

THE CHICKEN ENCYCLOPEDIA



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AN ILLUSTRATED REFERENCE



GAIL DAMEROW

author of Storey's Guide to Raising Chickens



Storey Publishing

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Edited by Deborah Burns

Art direction and book design by Alethea Morrison

Text production by Sourena Parham

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Indexed by Samantha Miller

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COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

ABA	American Bantam Association
ACV	apple cider vinegar
AGB	American Game Bantam
AI	artificial insemination
ALBC	American Livestock Breeds Conservancy
AOC	All Other Colors; Any Other Color
AOCCL	All Other Comb Clean Leg
AOSB	All Other Standard Breeds
AOV	All Other Varieties; Any Other Variety
APA	American Poultry Association
BB	Best of Breed
BQ	breeder quality
BBR	black breasted red
BLR	blue laced red
CRD	chronic respiratory disease
DE	diatomaceous earth
EE	Easter Egger
FL	feather leg
GLW	golden laced Wyandotte
IB	infectious bronchitis
LS	light Sussex
MG	Modern Game
ND	Newcastle disease
NOP	National Organic Program
NSQ	not show quality
OEG	Old English Game
OEGB	Old English Game bantam
POL	point of lay
PQ	pet quality

RBC	Rare Breeds Canada
RFID	radio frequency identification
RIR	Rhode Island Red
RCCL	Rose Comb Clean Leg
SCCL	Single Comb Clean Leg
SLW	silver laced Wyandotte
SPPA	Society for the Preservation of Poultry Antiquities
SQ	show quality
VND	velogenic Newcastle disease

A

abdomen \ The belly, or the underside of a chicken's body from the end of the breastbone to the vent. Technically, because a chicken has no diaphragm separating its chest from its abdomen, its body cavity is more properly called the coelom. **See page 19 for illustration.**

abdominal capacity \ Total depth and width of the abdomen.

abdominal depth \ The distance between the pubic bones and the breastbone, indicating a hen's ability to hold a forming egg.



abdominal depth

abdominal width \ The distance between the two pubic bones, indicating the amount of space available for an egg to pass through when being laid. [*Also called: width of body*]



abdominal width

acariasis \ Infestation by mites.

addled \ Describes a rotten or otherwise inedible egg, typically one in which the embryo died during early incubation, such as when an egg was partially incubated, then abandoned.

aflatoxicosis \ A toxic reaction resulting from eating moldy grain containing aflatoxin, a compound produced by *Aspergillus flavus*, *A. parasiticus*, and *Penicillium puberulum* mold in grain. Aflatoxin is most likely to occur in grain that has been insect damaged, drought stressed, or cracked. Any grain that looks or smells moldy should not be fed to chickens. [*Also called: X disease*]

age, determination of \ **See box on page 8.** *See also: longevity*

age of lay \ The age at which pullets begin laying eggs. Leghorns and similar lightweight breeds start

laying at 18 to 22 weeks of age. Larger-bodied hens generally begin laying at 24 to 26 weeks of age.

aggressive chicken \ A chicken with an attitude. Mean individuals occasionally appear in nearly every breed and are more typically cocks than hens. Some breeds are characteristically aggressive; others commonly have aggressive individuals. Generally aggressive breeds include Cubalaya, Modern Game, and Old English Game. Breeds known for commonly having aggressive individuals include Aseel, Buckeye, Cornish, Faverolle, Rhode Island Red, Shamo, Sumatra, and Wyandotte. All sorts of methods have been put forth for taming an ornery rooster, but the safest course is to get rid of it before you, a family member, a neighbor, or a young child gets seriously injured.

aging (of meat) \ Allowing time for the muscles (meat) of a freshly killed chicken to relax and become tender. Aged chicken meat tastes better and is more tender than that of a chicken cooked or frozen a few hours after being killed. The muscle protein of a freshly killed chicken rapidly stiffens (as rigor mortis sets in), so unless the chicken is rushed to the cook pot, the meat will be tough if it is not aged before being cooked. The older the chicken, the longer its meat needs to age.

To age a freshly killed chicken, cool the meat and wrap it loosely. Set it in the refrigerator for at least one day, up to three days if it will be frozen or canned, or up to five days if it will be cooked fresh.

Agricultural Extension \ *See: Cooperative Extension System*

DETERMINING AGE

Exact age is not possible to determine, but a young bird may be distinguished easily from an old one based on the features listed below.

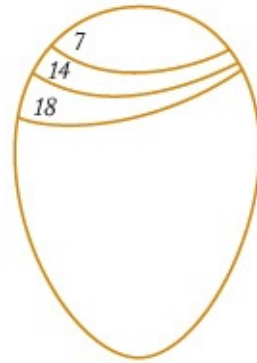
Feature	Young Chicken	Old Chicken
BODY SHAPE	Gangly	Round
LEGS	Smooth scales	Rough scales
SPURS	Small nubs	Long spurs*
BREASTBONE	Flexible	Rigid
MUSCLES	Soft	Firm
SKIN	Thin and translucent	Thick and tough

*All cocks and some hens have spurs; the longer the spur, the older the bird.

air cell \ The air space that develops at the large, round end of an egg between the inner and outer membranes just inside the shell. A freshly laid egg has no air cell. As the egg cools and its contents shrink, the inner shell membrane pulls away from the outer shell membrane, forming a pocket. The

cell of a freshly laid cool egg is about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3 cm) deep. As the egg ages, moisture evaporates from it, its contents continue to shrink, and the size of the air cell increases. Just how fast the cell grows depends on the porosity of the shell and on the temperature and humidity under which the egg is stored.

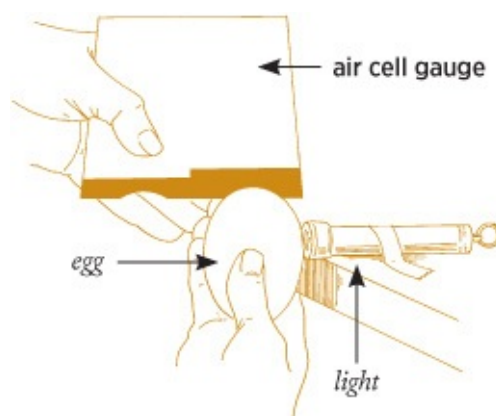
air cell



Relative size of air cell on the 7th, 14th, and 18th days of incubation.

During incubation the air cell increases rapidly, and its size at various stages of incubation may be used to determine whether or not the humidity within the incubator is optimal. If the air cell in an incubated egg is proportionately larger than is a typical cell after 7, 14, and 18 days of incubation, humidity is too low; if the cell is smaller, humidity is too high. [Also called: *air space*]

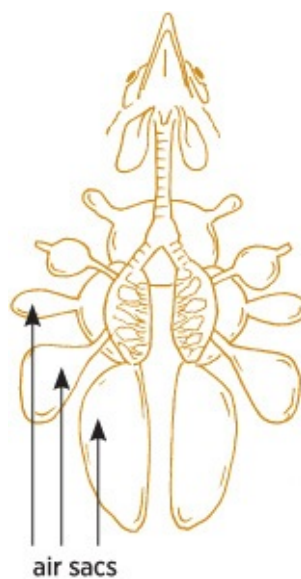
air cell gauge \ Gauge used for determining the depth of the air cell, one of the factors in grading an egg for quality (AA, A, B). The USDA official air cell gauge is designed to help the beginner learn to judge accurately the size of an air cell at a quick glance while candling. Experienced candlers occasionally use the gauge to verify the accuracy of their determinations. With the egg held large end upward, the gauge measures the depth of an air cell at the point of greatest distance between the top of the cell and an imaginary plane passing through the egg at the lower edge of the air cell where it touches the shell. *See also: candle*



EGG QUALITY AND AIR CELL DEPTH

Quality	Depth
AA	$\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3 cm)
A	$\frac{3}{16}$ inch (0.5 cm)
B	$\frac{3}{8}$ inch or larger (1 cm)

air sacs \ Thin-walled pockets that, as part of the chicken's respiratory system, circulate air from the lungs throughout other parts of the chicken's body. The system of air sacs extends around the internal organs and into some bones, called pneumatic bones, that are hollow. Unlike the chicken's lungs, which are rigid, its air sacs are flexible. Of the nine air sacs, eight are paired, with one set attached to each lung. The single, largest air sac is shared by both lungs.



alarm call \ A sound a chicken uses to alert other chickens to potential danger. Different sounds are used to distinguish between a possible threat and immediate danger and between a predator in the air and one on the ground.

CAUTION CALL. A few quick notes briefly repeated, made by a chicken that sees (or thinks it sees) a predator in the distance. It is not particularly loud or insistent and doesn't last long unless the predator becomes a threat.

ALARM CACKLE. A more insistent caution call announcing the approach of an apparent predator on the ground or perhaps perched in a nearby tree or on a fence post. It consists of a brief series of short, sharp sounds followed by one loud, high-pitched sound. Other chickens may join the cackling while stretching their necks to get a better look and moving around in an agitated way, as though not quite sure whether or where to run. These sounds increase in intensity the longer the assumed predator is in sight and may continue after the creature has gone.

AIR RAID. A loud warning cry made by a cock, or occasionally a hen, that spots the approach of a raptor. While making this sound the chicken looks up with one eye while flattening its head and tail in a crouch to make itself less conspicuous. Without looking up, the other chickens run for cover. See

also: warning call

albumen \ *See: egg white*

alektorophobia \ Fear of chickens (from the Greek words *alektor*, meaning cock, and *phobos*, meaning fear), usually triggered by some unpleasant incident involving a chicken. People with alektorophobia have an irrational fear of chickens and their parts (including a feather or an egg). They break out in a sweat or experience panic at the sight or nearness of a chicken, fearing it might peck or attack them. In an extreme case, just seeing a chicken in a photograph or movie can cause panic.

allele \ A variation of a gene (from the Greek word *allellos*, meaning “each other”); short for allelomorph (literally meaning “other form”). The combined effect of paired, unlike alleles can be either dominant or recessive.

all-in, all-out \ The management procedure of keeping laying hens or breeders for the most productive part of their lives, then disposing of the entire flock, thoroughly cleaning and sanitizing the facility, and bringing in a young replacement flock. The purpose of this method is to avoid introducing diseases that may occur when new chickens are brought into an existing flock or into unclean reused housing.

All Other Colors (AOC) \ A show designation for a catchall class that includes all colors of a breed or variety without a specific class of their own. [*Also called: Any Other Color*]

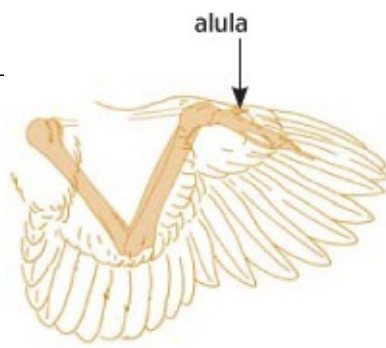
All Other Comb Clean Leg (AOCCL) \ One of the groupings into which the American Poultry Association organizes bantam breeds. It includes breeds that are not game breeds, have neither a single comb nor a rose comb, and are not feather-legged. This class includes Ameraucana, Araucana, Buckeye, Chantecler, Cornish, Crevecoeur, Cubalaya, Houdan, La Fleche, Malay, Polish, Shamo, Sicilian Buttercup, Sumatra, and Yokohama.

The American Bantam Association does not recognize Crevecoeur but additionally includes in this class Hamburg and Orloff.

All Other Standard Breeds (AOSB) \ One of six groupings into which the American Poultry Association organizes large chicken breeds. The breeds in this class are further subdivided into three groups: Game (Modern and Old English), Miscellaneous, and Oriental. The Miscellaneous breeds are Ameraucana, Araucana, Frizzle, Naked Neck, and Sultan. The Oriental breeds are Aseel, Cubalaya, Malay, Phoenix, Shamo, Sumatra, and Yokohama.

All Other Varieties (AOV) \ A show designation for a catchall class that includes all varieties of a breed without a specific class of their own. [*Also called: Any Other Variety*]

alula (plural: alulae) \ A small, sharp point in the middle of a chicken’s wing, corresponding to the human thumb, covered with a few short, stiff feathers. Alula is the diminutive form of the Latin word *ala*, meaning “wing.” [*Also called: bastard wing; false wing; spurious wing; thumb*]



Ameraucana \ One of two breeds that lay blue-shell eggs, developed from chickens imported from Chile. The name Ameraucana was derived by combining the words American and Araucana (the other breed that lays blue-shell eggs). Unlike the rumpless Araucana, the Ameraucana has a tail (although in Britain and Australia, rumpless and tailed are recognized as varieties of Araucana, not as separate breeds). It also sports a pea comb, as well as a beard and muffs. It comes in several color varieties, it may be either large or bantam, and the hens tend toward broodiness.

American Bantam Association (ABA) \ A national organization established in 1914 to represent bantam breeders and promote all kinds of bantams. Its objectives are: to encourage the breeding, exhibiting, and selling of purebred bantams

- to foster cooperation among breeders
- to sponsor national, semiannual, state, and special meets for the benefit of a greater bantam fancy
- to assemble and distribute information on the breeding, husbandry, and economic value of bantams

American class \ One of six groupings into which the American Poultry Association organizes large chicken breeds. The 13 breeds in this class originated primarily in the United States and Canada and lay brown-shell eggs. They are Buckeye, Chantecler, Delaware, Dominique, Holland, Java, Jersey Giant, Lamona, New Hampshire, Plymouth Rock, Rhode Island Red, Rhode Island White, and Wyandotte.



Ameraucana hen

American Game Bantam (AGB) \ A breed developed in the United States from the old-time pit game bantam. It is similar in appearance to the Old English Game bantam but slightly larger, and the cocks' tails feature a semi-heart-shaped curve that the Old English Game cock may or may not sport. Both Old English and American Games have a small single comb, but the American Game cockerel on exhibit must be dubbed to avoid disqualification, while the Old English cockerel may be shown undubbed.

The American Game comes in several color varieties, although not nearly as many as the Old English Game, and unlike the Old English is a true bantam, with no larger counterpart. American Game hens, like Old English hens, lay eggs with slightly tinted shells and brood easily. *See also: dubbed*



American Game Bantam rooster

American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) \ A national organization established in 1977 with the goal of ensuring the future of agriculture by conserving historic breeds and genetic diversity in poultry and other livestock. The Conservancy's programs include:

- research on breed population size, distribution, and genetic health
- research on breed characteristics
- gene banks to preserve genetic material from endangered breeds
- rescues of threatened populations
- education about genetic diversity and the role of livestock in sustainable agriculture
- technical support to a network of breeders, breed associations, and farmers

American Game Bantam hen



American Poultry Association (APA) \ The oldest livestock organization in North America, established in 1873 with the primary objective of standardizing the many varieties of domestic fowl; their qualities might be fairly evaluated according to three guiding principles:

USEFUL TYPE. Within each breed the most useful type shall be the standard type

NEW BREEDS. No new breed may be recognized that cannot be readily distinguished from existing recognized breeds

COLOR VARIETIES. The recognition of color varieties in a breed is limited to a distinctive color or color pattern.

Other objectives include:

- to promote and protect the standard-bred poultry industry in all its phases
- to publish the *American Standard of Perfection* containing breed and variety descriptions for all recognized purebred fowl
- to encourage and protect poultry exhibitions as the show window of the industry, an education for both breeders and public, and a means of interesting future breeders in taking up poultry
- to assist, encourage, and help educate the junior poultry enthusiast to the sound and practical value of standard-bred poultry and pure breeding

American Standard of Perfection \ A periodically updated book, first published in 1874 as the *Standard of Excellence*, describing and depicting the 100-plus breeds currently recognized by the American Poultry Association. The organization's goal in establishing and illustrating the standard fowl was to stabilize the economic and commercial breeds to uniform size, shape, and color with good production and practicability, with the provision that ornamental breeds, including bantams, be attractive and productive and meet requirements of the standard breeder. Although this publication started out as the nation's premier sourcebook for the poultry industry, it has since narrowed its focus to exhibition. In addition to the breeds recognized in this volume, other breeds may be found in North America, and still more exist in the world.

amino acids \ Simple organic compounds occurring naturally in plant and animal tissues. Amino acids are the basic constituents of protein. Of the 22 amino acids that make up various kinds of protein, 14 are synthesized within a chicken's body. The remaining 8 (the essential amino acids) must be obtained through dietary protein.

ammonia \ A colorless gas that emits a characteristic pungent odor. The smell of ammonia coming from chicken housing means the bedding is too damp. When enough ammonia is emitted to make your eyes burn and your nose run, the ammonia level is high enough to increase your birds' susceptibility to respiratory disease. If the ammonia concentration gets so strong that the chickens' eyes become inflamed and watery and the birds develop jerky head movements, ammonia blindness may soon follow.

Where ammonia buildup becomes a problem, take measures to eliminate damp spots and condensation; frequently add fresh litter or decrease the number of birds housed; aerate the litter often by loosening and turning it; and improve ventilation to remove excess moisture from the air. Periodically applying ground rock phosphate or ground dolomitic limestone also helps keep litter dry and improves the fertilizer value of droppings-laden litter. For an average-size backyard coop, apply 1/2 pound (0.45 kg) per week stirred into litter or 2 pounds (0.9 kg) per week scattered over the dropping pit.

amprolium \ A commonly used coccidiostat available under several different brand names.

anatomy \ See box on pages 18 and 19. For egg anatomy, see page 54.

Ancona single comb hen, bantam size



Ancona \ An Italian breed named after its town of origin. The Ancona is so similar in type to the Leghorn that it is sometimes called a mottled Leghorn, from the white speckles in its black feathers. The Ancona may be either large or bantam and comes in two comb varieties — rose comb and single comb. The hen's comb typically flops to one side. The hens lay white-shell eggs and seldom brood.

Andalusian \ A breed originating in Spain and named after the region where it originated. It comes in only one color, blue, and is sometimes called the blue Andalusian, although only 50 percent of the offspring of a blue cock mated to a blue hen will be blue; half the remainder will be black and the other half splashed. Andalusians may be either large or bantam. They sport a single comb, and the hen's comb typically flops to one side. The hens lay chalky white-shell eggs and seldom brood.

Andalusian blue \ *See: Andalusian; blue*

anemia \ A condition in which the blood is deficient in quantity (blood loss) or quality (low hemoglobin, red blood cell count, or both), caused by dietary iron deficiency, internal parasites (worms), external parasites (mites or lice), coccidiosis, or some infectious disease — notably infectious anemia. Signs include pale skin and mucous membranes, loss of energy, and loss of weight despite ravenous appetite. [*Also called: going light*] *See also: infectious anemia*

angel wing \ *See: slipped wing*

animal protein \ Protein derived from animal sources for the purpose of furnishing the eight essential amino acids that are not synthesized within a chicken's body. Animal protein in commercially prepared feeds can be problematic if it is derived from diseased animals or livestock that has been fed antibiotics and other undesirable drugs. Chickens that forage freely obtain animal protein from bugs, worms, and other small critters.

ankle \ The hock joint, often mistakenly called the knee.

anthelmintic \ Any preparation used for deworming, from the Greek words *anti*, meaning “against,” and *helmins*, meaning “worms.” *See also: dewormer*

antibiotic \ A medicine used to destroy or inhibit the growth of bacteria and other microorganisms. Although antibiotics have been fed (controversially) to commercially grown broilers to stimulate growth and feed-conversion efficiency, they are not used in feeds sold for backyard flocks.

antibody \ A natural substance in the blood that recognizes and destroys foreign invaders and causes an immune response to vaccination or infection. A chick acquires disease protection through antibodies obtained from the mother hen via substances in the egg, primarily in the yolk. For about four weeks after hatching, therefore, a chick is immune to any disease for which the mother hen carries a high level of antibodies. Since antibodies attach to specific antigens, the antibody against one disease offers no protection against any other disease.

anticoccidial \ One of many drugs used to prevent or treat coccidiosis. A drug used for prevention is a coccidiostat; a drug used for treatment is a coccidiocide.

Andalusian hen



anticoccidial vaccine \ A commercial vaccine administered to chicks to stimulate immunity by introducing a low-level infection from the species of coccidia most likely to be encountered in their environment. Immunity is subsequently enhanced by exposure to the developing life cycles of both the coccidial strains present in the vaccine and those naturally occurring in the environment. Many hatcheries offer the option of having chicks vaccinated, which produces lifetime protection against coccidiosis, provided the chicks are never fed medicated rations, which would neutralize the vaccine.

antigen \ A toxic or other foreign substance that triggers an immune response, especially by stimulating the production of antibodies.

antitoxin \ An antibody that is artificially introduced through injection and that neutralizes toxins produced by bacteria. Botulism, for example, is caused by bacteria that produce toxins. An injection of botulism antitoxin may be used to treat the disease by inducing immediate, though temporary, immunity.

Antwerp Belgian \ An alternative name for the Belgian Bearded d'Anvers bantam, named after the Belgium municipality of Antwerp (which the French call Anvers). *See also: Belgian Bearded d'Anvers*

Any Other Color (AOC) \ A show designation for a catchall class that includes all colors of a breed or variety without a specific class of their own. [*Also called: All Other Colors*]

Any Other Variety (AOV) \ A show designation for a catchall class that includes all varieties of a breed without a specific class of their own. [*Also called: All Other Varieties*]

APA-ABA Youth Program \ A national organization sponsored jointly by the American Poultry Association and the American Bantam Association to educate young folks five years or older about poultry by promoting opportunities to practice showmanship and by encouraging members to become involved with the poultry fancy in general.

Appenzeller \ A chicken developed in the Appenzell canton of Switzerland. Appenzellers are of two distinct breeds: Spitzhauben (which has found its way to North America) and Barthühner (which has not). *See also: Barthühner; Spitzhauben*

apple cider vinegar (ACV) \ *See: vinegar*

approved for poultry \ Ascertained by the Food and Drug Administration to be generally safe for use around chickens and other poultry and for which a withdrawal period (if applicable) has been established. Medications, dewormers, paracitocides, pesticides, and similar products that have not been approved for poultry must be used with caution, preferably under veterinary supervision.

apron \ A fencing technique to keep digging predators such as raccoons and foxes from burrowing into the poultry yard. It is created by attaching a 12-inch (30 cm)-wide length of wire mesh to the bottom of the fence, perpendicular to the fence and extending away from the yard. On a portable run, the apron sits on top of the ground; on a fixed run, it is usually shallowly buried. To prevent soil moisture from rapidly rusting the apron, use vinyl-coated wire or brush the mesh with roofing tar. Cut and lift the sod along the outside of the fence line, and clip or lash the apron to the bottom of the fence. Spread the apron horizontally along the ground and replace the sod on top. The apron will get matted into the grass roots to create a barrier that discourages digging. [*Also called: fence skirt*] \ A saddle.

aragonite \ Calcium carbonate derived from seashells and used as a supplement for laying hens to ensure strong eggshells.

Araucana \ One of two breeds that lay blue-shell eggs (the other being the Ameraucana), developed from chickens imported from Chile and named after Indians living in Chile's Gulf of Arauco. Araucanas have a pea comb, come in several color varieties, and may be large or bantam. Their most distinguishing physical features are their lack of a tail, reducing fertility (because a tail pulls feathers away from the vent during mating), and their spectacular ear tufts, a trait associated with a lethal gene that can cause the early death of chicks. Araucana hens tend toward broodiness. *See also: ear tuft; rumplessness*

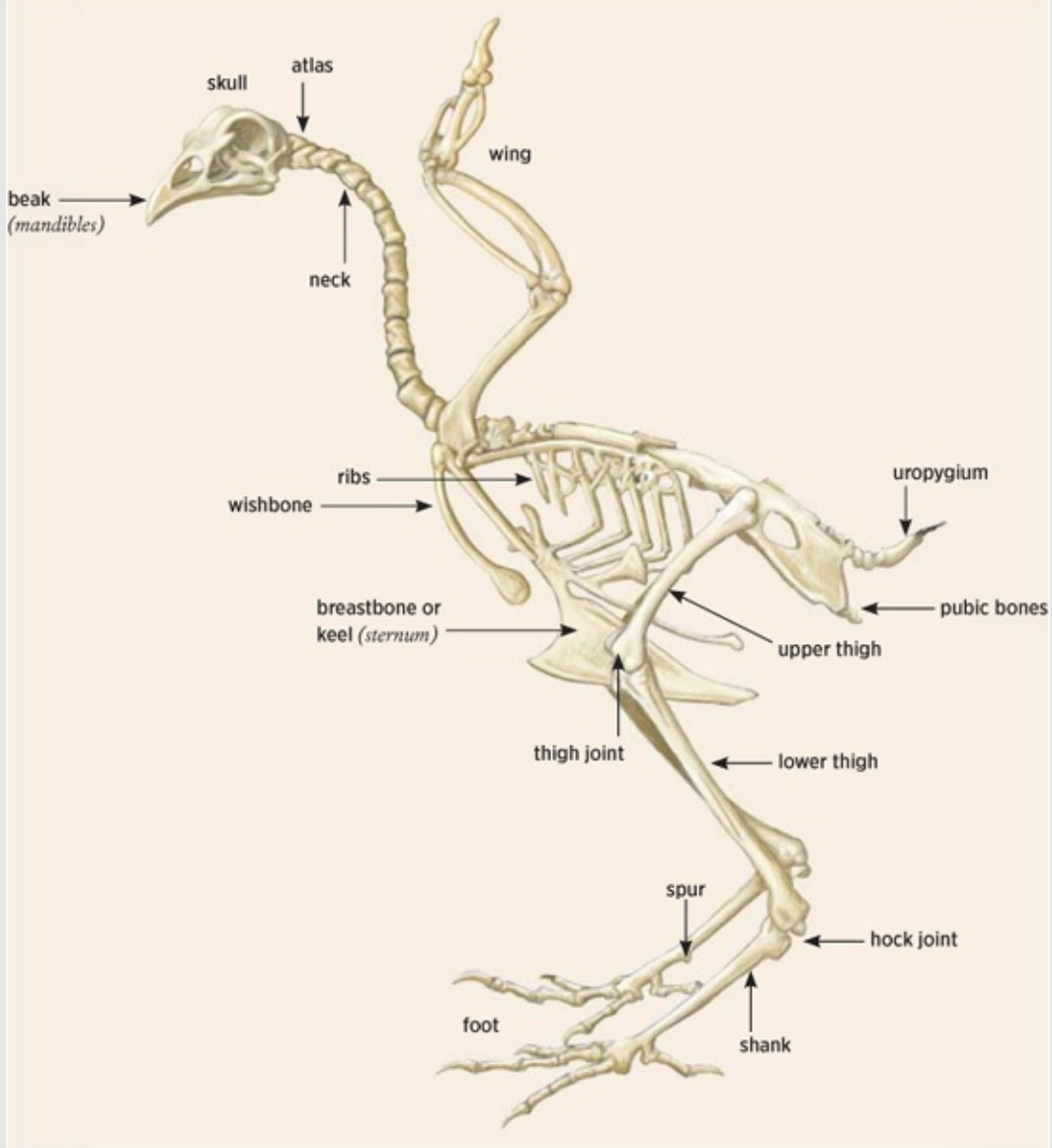
Araucana hen and chicks

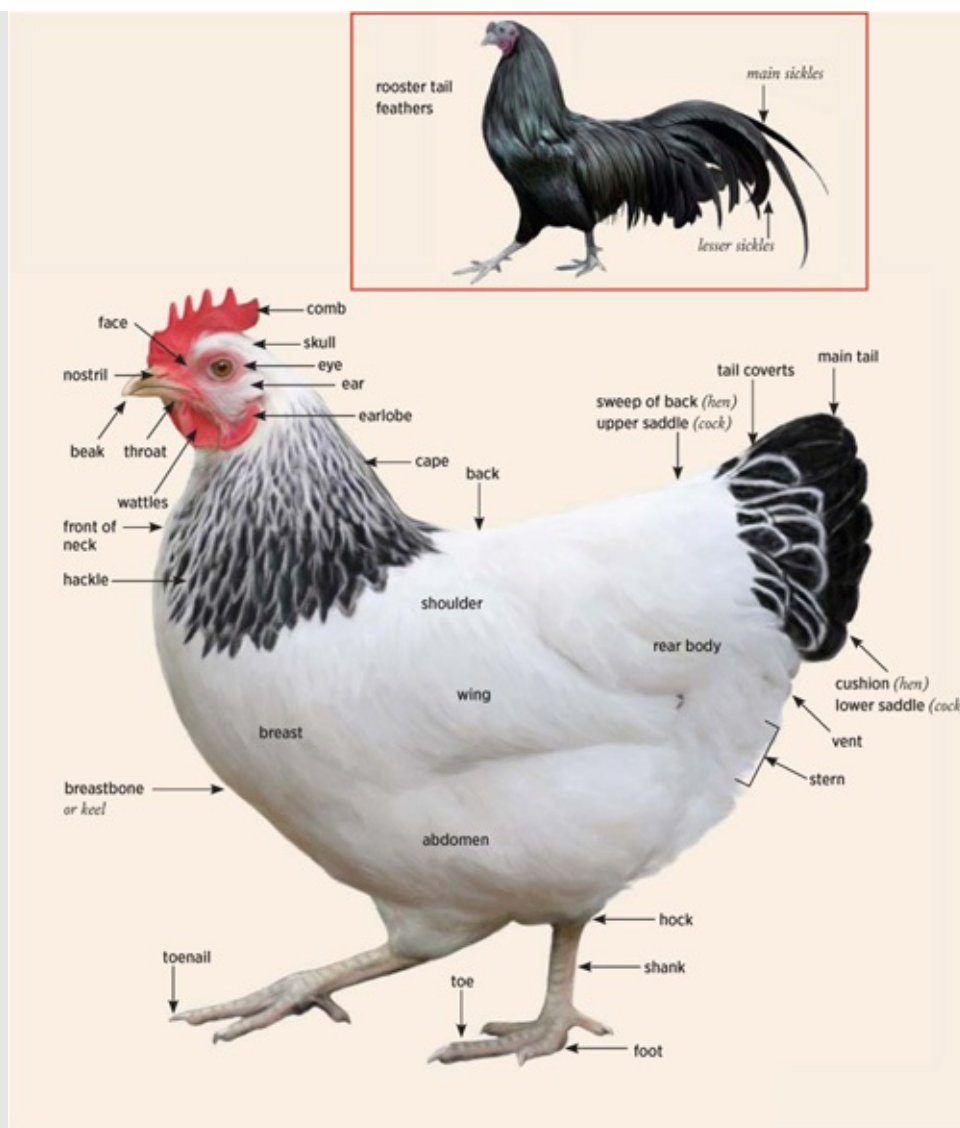


ANATOMY

Capably discussing various aspects of a chicken requires being able to identify its many parts.

See pages 115 and 293 for details of wing anatomy. See page 44 for butchering anatomy.





ark \ A small, floorless, portable chicken shelter, usually A-frame in shape, periodically moved around the lawn or garden to provide fresh forage and a clean environment for the inhabitants. [Also called: *chicken tractor*]

arthritis \ Inflammation of the joint and surrounding tissue. The most common type of avian arthritis is staphylococcal arthritis, caused by the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria, common in poultry environments. The bacteria enter a chicken through an open wound and may cause food poisoning in humans if an infected chicken is handled in an unsanitary manner during or following butchering. Prevention involves avoiding injuries by providing safe, uncrowded housing. [Also called: *joint ill*]

artificial incubation \ Hatching eggs in an incubator, rather than under a hen. *See also: incubator*

artificial insemination (AI) \ The injection of semen into a hen other than by natural mating with a cock. Artificial insemination is used by breeders of Cornish chickens (which have trouble mating naturally because of their heavy muscling and wide-apart legs), by exhibitors who wish to keep their hens in show condition or have a top cock with a leg injury that precludes mating, and by owners of valuable cocks that tend to be shy or otherwise low in sex drive.

ascariidiasis \ Infection by ascarids.

ascarids \ Large, long, yellowish-white parasitic nematode worms of the family Ascaridae. These worms invade the chicken's intestine, causing a pale head, droopiness, weight loss, diarrhea, and death. Most chickens become resistant to ascarids by three months of age. [*Also called: large roundworms*]

ark or chicken tractor



ascites \ (pronounced a-site-eez) An accumulation of yellowish or bloody fluid in the abdominal cavity, generally occurring in fast-growing broilers as a result of heart failure. Prevention includes avoiding stress caused by crowding, insufficient numbers of feeders and drinkers, excessive temperatures (hot or cold), ammonia fumes arising from damp bedding, and inadequate ventilation. [*Also called: broiler ascites; dropsy; waterbelly*]

Aseel \ A muscular game breed developed more than three thousand years ago on the Indian subcontinent. The name Aseel — an Arabic word meaning “trueborn” or “purebred” — was given to this indigenous breed while northern India was under Muslim rule. Aseels are known for their short, tight plumage; upright stance; and square shanks, as well as the cocks' inherent disposition to engage in vicious fights if not housed separately. The Aseel has a pea comb, lacks wattles, and comes in a few color varieties. A bantam version is known in Europe but not in North America. The eggs have a tinted shell color, and hens quite typically go broody.

as hatched \ *See: straight run*

Asiatic class \ One of six groupings into which the American Poultry Association organizes large chicken breeds. The breeds in this class, originating primarily in China, are Brahma, Cochin, and Langshan. All three breeds are feather-legged and tend to be quite large.

Asil \ Aseel.

aspergillosis \ Brooder pneumonia.

Aseel hen



Aseel rooster



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