

Fancy a Chicken?

Consider building a coop and adding a few happy hens to your backyard! The benefits are endless (fresh eggs, garden fertilizer, companionship), and chickens' size makes them a great fit for the country or the city. There are tons of breeds to choose from, but we've picked five unique ones worth clucking about.

BY LORI VANOVER SENIOR EDITOR

POLISH ▶

WEIGHT: 4.5 lbs EGGS: MEDIUM TEMPERAMENT: CALM

Surprisingly not from Poland, this flashy breed likely originated in Spain. However, **feathered caps worn by Polish soldiers may have inspired the name**—the small birds have crests on their heads. Usually calm, these chickens' obscured vision may make them nervous, so be mindful not to surprise or startle them.



Polish chickens are pretty, but they might bounce off the walls because that fancy "do" blocks their vision.

Queen Victoria adored Cochins, making them all the rage in the mid-1800s.



◀ COCHIN

WEIGHT: 8.5 lbs EGGS: LARGE TEMPERAMENT: HUGGABLE

If you're looking for **big, plush chickens that resemble teddy bears**, check out Cochins. Their thick feathers come in many colors, including black, buff, blue, white, partridge and barred. These hens are friendly and easily tamed, and they often act broody, protecting their eggs. Cochins are big enough to hatch duck or turkey eggs, as well.

SILKIE ▶

WEIGHT: 32 oz EGGS: MEDIUM

TEMPERAMENT: DOCILE

Known for downy soft feathers, black eyes and slate blue skin, this bantam breed makes a great pet. The plumage, which comes bearded or non-bearded in black, blue, partridge, buff, white or gray, looks and **feels like silky, fluffy fur**. The hens are small, so they're easy to pick up. You'll want to pet them often!



Marco Polo described the Silkie in his writings about visiting China.

▶ AMERAUCANA

WEIGHT: 5.5 lbs EGGS: LARGE TEMPERAMENT: GENTLE

Folks **love these hens for their colored eggs**.

Ameraucanas' fluffy faces are bearded and muffed, adding to their beauty. They were developed as a cold-hardy breed. Varieties include black, blue, silver, wheaten, white and lavender, making their plumage as pretty as their eggs.

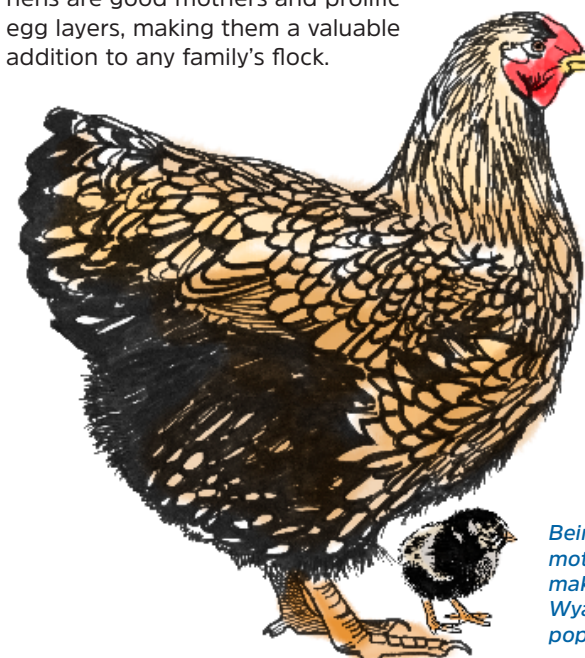


Ameraucana's blue eggs are the perfect choice for your Easter basket.

▼ WYANDOTTE

WEIGHT: 6.5 lbs EGGS: LARGE TEMPERAMENT: FRIENDLY

Originally called the American Sebright, these medium-size birds are **popular for their variety of eye-catching patterns and colors**, such as black, partridge, white, buff, Columbian, golden laced, blue, silver laced and silver-penciled. The hens are good mothers and prolific egg layers, making them a valuable addition to any family's flock.



Being a good mother hen makes the Wyandotte a popular breed.

OK,
what's
next?

Once you've selected the breed that's right for you, head to a local farm supply, feed store or breeder, or check out these online hatcheries.

mypetchicken.com
cacklehatchery.com
meyerhatchery.com
hoovershatchery.com
mcmurrayhatchery.com
idealpoultry.com

ILLUSTRATIONS: SCOTT SCHILLER