

# 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.

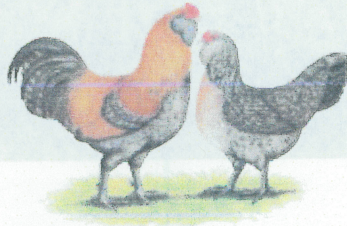
**Broodiness:** readiness to brood eggs that is characterized by cessation of laying and by marked changes in behavior and physiology

**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.

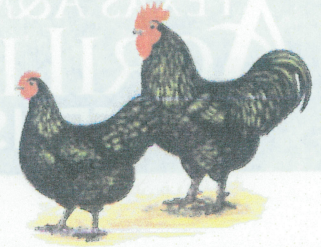
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## Ameraucana



<b>Egg Production</b>	Medium
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Medium
<b>Space needs</b>	Medium
<b>Bantam available</b>	No
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	Blue

## Australorp



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

## Ancona



<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## Brahma



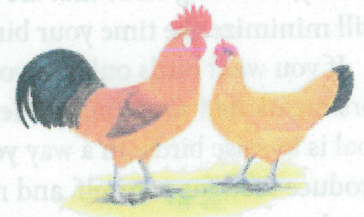
<b>Egg Production</b>	Medium
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Medium
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Andalusian



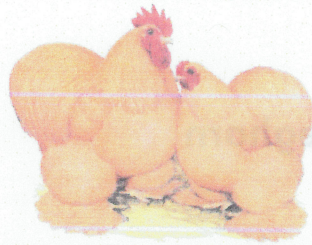
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Medium
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	No
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## Catalana



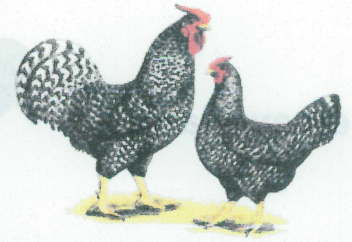
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Medium
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	No
<b>Climate</b>	Does well in hotter climates
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## Chochin



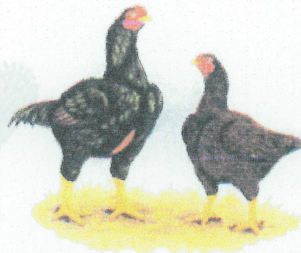
<b>Egg Production</b>	Medium
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	High
<b>Space needs</b>	Medium
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Does well in colder climates
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Dominique



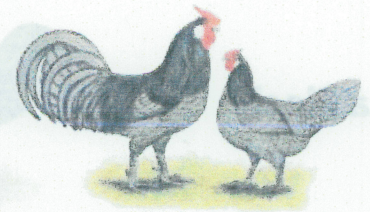
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Medium
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	No
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Cornish



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

## Hamburg



<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## Delaware



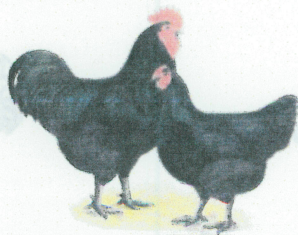
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Medium
<b>Space needs</b>	Medium
<b>Bantam available</b>	No
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Java



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

## Jersey Giant



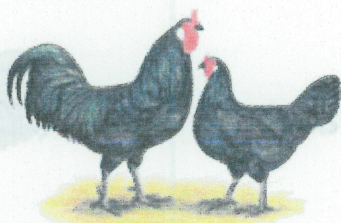
<b>Egg Production</b>	Medium
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	No
<b>Climate</b>	Does well in colder climates
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Leghorn



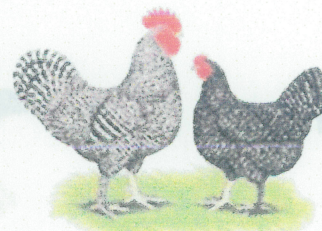
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Medium
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	Low-Cage; High-Free range
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## La Fleche



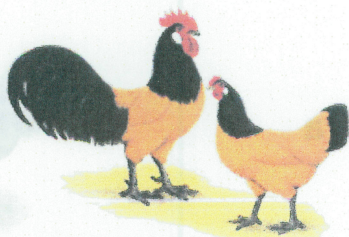
<b>Egg Production</b>	Medium
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Does well in hotter climates
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## Marans



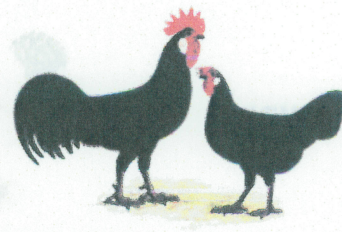
<b>Egg Production</b>	Medium
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Medium
<b>Space needs</b>	Medium
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Does well in colder climates
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Lakenvelder



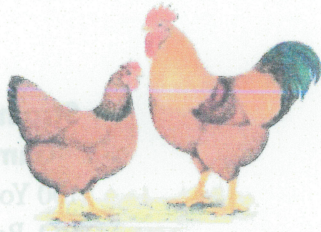
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## Minorca



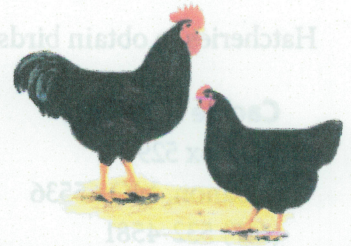
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Medium
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Does well in hot climates
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## New Hampshire Red



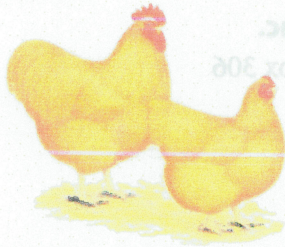
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	High
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Rhode Island Red



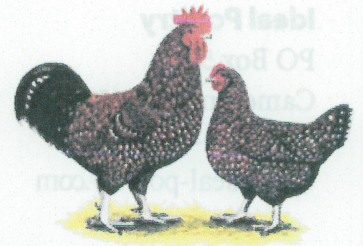
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Medium
<b>Broodiness</b>	Low
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Orpington



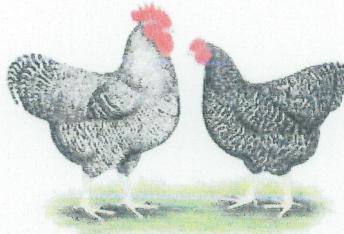
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	High
<b>Space needs</b>	Medium
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

## Sussex



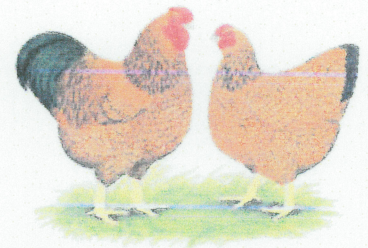
<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	Medium
<b>Space needs</b>	Medium
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	White

## Plymouth Rocks



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

## Wyandotte



<b>Egg Production</b>	High
<b>Aggressiveness</b>	Low
<b>Broodiness</b>	High
<b>Space needs</b>	High
<b>Bantam available</b>	Yes
<b>Climate</b>	Any
<b>Egg Color</b>	Brown

Hatcheries to obtain birds from include:

**Cackle Hatchery**

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

**Meyer Hatchery**

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

**Stromberg's Chicks and Game Birds**

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

**Hoffman Hatchery Inc.**

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

**Murray McMurray Hatchery**

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

**Welp Hatchery**

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

**Ideal Poultry**

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

**Ridgway Hatcheries, Inc.**

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

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