

Selecting **LAYING BREEDS** for Backyard Poultry

Gregory S. Archer*

When selecting laying hens for your backyard, you need to consider what it is that you expect from your chickens. Do you want to raise poultry as a business to make a profit? Do you want to produce eggs to reduce your grocery bill? Or, do you want poultry in your back yard just for your own use and satisfaction?

If you want to raise poultry for profit or for eggs, egg-laying ability, space needs, and broodiness will be important factors to consider. You will want birds that lay many eggs to maximize your efficiency. Having birds that require less space or do well in cages may also be important if you plan to have a large flock. Finally, choosing birds that are not usually broody will minimize the time your birds are not laying eggs.

If you want birds only for your own use, the factors mentioned above may be less important. If your goal is to raise birds (in a way you find acceptable) to produce food for yourself, and maximum production numbers are not important, the number of breeds that can meet your needs increases dramatically. In this case, you may also be selecting birds based on their appearance. Chickens vary in the color and pattern of their feathers, combs, eggs, and even size. Regardless of why you want to have chickens, it is important to



select birds that will fit your needs and do well in your environment.

The following terms are important to understand as you select the breed that will best fit your situation.

Broodiness: readiness to brood eggs that is characterized by cessation of laying and by marked changes in behavior and physiology

Bantam: any of numerous small domestic fowls that are often miniature versions of the standard breeds

Popular breeds for backyard egg production can be found on the following pages.

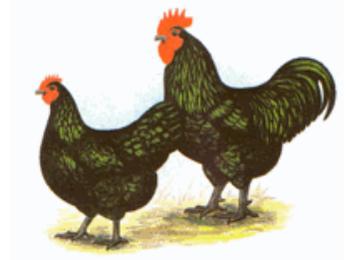
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Ameraucana



Egg Production	Medium
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	Medium
Bantam available	No
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Blue

Australorp



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	Medium
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Ancona



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	White

Brahma



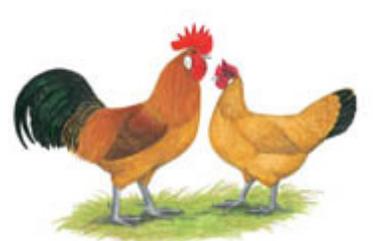
Egg Production	Medium
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Andalusian



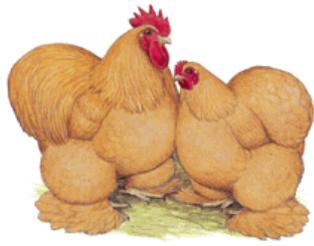
Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Medium
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	No
Climate	Any
Egg Color	White

Catalana



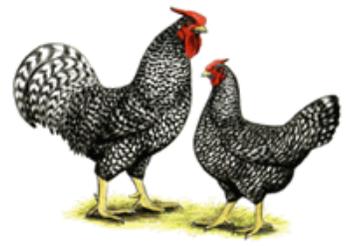
Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Medium
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	No
Climate	Does well in hotter climates
Egg Color	White

Chochin



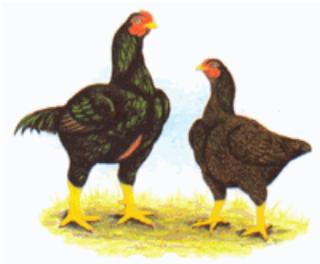
Egg Production	Medium
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	High
Space needs	Medium
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Does well in colder climates
Egg Color	Brown

Dominique



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	High
Bantam available	No
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Cornish



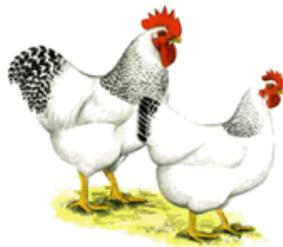
Egg Production	Low
Aggressiveness	High
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Hamburg



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	White

Delaware



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	Medium
Bantam available	No
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Java



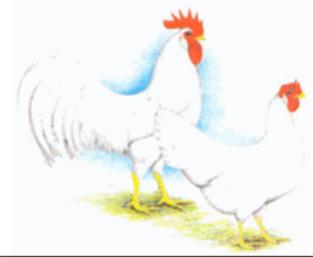
Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Jersey Giant



Egg Production	Medium
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	No
Climate	Does well in colder climates
Egg Color	Brown

Leghorn



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Medium
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	Low-Cage; High-Free range
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	White

La Fleche



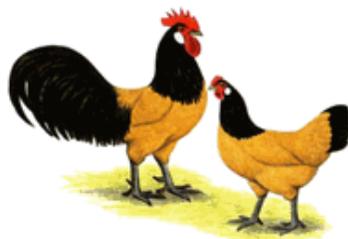
Egg Production	Medium
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Does well in hotter climates
Egg Color	White

Marans



Egg Production	Medium
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	Medium
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Does well in colder climates
Egg Color	Brown

Lakenvelder



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	White

Minorca



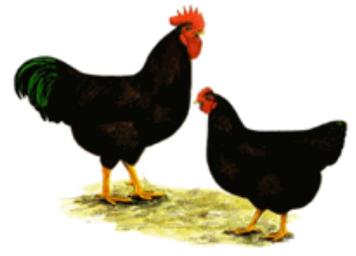
Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Medium
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Does well in hot climates
Egg Color	White

New Hampshire Red



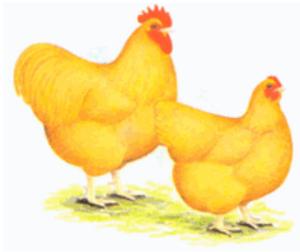
Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	High
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Rhode Island Red



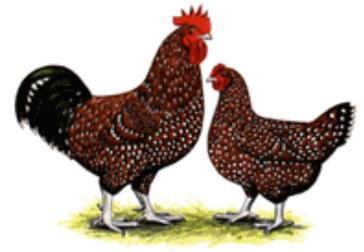
Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Medium
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Orpington



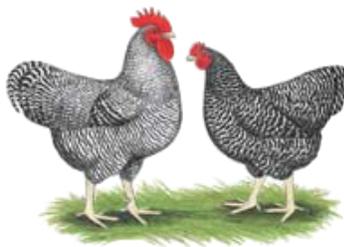
Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	High
Space needs	Medium
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Sussex



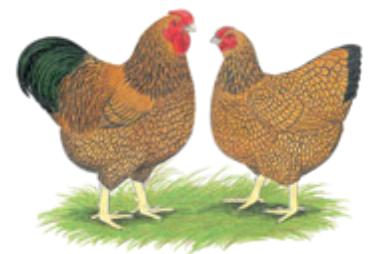
Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Medium
Space needs	Medium
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	White

Plymouth Rocks



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	Low
Space needs	Medium
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Wyandotte



Egg Production	High
Aggressiveness	Low
Broodiness	High
Space needs	High
Bantam available	Yes
Climate	Any
Egg Color	Brown

Hatcheries to obtain birds from include:

Cackle Hatchery

PO Box 529
Lebanon, MO 65536
(417) 532-4581
cacklehatchery.com

Hoffman Hatchery Inc.

P.O. Box 129
Gratz, PA 17030
(717) 365-3694
www.hoffmanhatchery.com

Ideal Poultry

PO Box 591
Cameron, TX 76520
(254) 679-6677
www.ideal-poultry.com

Meyer Hatchery

626 State Route 89
Polk, OH 44866
(888)568-9755
www.meyerhatchery.com

Murray McMurray Hatchery

P.O. Box 458
191 Closz Drive
Webster City, Iowa 50595
(800) 454-3280
www.mcmurrayhatchery.com

Ridgway Hatcheries, Inc.

615 North High Street Box 306
Larue, Ohio 43332
(740) 499-2163
ridgwayhatchery.com

Stromberg's Chicks and Game Birds

100 York Street
P.O. Box 400
Pine River, MN 56474
(800) 720-1134
www.strombergschickens.com

Welp Hatchery

PO BOX 77
Bancroft, Iowa 50517
(800) 458-4473
www.welphatchery.com

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