

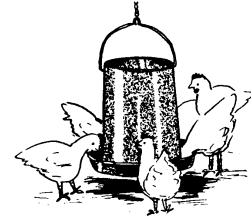


The University of Georgia

**Cooperative Extension Service**

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## ***BACKYARD FLOCK TIP . . .***

### **CHOOSING THE BEST CHICKEN BREED FOR YOUR FLOCK**



When establishing a backyard flock it is important to choose the best breed of chicken to meet your goals whether that is egg production, meat production, dual purpose, or exhibition/ornamental. Chicken breeds differ in their production abilities, and it is important to take this into consideration when choosing a breed for your backyard flock. For example, if you choose leghorn varieties, then there should be an abundance of eggs produced, but if meat is your objective then you will be greatly disappointed.

There are approximately 105 chicken breeds and 8 turkey breeds recognized by the American Poultry Association (APA). Some breeds are better egg producers than others, while some are better meat producers. Sometimes flocks can be kept purely for fun, and in that case an ornamental breed may be of interest. The APA publishes a book called the "*American Standard of Perfection*" which contains descriptions for all the recognized purebred fowl. While the APA recognizes bantam breeds, there is another organization, the American Bantam Association (ABA) which specializes in bantam chickens. The ABA publishes the "*Bantam Standard*" which gives descriptions of 57 breeds, 85 plumage patterns and more than 400 varieties of bantam chickens and ducks. While most of the time it appears that the groups recognize the same bantam varieties, there is the possibility that one group may recognize a color variety that the other has not. In addition to the breed recognized by APA and ABA, there are chickens that

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are hybrids of these breeds and have not been accepted into the APA *Standard of Perfection*. Additional sources of information on poultry breeds can be located at the following websites:

American Poultry Association

[amerpoultryassn.com](http://amerpoultryassn.com)

American Bantam Association

<http://www.bantamclub.com/>

Oklahoma State University Poultry Breeds website

<http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/poultry/>

An internet source with pictures of many of the breeds of chickens, turkeys and water fowl can be found at the FeatherSite – The Poultry Page:

<http://www.feathersite.com/Poultry/BRKPoultryPage.html>.

***The following general information is provided to point backyard flock owners toward breeds recognized for excellent egg and/or meat production.***

**Breeds commonly used for *EGG* production:**

White Leghorn hens are extraordinary white egg layers, however they are flighty birds that are very active and sometimes high strung. Other breeds exhibiting high egg production include:

Ancona	California White	Hammberg	Rhode Island Red
Australorp	California Gray	Lakenvelder	
Minorca	Chantecler		

**Breeds commonly used for *MEAT* production:**

Brahma	Cochin	Jersey Giant
Buckeye	Cornish	Langshan
	Dorking	Orpington

**Breeds commonly used for *DUAL PURPOSE* (both egg and meat production):**

Delaware	Holland	Plymouth Rock	Sussex
Dominique	New Hampshire	Rhode Island Red	Welsummer
Faverolle	Java	Rhode Island White	Wyandotte

Selecting the breed or breeds of chickens to comprise your backyard flock is important. The source from which eggs, chicks and chickens are obtained needs to be researched carefully. Questions to ask will include but are not limited to:

Are chicks/eggs from purebred breeds or from a hybrid cross? Depending on the purpose of the flock, hybrid crosses are not necessarily undesirable. Many hybrid crosses will possess characteristics of both parent breeds that may make them better meat and egg producers.

When purchasing backyard stocks try to purchase from source that participates in the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). Inquire about the biosecurity procedures, vaccination programs and health guarantees/certificates. Always insist on stock that is certified pullorum free. When purchasing birds make sure they look healthy and are from a healthy flock. For more information visit:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/birdbiosecurity/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/) or

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/animal\\_dis\\_spec/poultry/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/poultry/index.shtml)

Ask about any guarantees on chick livability. In some cases, chicks may need to be shipped long distances. While the yolk that is absorbed by the embryo prior to hatching is sufficient to provide nutrients for a period of 3 days, if proper temperature or other environmental factors are not maintained then the birds could arrive in a weakened or terminal state.



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“Your local County Extension Agent is a source of more information on this subject”