They lay between 200 to 240 eggs per year of a pale brown or tan colour.



Silver Spangled Hamburgs

Laying china white eggs, Hamburgs are a rarer breed regarded as a good quality egg producer. An active bird, capable of flight, they are a hardy bird which comes in many different varieties. The cockerels can be noisy and aggressive, however as a breed they enjoy free ranging and foraging over large areas. Available as either a bantam or large fowl, they come in several colours. They are a typical central European bird, frugal eaters and self sufficient.

If you know of a friendly reliable breeder, or are looking for one in your area, why not contribute to, or look at our Poultry Breeder Directory. All the names on there come from local customer recommendation. Sometimes word of mouth is the best way to find a reliable breeder of poultry. Otherwise poultry auctions, advertisements in the paper, the British Hen Welfare Trust (which is a great way to re-house ex-battery hens) are all ways that you can find and pick your poultry pals. Novice keepers should be cautious when shopping at auctions, being aware of the disease risk that can come with purchasing hens at an auction.