BREEDS OF CHICKENS FOR SMALL FLOCK PRODUCERS

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Objectives

1. To make you aware of the different Chicken breeds available for egg laying, meat production or Show.

2. Highlight some of the qualities of chicken breeds commonly available to the small flock producer

3. Awareness of Welfare Needs of Chickens

4. Where to find quality chickens
**Introduction**

- Chickens exist in many colors, sizes and shapes
- There are over 350 recognized Standard and Bantam Breeds of Chickens
- There is a system of designations for chickens known as Classes, Breeds, Varieties and Strains
- Bantams are the miniatures “compacts” of the poultry world raised primarily for exhibition (show) and weigh 1/5\(^{th}\) of their standard breed and make great show or pet birds and require less space and feed
Introduction

**Class:** Group of Breeds originating from the same geographical area such as
- Asiatic: i.e. Cochin
- Mediterranean: i.e. Leghorn
- American: i.e. Plymouth Rocks
- English: Orpington

**Breed:** is a group of chickens which possess a given set of physical features such as
- Body Shape
- Skin Color
- How they carry themselves or station
- Number of toes: most chickens have 4 toes
- Feathered or non-feathered shanks or legs
Introduction

**Variety:** is a sub-division of a breed based on:

- Feather color
- Comb type
- Presence of beard or muffs

**Example:** Plymouth Rocks have 7 feather variations which include:

- Barred
- White
- Buff
- Silver Penciled
- Blue
- Columbian
- Partridge

**Strains:** subdivision of a breed or variety usually seen in the commercial poultry world
Overall Considerations When Selecting a Breed of Chicken

Welfare Needs for Chicken
Egg Type Chickens (Standard or Bantam)
Meat Type Chickens (Standard or Bantam)
Dual Purpose Chickens (Standard or Bantam)
Heritage Breeds (Specific Management Requirements)
Welfare Needs of Chickens

When considering raising chickens remember they must be:

1. Free from hunger & thirst: should always have food and water available
2. Freedom from discomfort: Not stressed from the cold, heat, bad weather
3. Freedom from pain & distress: keep them disease free and prevent injuries
4. Freedom to express normal behaviors: Adequate room to scratch and move around
5. Freedom from fear & distress: Chickens are prey, everything wants to eat them so is there good predator control
Overall Considerations for Breed Selection

Temperament of the bird: Chickens do have personalities
  - Docile: easy to handle
  - Prolific egg producer: what to do with the extra eggs
  - Good meat producer: how to harvest these chickens
  - Beauty/Show: pretty feathers
Where to get the breed of chicken you want
Considerations for Breed Selection

What type of space do you have?
- Small backyard
- Large area

City vs. Country Setting

How many do you need or allowed to have where you live?

Just for a few eggs, or meat, or show

How do I keep the predators out?
Considerations for Breed Selection

Availability of the breed you want:
  Cost: 75% of cost is feed then + chick cost + housing cost.
What is your cost/bird?
Time Commitment: 25 chickens requires at least 1 hour per day
Egg Type Chickens

Non-commercial Leghorns: Mediterranean Class
Minimal maintenance, midsize,
Nervous, less cost for feed/number of eggs
Originally from Italy
Varieties developed in England, Denmark and America
Active good foragers
Prolific White Egg Layers
Most numerous breed in America
Dual Purpose Breeds

New Hampshire
Marans
Rhode Island Reds
Dominique
Barred Plymouth Rocks
Orpingtons
Rhode Island Reds

Originated in Rhode Island USA
American Class
Crossing a Red Malay Game X Leghorn
Two Varieties:
  • Single Comb
  • Rose Comb tend to be smaller
Good Brown Egg Producers
Hardy
New Hampshire

American Class
No Varieties
Single Comb
Developed from RIR
Brown Egg Layer
Early Maturing
Fast feathering
Good for meat and eggs
Aggressive
Dominique

American Class
Oldest American Breed
Brown Egg Producers
Smaller than Barred Rock
No Varieties
Dual Purpose
Rose Comb!
Barring Irregular
Barred Plymouth Rock

American Class
7 Varieties
Calm and docile
225 Eggs/year
Originated in New England
From Dominique X Black Java
White Plymouth Rocks are
Used as the female line in
Commercial Broilers
Maran

Continental Class
Docile
150 Dark Brown Eggs
From France
Buff Orpington

English Class
4 Varieties
Calm
Large
Lay 190 Brown Eggs
Originated in England
In the town or Orpington
Good in the cold
Great general use fowl
Ameraucana

Developed in the US from Araucana Chickens from Chile in 1970’s
Blue-egg gene
Both Standard and Bantam
8 Varieties: Black, Blue, Blue wheaten, Brown Red, Buff, Silver, Wheaten, White
Pea Comb
Muffs (a cluster of feathers projecting from the face and sides of eyes) and Beard (a projection of feathers from the upper throat)
Cross Breeds

**Sex Link:** Chicks can be identified at hatch as to whether they are a male or female. In birds, the female determines the sex.

**Red Sex Linked:** Cross of male with a red/gold gene such as New Hampshire (NH), Rhode Island Red (RIR) or Brown/Red Ameraucana crossed with a female with a dominant Silver gene such as Delaware, Silver Leghorn, Columbian Wyandotte.

"Golden Comet"

"Red Star"
Amber Sex-Link

ISA Hendrix Cross Breed
Rhode Island Red (RIR) X White Plymouth Rock (WPR) or White Island Rock
Lay Brown Eggs
Cold Hardy
Short Life span
Egg Laying decreases by 15-20% each year
Hybrids do not breed true
Are Not Broody
Cross Breeds

**Black Sex Linked:** Cross of a male of any variety that does NOT have a barred or dominant white gene such as RIR, Black Australorp, Buff Orpington

Crossed with a female with a Dominant Barred gene such as Barred Plymouth Rock (BPR), Cuckoo Maran, Barred Holland
Breed Sources

Hatcheries that participate in the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP)
http://www.poultryimprovement.org

American Poultry Association (APA)-oldest livestock association in America
http://www.amerpoultryassn.com

American Bantam Association (ABA)
http://www.bantamclub.com

Participants in the 4-H Pullet Chain – County Agent

State Poultry Specialist
NPIP

What is NPIP?
A voluntary program administered by the USDA, the various states, and the poultry industry.
Begun as a national program in 1935, it was designed to improve the poultry industry by controlling and eradicating Pullorum disease and fowl typhoid from poultry flocks
Improving the selection of breeders and sanitation practices.
Participation was, and still is, voluntary
  The incentive to participate is the use of official NPIP logos on advertising and containers
  The ability to ship product across state lines or internationally easier.
Although still a voluntary program, state and federal regulations make it difficult for a poultry business of any size to operate without participation.
Heritage Breeds

Heritage Breed Management Requirements:
Breeds recognized prior to the 20th Century
Naturally Mated
Slow Growth
Thrive Outside
Reproduce outside
American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC)
http://www.livestockconservancy.org
Examples: Dominique, Plymouth Rock, Delaware, Rhode Island White, Araucana
Meat Type Chickens

Rock Cornish Cross: White Cornish male crossed with a White Plymouth Rock Female is the standard for the poultry industry broiler

- Characteristics:
  - Fast growing,
  - Ready for slaughter at 6-8 weeks of age
  - White feathers
  - Not good for range rearing
  - Leg problems
  - 1.75 – 1.9 lbs of feed to pound of gain
Meat Type Breeds

**Red Broilers:** Freedom Ranger or Red Ranger

**Characteristics**
- Slower growing,
- Ready for slaughter at 12 weeks of age,
- Good for range rearing,
- Disease resistant,
- Dark red feathering,
- Good conformation,
- About 3.17 pounds of feed per pound of gain
Meat Type Chickens

Rosambro Broilers:
Characteristics

Grown to 8-10 weeks of age, Faster growth than Red broilers but slower than Rock Cornish
Sources for Meat Type Chickens

Mt-Di Poultry Farm & Hatchery
Altoona, PA 16602
814.942.7024
mtdifarm@atlanticbb.net
US Pullorum-Typhoid Clean
US AI Clean
NPIP No. 23-519
Cornish Cross, Red Ranger, Rosambro
Sources for Meat & Egg Type Chickens

Stromberg’s Chicks & Game Birds
100 York Street
P.O. Box 400
Pine River, MN 56474
218.587.2222
1.800.720.1134
US Pullorum-Typhoid Clean
Red Ranger, Cornish Cross, Freedom Ranger
Sample Questions (Multiple Choice)

Cloverbud Questions
What is an example of a good meat type chicken?

a. Rosambro
b. Leghorn
c. Cochin
d. Maran

What does NPIP stand for?

a. Nice Poultry in Progress
b. National Poultry Improvement Plan
c. National Poultry Industry Plan
d. None of the Above
Sample Questions

Junior Level
What are two requirements for Heritage Breed Management?

a. Naturally mated, grown inside
b. Naturally mated, raised outside
c. Must be a recognized breed prior to 20th Century, and grown inside
d. Grown inside, and recognized by the ALBC

Who administers the NPIP Program?

a. USDA
b. Participating States
c. Poultry Industry
d. All of the Above
Sample Questions

Senior Level

What cross is used for a meat type chicken in the commercial poultry industry?

a. Maran X Leghorn  
b. Plymouth Rock X Cornish  
c. Cochin X Ameraucana  
d. New Hampshire X Cornish

What is the cross used for the Red Sex linked?

a. Female w/ a silver gene X with a barred rock male  
b. Female w/ barred gene X with a Leghorn  
c. Female w/ a barred gene X with a Cochin Male  
d. Female with a silver gene X with a New Hampshire Male with a red/gold gene