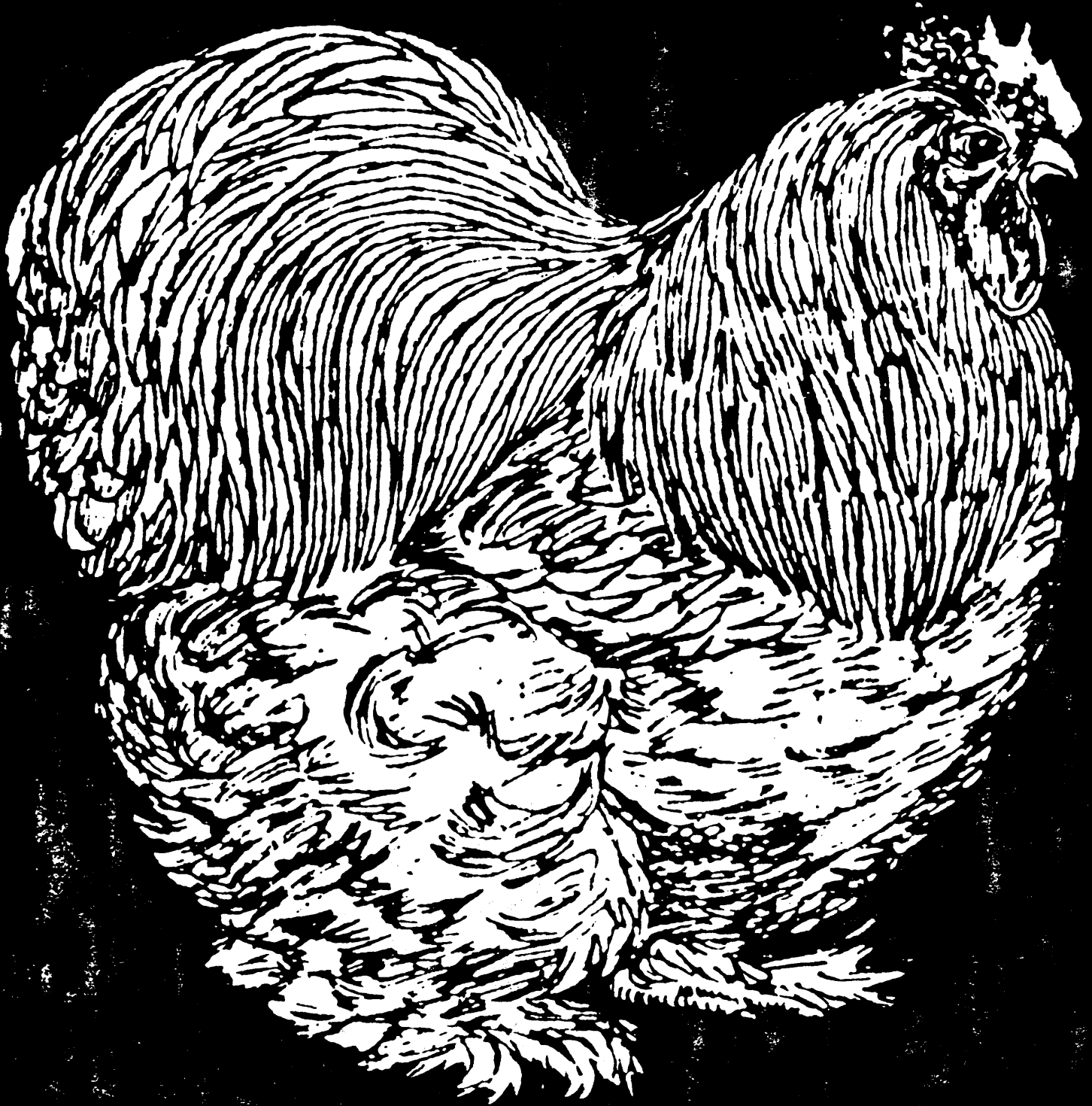


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CHICKEN BREEDS AND VARIETIES

JOHN SKINNER



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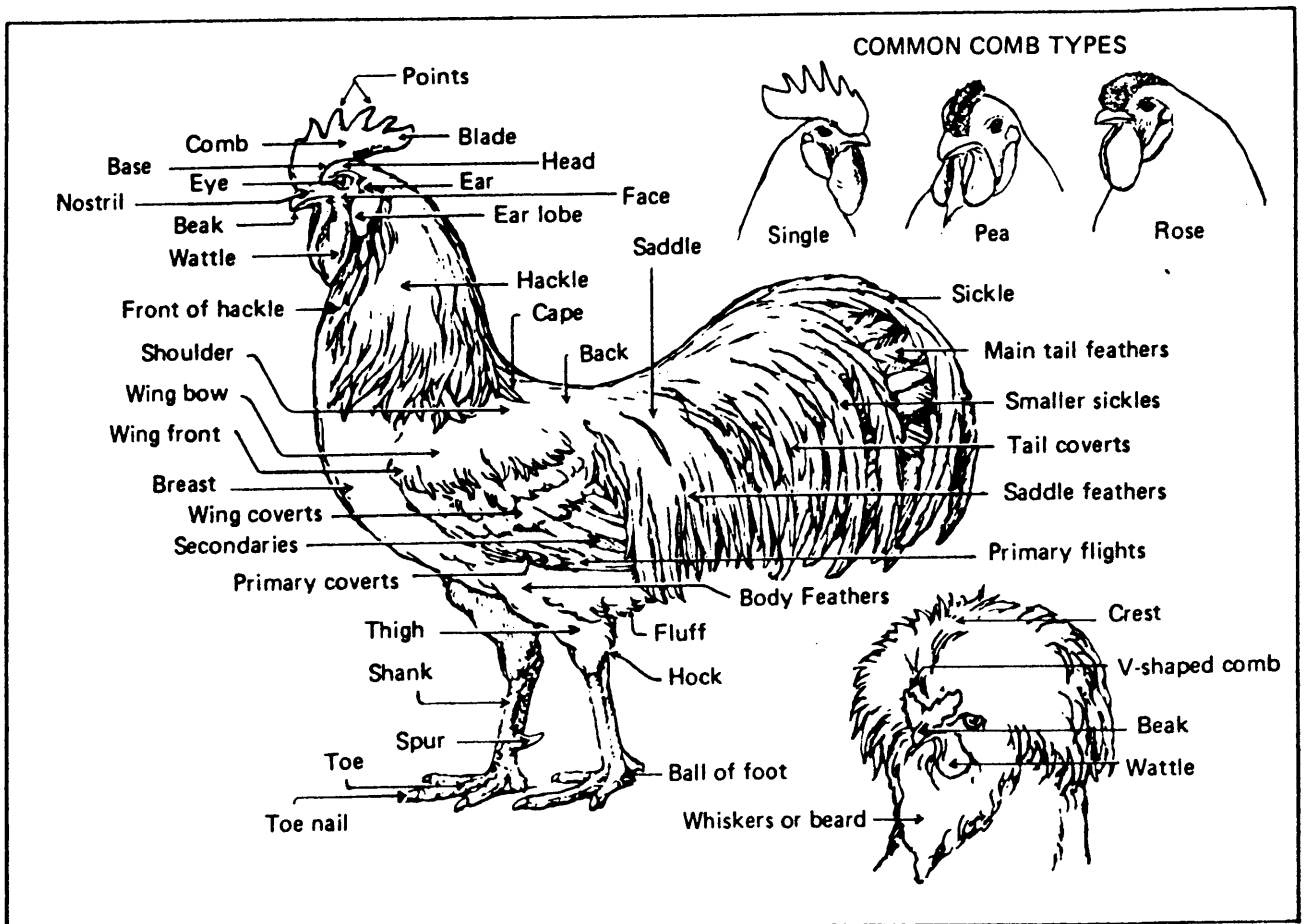
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BREEDS, VARIETIES & STRAINS

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 and varieties.

A class is a group of breeds originating in the same geographical area. The names themselves indicate the region where the breeds originated, such as Asiatic, Mediterranean, 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 text.

Breed means 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 non-feathered shanks. If such an individual is mated to one of its own kind these features will be passed on to the offspring.

Variety means a sub-division of a breed. Differentiating characteristics include plumage color, comb type or presence of a beard and muffs. Examples exist in almost all breeds. In Plymouth Rocks, there are several colors, Barred, White, Buff, Partridge, etc. 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 being identical.

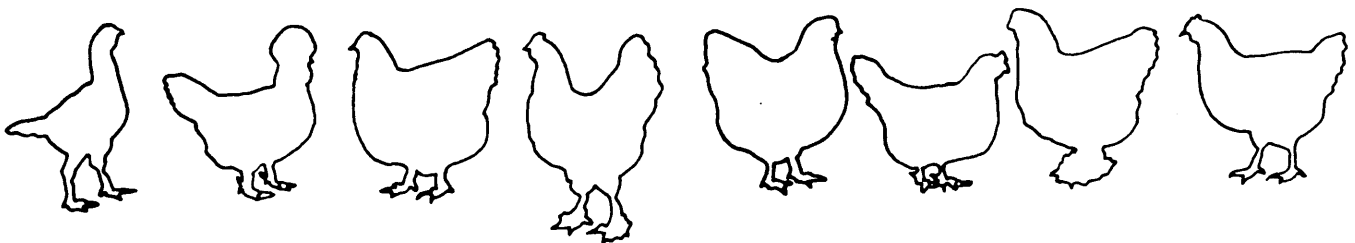
Strains are families or breeding populations possessing common traits. They may be subdivisions of a breed or variety or may even be systematic crosses. However, a strain shows a relationship more exacting than that for others of similar appearance. Strains are the products of one person

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 U.S. 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 issues a book called *The American Standard of Perfection*. 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.

For more information on chicken breeds, consult the following books: *The American Standard of Perfection*, American Poultry Association, P.O. Box 70, Cushing, Oklahoma 70423; *The Bantam Standard*, American Bantam Association, P.O. Box 610, North Amherst, Massachusetts 01059.



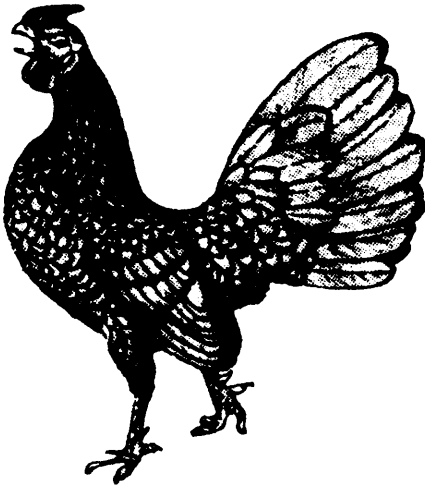
BANTAMS

Bantams are the miniatures of the poultry world. The word *bantam* is the overall 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.

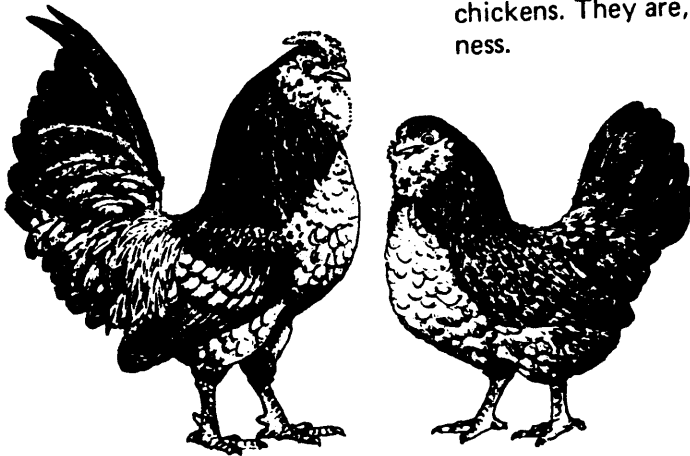
The term "Banty" or "Bantie" is often used to describe any non-descript, undersized chicken. This is misleading. Bantams are not unhealthy midgets or unproductive dwarfs. They are complete miniatures raised primarily for exhibition, a purpose for which they excel. The American Bantam Association issues 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; for example = Buff Cochin Bantams.

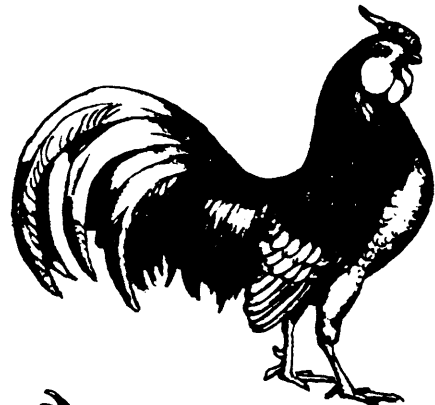
Bantams are kept for their beauty, exhibition, as pets or companion animals. Their wide array of shapes, colors and personalities gives them broad appeal. However, they can be quite useful for the production of eggs and their meat is fine grained and nutritious. Often bantams can be kept in areas too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



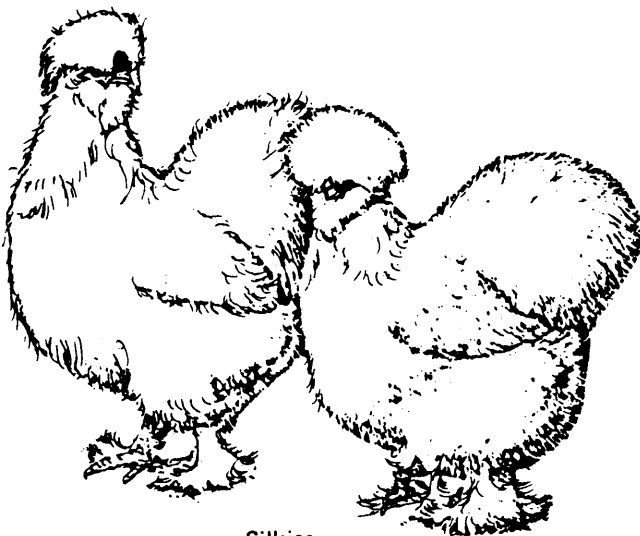
Sebright



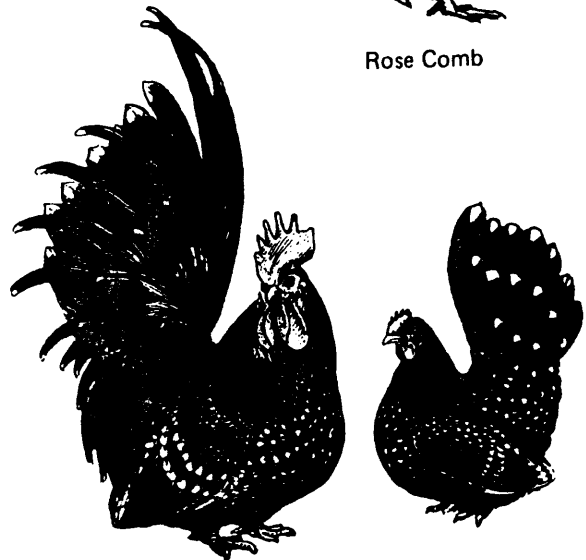
Antwerp Belgians



Rose Comb



Silkie



Japanese

AMERICAN CLASS

JERSEY GIANTS



Varieties: Black, White.

Standard Weights: Cock—13 pounds; hen—10 pounds; cockerel—11 pounds; pullet—8 pounds.

Skin Color: Yellow.

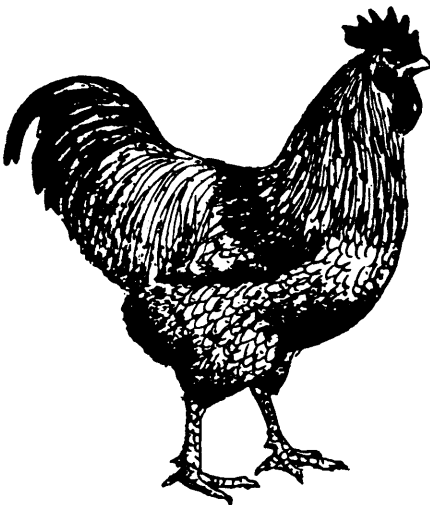
Egg Shell Color: Brown.

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 make them a poor fit for today's conditions. The meat yield is disappointing until they are 6 months or older. No fowl with black plumage or dark or willow shanks has ever remained popular in this country for long, although they used to be more widespread. However, good specimens do have an appeal, mainly because of their size.

NEW HAMPSHIRE REDS



Varieties: None.

Standard Weights: Cock—8-1/2 pounds; hen—6-1/2 pounds; cockerel—7-1/2 pounds; pullet—5-1/2 pounds.

Skin Color: Yellow.

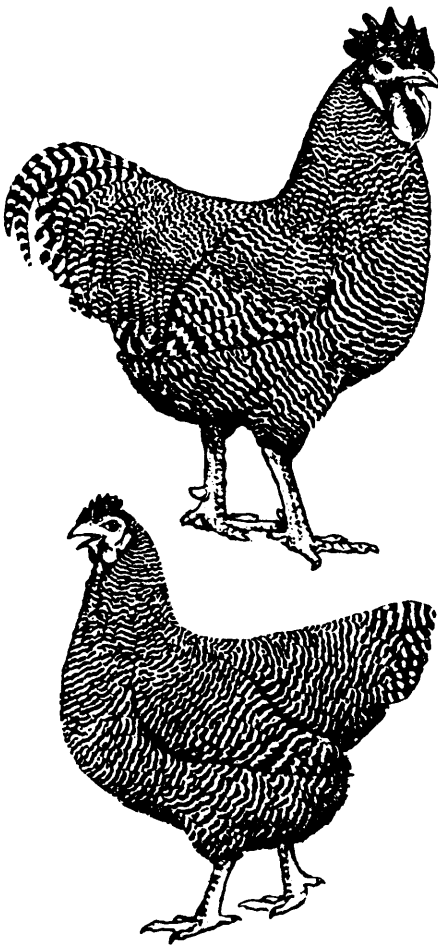
Egg Shell Color: Brown.

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 pin feathers are a 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.

PLYMOUTH ROCKS



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

Standard Weights: Cock—9-1/2 pounds; hen—7-1/2 pounds; cockerel—8 pounds; pullet—6 pounds.

Skin Color: Yellow.

Egg Shell Color: Brown.

Use: Meat and eggs.

Origin: Developed in America 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; normally will show broodiness; 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 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 of the drawing. This is a definite breed characteristic and should be maintained. Common faults include shallow breast, high tails, narrow bodies and small size.

RHODE ISLAND REDS

Varieties: Single Comb, Rose Comb

Standard Weights: Cock—8-1/2 pounds; hen—6-1/2 pounds; cockerel—7-1/2 pounds; pullet—5-1/2 pounds.

Skin Color: Yellow.

Egg Shell Color: Brown.

Use: A dual purpose medium heavy fowl; used more for egg production than meat production because of its dark colored pin feathers 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 Combed variety. The red color fades after long exposure to the sun.

(A breed of similar size and type to that of the Rhode Island Red has been developed. It has pure white feathering and is known as Rhode Island White.)

WYANDOTTES

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

Standard Weights: Cock—8-1/2 pounds, hen—6-1/2 pounds, cockerel—7-1/2 pounds, pullet—5-1/2 pounds.

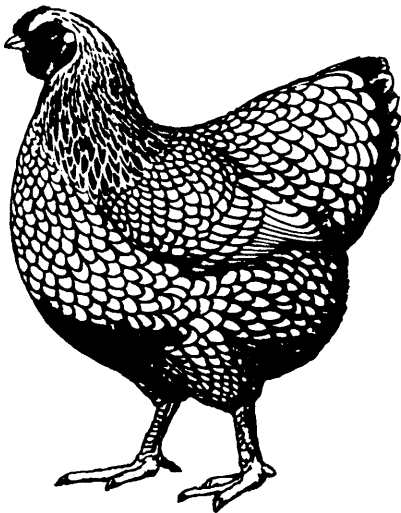
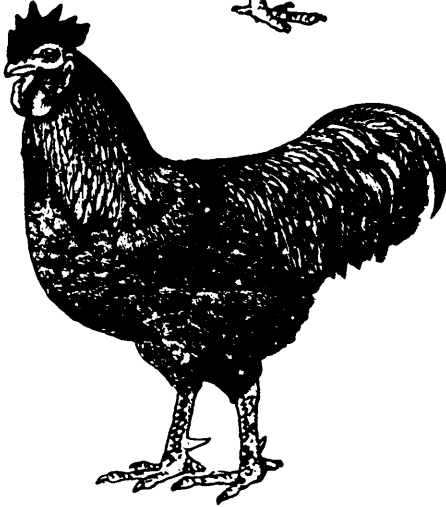
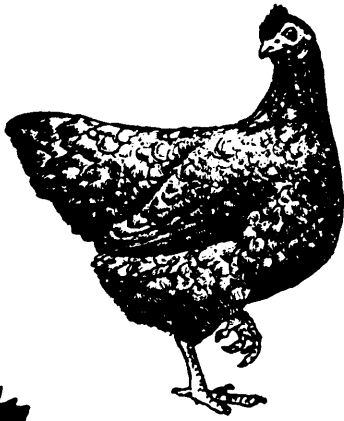
Skin Color: Yellow.

Egg Shell Color: Brown.

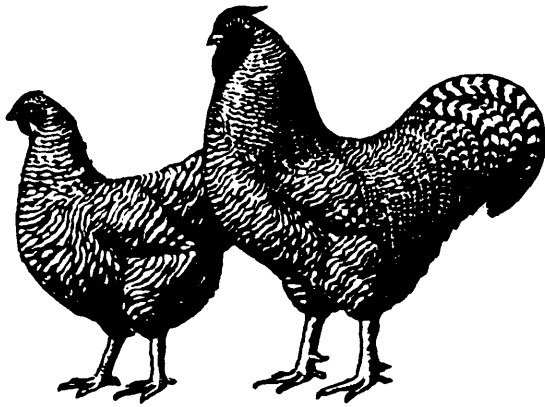
Use: Meat or eggs.

Origin: America. 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.



LESS POPULAR BREEDS IN THE AMERICAN CLASS



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

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

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

Dominiques: America's oldest breed. They are rather indefinitely barred—black and white, have rose combs, are relatively small, with tightly held feathers. No varieties.

Hollands: 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.

Javas: A medium-sized, angular bird which was a common farm chicken in the U.S. in the 19th century. Javas possess single combs. Varieties: Black, Mottled.

Lamonas: Lamonas have single combs, appear short legged and are one of the few chickens with red ear lobes that lay white-shelled eggs. No varieties.

ASIATIC CLASS

BRAHMAS

Varieties: Light, Dark, Buff.

Standard Weights (Light): Cock—12 pounds; hen—9-1/2 pounds; cockerel—10 pounds; pullet—8 pounds.

Standard Weights (Dark and Buff): Cock—11 pounds; hen—8-1/2 pounds; cockerel—9 pounds; pullet—7 pounds.

Skin Color: Yellow.

Egg Shell 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 showmen 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.

COCHINS

Varieties: White, Black, Buff, Partridge.

Standard Weights: Cock—11 pounds; hen—8-1/2 pounds; cockerel—9 pounds; pullet—7 pounds.

Skin Color: Yellow.

Egg Shell 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 to keep 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.



LANGSHANS

Varieties: Black and White.

Standard Weights: Cock—9-1/2 pounds; hen—7-1/2 pounds; cockerel—8 pounds; pullet—6-1/2 pounds.

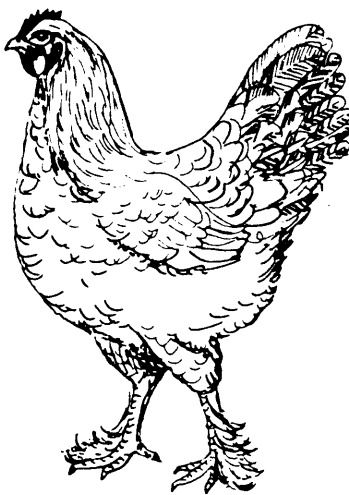
Skin Color: White.

Egg Shell 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 our 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

Variety: Black.

Standard Weights: Cock—8-1/2 pounds; hen—6-1/2 pounds; cock-
erel—7-1/2 pounds; pullet—5-1/2 pounds.

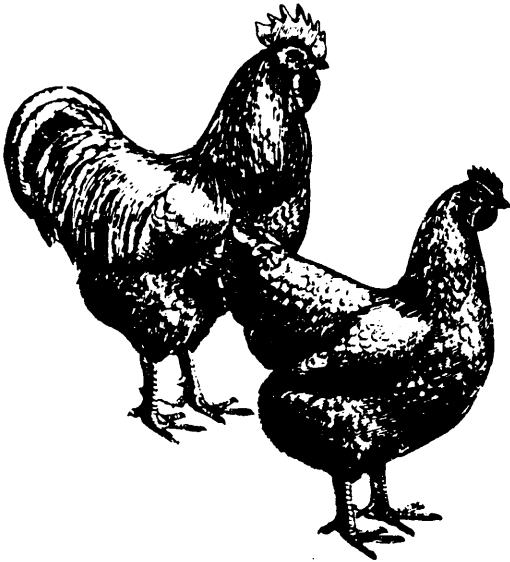
Skin Color: White.

Egg Shell 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 Austa-
White cross. This cross of Australorp x White Leghorn became the
successor to purebred breeds on many Midwestern farms. Brood-
iness was a problem with the cross and some markets discounted
the tinted eggs they laid. Therefore, it soon fell victim to the in-
bred 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.



CORNISH

Class: English.

Varieties: Dark, White, White Laced Red, Buff

Standard Weights: Cock—10-1/2 pounds; hen—8 pounds; cock-
erel—8-1/2 pounds; pullet—6-1/2 pounds.

Skin Color: Yellow.

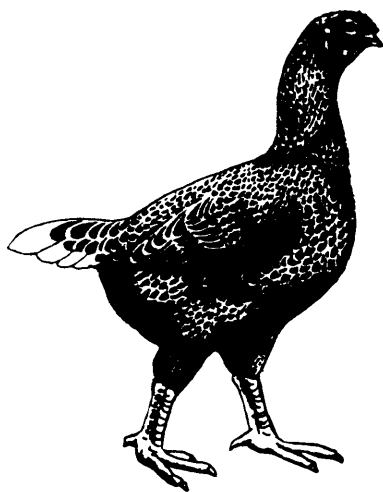
Egg Shell Color: Brown.

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 car-
cass shape.

Origin: Cornish were developed in the shire (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. Cornish males are often pugnacious and the chicks tend to be more cannibalistic than some breeds. 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 is suggested. 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 can cover relatively fewer eggs. They are very protective mothers but are almost too active to be good brood hens.

DORKINGS

Class: English.

Varieties: White, Silver Gray, Colored.

Standard Weights (White): Cock—7-1/2 pounds; hen—6 pounds; cockerel—6-1/2 pounds; pullet—5 pounds.

Standard Weights (Silver Gray and Colored): Cock—9 pounds; hen—7 pounds; cockerel—8 pounds; pullet—6 pounds.

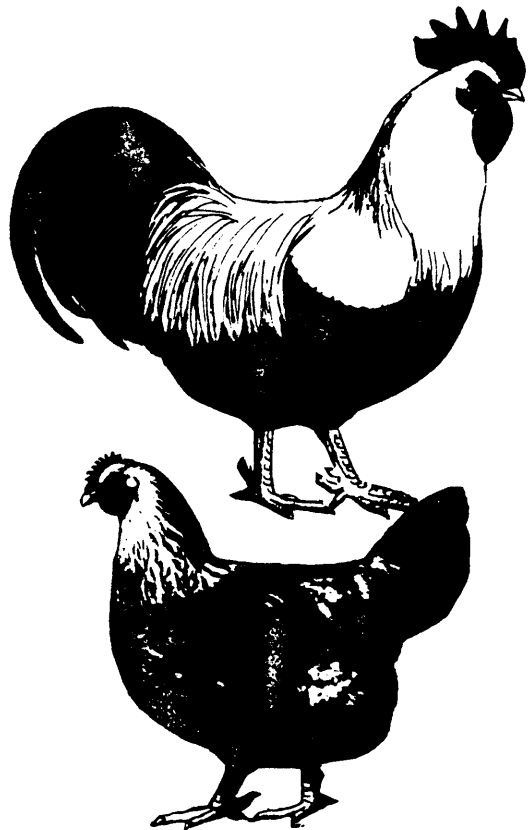
Skin Color: White.

Egg Shell Color: White.

Use: A good, general purpose fowl for producing meat and eggs. It was developed for its especially fine quality meat.

Origin: The Dorking is believed to have originated in Italy, having been introduced into Great Britain at an early date by the Romans. Much of its development took place in England where it gained much acclaim for its table qualities. The Dorking is one of our oldest breeds of chickens.

Characteristics: The Dorking has a rectangular body set on very short legs. It is five toed and has a relatively large comb, thus requiring protection in extremely cold weather. Dorkings are good layers and are one of the few instances where a bird with red earlobes lays a white shelled egg. Most Dorking hens will go broody, make good mothers and are quite docile. Because of their white skin, Dorkings are not as popular in the U.S. as in Europe.



ORPINGTONS

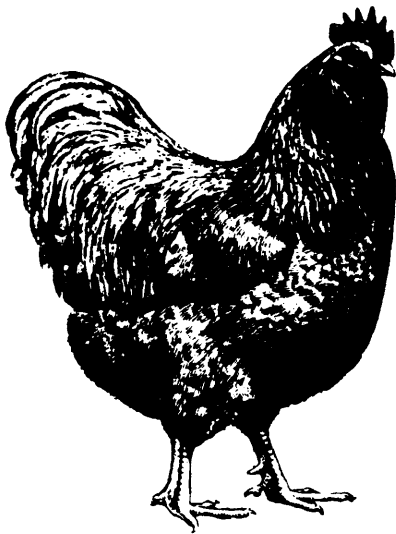
Varieties: Black, White, Buff, Blue.

Standard Weights: Cock—10 pounds; hen—8 pounds; cockerel—8-1/2 pounds; pullet—7 pounds.

Skin Color: White.

Egg Shell Color: 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 America in the 1890s and gained popularity very rapidly, based on 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.

SUSSEX

Class: English.

Varieties: Speckled, Red, Light.

Standard Weights: Cock—9 pounds; hen—7 pounds; cockerel—7-1/2 pounds; pullet—6 pounds.

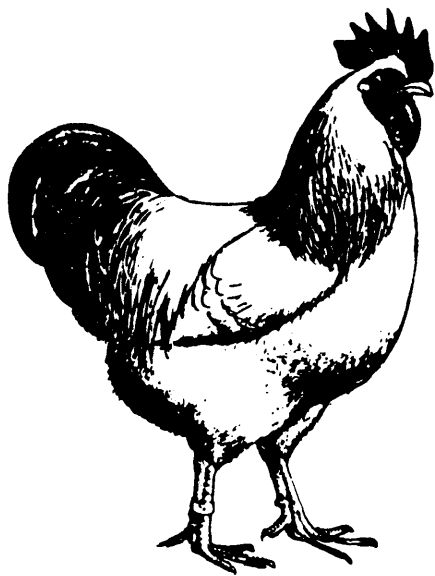
Skin Color: White.

Egg Shell Color: Brown.

Use: A general purpose breed for producing meat and/or eggs. One of the best of the dual purpose chickens, a good all-around farm fowl.

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 multi-colored 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.



ANOTHER BREED IN THE ENGLISH CLASS

Red Caps: 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.

