

Hawthorn Hill Poultry – Breed Overview

Thank you for considering Hawthorn Hill Poultry for your purchase of quality breeding stock. The following is intended to provide some additional information to help make your experience a positive one!

Deciding on a breed is one of the first and most important steps involved after making the decision to raise heritage chickens. There are dozens of possibilities and it is important to choose one that will best meet your needs and expectations. If breeding or conservation is one of your goals, it is highly recommended to choose only one breed, learn everything you can and stay focused on that breed for several years before branching out. If a mixed flock is your goal, then you will have more freedom to keep hens of different varieties.

My website includes information and photos of each of the breeds I now raise. I truly enjoy them all, and appreciate each breed for their usefulness, beauty and uniqueness. <http://www.hawthornhillpoultry.com/breeds.html>

Characteristics vary greatly within each breed, and will depend largely on the strain. A strain is the result of line-breeding and selection over a number of years to produce a bloodline that is distinctive and consistent. In other words, the strain is the manifestation of a long-term breeder's focus. The following is a brief summary of what can be expected from Hawthorn Hill's strains of Chantecler, Orpingtons, Cochins and Rhode Island Reds.

Chanteclers:

Prolific egg layers, excellent choice for a meat bird. Chanteclers put on weight fastest of all my breeds so are ready for butchering earlier, at around 20 weeks. They do not enjoy being handled or fussed with. Chanteclers are clever, independent and hardy -- very practical farm livestock. Roosters are respectful to people, but tend to be very territorial and will not share hens with other roosters, so good rooster management is necessary.

Orpingtons:

Big and hardy, our Orpingtons offer a good balance between laying rate and meat properties. They are a good choice for a dual purpose farm flock. Orpington hens take longer to reach point of lay and may take a longer break between laying cycles than some other breeds. Cockerels grow well, finish up huge and are excellent for slow roasting, but take around 28 weeks to reach optimal butcher size. Our renowned HH Buff Orpingtons are unsurpassed as exhibition birds and regularly place at the top of their class.

Cochins:

While Cochins are mainly considered ornamental, my strains are very comparable to Orpingtons in egg and meat traits. Hens and roosters are especially sweet natured, loveable, never in a hurry and tend to be under your feet. They make the best pets and although very large, they make a good first-time breeding project for adults or children. Some Blue Cochin hens will have a tendency to go broody, which may be useful to those who prefer to hatch chicks under hens; however broodiness is counter-productive to overall egg prolificacy.

Rhode Island Reds:

My Reds are friendly, calm and curious and are a joy to have on the farm. Since these hens are so placid they can be picked on by more aggressive chickens such as hybrid layer hens. Reds aren't inclined to venture outdoors much in the winter, but they love to be outside scratching about during the other 3 seasons. These hens are very good, dependable layers and cockerels can be butchered early for delicious fryers.