

Cochin Chicken Breed Guide



**Breed type**

Ornamental,
exhibition

**Egg color**

Brown

**Pen or free-range?**

Pen

**Temperament**

Mostly calm and
friendly, sometimes
broody

Cochin quick facts

Lifespan: 8-10 years

Weight: Females (hens): 8.5 lbs.; Males (roosters): 11 lbs.

Appearance: Heavy feathering with various colors

Egg Production: 110-150 eggs/year (3-5 eggs/week)

Good for Beginners: Yes

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Cochin chickens are one of the main breeds people keep. These chickens were once primarily used for meat but are more popular for exhibition today. Tractor Supply offers numerous **poultry breeds** and here gives the key facts you need to know about Cochin chickens.

History of Cochin Chickens

The origins of Cochin chickens are somewhat ambiguous. Some accounts say these large fowl were once raised and revered in monasteries in Europe and Asia. A document published in 1923 called "Popular Breeds of Domestic Poultry" discusses how the breed was developed in the Province of Shantung, north of Shanghai in China. Here, people referred to the bird as "Ju-chin".

These birds were first called Shanghai chickens, and some people may refer to them this way today. Many cite Cochin chickens first arrival in England and the U.S. on boats from Shanghai in the mid-1800s. However, people discovered Shanghai was simply the port of call – not the birds' place of origin. So, the name changed to Cochin, from the French province Cochinchina which is now Vietnam. This province wasn't the point of origin either, but the name stuck.

Queen Victoria, who received imported Cochin chickens, sparked increased popularity of the breed in England and the U.S. This started the "hen fever" trend, where people throughout both countries were fascinated with poultry. People were in awe of these **ornamental and exhibition birds**. To this day, chicken lovers go crazy for Cochin.

Records indicate that the importation of Cochins to America started in 1846, although it's likely these chickens first arrived in the area at least half a century earlier. Cochins have been used to create other American breeds, such as **Plymouth Rock** and **Rhode Island Red**.

Temperament and Good-to-Knows

Cochins may be the ideal chicken for beginners since they're one of the calmest and friendliest breeds. Even the roosters rarely get aggressive, although some variations might. Other facts about Cochins' personality include:

- **Exceptional broodiness:** Cochin hens tend to hatch more than one batch a year, and sometimes even roosters will brood chicks. You may have Cochins brood duck or turkey eggs. Be aware that Cochins often wean their young too soon if hatching chicks during colder times of the year. Also, if using Cochins to brood eggs of other fowl, understand that their size might affect eggs with thin shells.
- **Easy to train:** Cochin chicks are less active than chicks of other breeds, making them easier to handle. You can train young Cochin to follow your lead. Generally, these birds won't leave the destination until you direct them. This obedient disposition makes this breed ideal for training chicken keepers.
- **Lack of predator awareness:** For all the benefits of Cochins' more cooperative personality, the drawback is they often lack awareness of predators and danger. That's why anyone who wants to keep Cochin chickens must invest in reliable **coops and pens**.

Visual and Egg Characteristics

The original Cochins looked different than they do today, and they had a different purpose, as well. These birds were offered as an alternative to goose or turkey for Christmas dinner. As such, these chickens were taller and heavier, grew fat more quickly and had few feathers.

Today, Cochins aren't considered a good meat source. Instead, they're mostly ornamental. A striking appearance saves Cochins from the cooking pot. These large birds have fluffy feathers. Their heavy feathering is full, soft and not tight like in other breeds. They even have feathers on their legs and feet, with only the inner toes visible.

Such heavy feathers mean Cochins' small heads often fade into their feathers, but you can always spot their bright red single combs. Hens have small rounded single combs and roosters have medium-sized single combs. Hens sport small rounded wattles while roosters have long wattles. Both sexes have red earlobes.

A short-wide stance gives Cochin chickens a stout appearance. The roosters weigh about 11 pounds and the hens about 8.5 lbs. There are full-size and bantam Cochins, and these birds come in a range of colors. The original colors – which were accepted into the American Poultry Association (APA) in 1874 – are buff, black, partridge and white.

Cochin Egg Production

Cochin chicken egg production is on the lower side, with hens producing about 110-150 eggs a year. Some keepers have claimed their Cochins produced higher amounts, closer to 180. This slow-developing breed may not begin laying eggs until around eight months old. Their eggs are brown and medium-to-large. Genetics make Cochins predisposed to getting very fat, which can halt egg production.

Health and Care

Proper care is essential for the **health and wellness** of all poultry. The unique characteristics of Cochin chickens mean you might need to invest time and resources into these birds differently than you would for other breeds.

Feeding

Cochins are big eaters and don't discriminate when it comes to **poultry feed**. However, they're also prone to gaining too much weight. You want to keep these chickens full-figured but not excessively fat to avoid fatty liver diseases and other health concerns. A telltale sign of excess weight is a young hen not laying. If your Cochins are too fat, reduce their rations and add in some leafy green vegetables.

Containment

Since Cochins lack the sensitivity to predators and other dangers other breeds exhibit, **brooders**, coops and runs are a must. Simple brooders where it's easy to find food and water are ideal. Be aware that chicks and young Cochins may be slow to feather so spend more time in brooders and coops, especially in cold climates. Cochins aren't made for **free-range** – they require confined coops and runs and supervision. Thankfully, these birds aren't inclined to wander or scratch too much. A two-foot fence is enough to keep them contained.

In addition to their stout bodies, Cochins don't fly. So, low roosts are best. Consider wide, flat bars and 2" x 4" or 2" x 6" shelves, 6" to 12" from the ground. This design gives Cochins enough space to be comfortable without risking injury. If these birds are part of a mixed flock, they might try to follow other breeds to higher bars in the roost. In this case, training Cochins to use a wide ramp to the roost can help.

Care in Different Climates

Although Cochins feather slowly, they are hardy. This allows these chickens to thrive in colder climates not suitable for other breeds. However, these chickens are still susceptible to frostbite if their feet get muddy during the day and harden at night. Keeping coops clean and providing fresh, thick litter for sleeping helps prevent issues like frostbite from muddy feet.

Heavy feathering can also increase the likelihood of heat stress when conditions are warm. Cochins need shade and cool areas to **beat the summer heat**.

Provide the Best for Your Chickens with Tractor Supply

A friendly breed great for exhibition, Cochin chickens are ideal for beginners and experienced keepers. If you're interested in Cochin chickens, turn to America's largest rural lifestyle retailer, Tractor Supply. In addition to offering **live chickens**, we share our 85+ years of experience with tips about raising chickens in **The Coop**. To shop for Cochin chickens and supplies, place an order online or **visit your local Tractor Supply store**.