

# Dominique Breed Guide



**Breed type**

Dual-purpose (egg and meat)

**Egg color**

Brown

**Pen or free-range?**

Both

**Temperament**

Mostly calm and friendly, sometimes broody

## Dominique quick facts

**Lifespan:** 6-8 years

**Weight:** Females (hens): 5-6 lbs.; Males (roosters): 7-8 lbs.

**Appearance:** Black and white/barred pattern

**Egg Production:** 230-280 eggs/year

**Good for Beginners:** Yes

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Considered a heritage breed, **Dominique chickens** were one of the first chicken breeds in America. It's often called America's oldest chicken breed. Today, keepers still seek Dominiques for the benefits they provide for flocks. Learn more about **poultry breeds** like the Dominique from Tractor Supply.

### **History of Dominique Chickens**

There are multiple theories for the origins of Dominique chickens. Some sources claim it was brought to New England by the Pilgrims, while others believe it was developed in Saint Dominique, a French colony in modern-day Haiti. Whatever their origins, Dominiques have been in America since the 1750s and bred on American farms in the early 1800s. Farmers and homesteaders admired them for meat and egg production and their hardiness.

Dominiques are a crossbreed representing several chicken breeds, including the **Cochin**, Dorking and Redcap. In 1874, the American Poultry Association (APA) recognized the breed. Dominiques were exported to Europe, and their popularity continued growing in America and abroad.

As new breeds were introduced, the Dominique's popularity began declining. By the 1970s, there were only a handful of known breeders left. The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (Livestock Conservancy) listed the breed as threatened and began efforts toward preservation.

Although the Dominique is still considered rare, its popularity is growing again. Thanks to the breed's capabilities and traits, small farms and homesteaders are introducing them into their flocks to reap the advantages they offer.

### **Temperament and Good-to-Knows**

Novice and experienced keepers are interested in Dominique chickens because of their docile, friendly personalities. Families that want to introduce young children to chickens might start with this breed because they often get along with kids. Prone to foraging and predator-savvy, Dominiques thrive in free-range settings.

Dominique hens vary in their broodiness. When hens decide to hatch, they're usually great mothers. Still, consider having artificial incubators available in case natural incubation isn't possible. When **collecting and storing eggs**, gather them daily and store them in a cool, dry place until it's time for incubation. The ideal conditions for incubating eggs are between 99 and 101 degrees Fahrenheit with humidity of 50%. Incubation takes about 21 days. Eggs must be turned regularly for proper embryo development.

### **Visual and Egg Characteristics**

As the Dominique became more popular, breeders sought to refine this chicken by crossing it with other breeds. Eventually, breeders' focus shifted to creating more uniformity as organizations like APA standardized breeds. As such, the physical and egg-laying capabilities of the Dominique represent many years of development.

#### ***Physical Characteristics of Dominiques***

Dominiques have a distinct black and white barred (striped) plumage that may be called hawk-colored or cuckoo-patterned. It's this appearance that helps Dominique chickens avoid detection from predators. These chickens have rose combs and bright red earlobes and wattles. Their skin, beaks, legs and feet are yellow.

Dominiques are bred for meat production, as their body type suggests. They have full, broad bodies and an upright stance. Roosters' backs slope into a U-shape, while hens' backs slope from their heads to the tails. Hens weigh between five and six pounds, and roosters weigh between seven and eight pounds.

#### ***Dominique Egg Production***

Dominiques are dual-purpose but they're mostly used for egg production. Dominique hens lay between 230-280 eggs a year. These medium-sized eggs come in a range of browns, from light to dark. As with other chicken breeds that lay many eggs, their production declines after the first two years.

## **Health and Care**

A Dominique's lifespan is average for a chicken – they live between six to eight years. However, your chickens' life expectancy depends on its care. Implement these practices to ensure the **health and wellness** of your chickens:

### ***Diet***

Dominiques like to forage, but you'll want to provide a commercial layer **poultry feed** so that they maintain a well-balanced diet for egg production. You can also supplement their diets with fresh fruits and vegetables and **treats**. Ensure to replenish **waterers** frequently with fresh, clean water. Washing out waterers is also important to prevent bacteria buildup and potential infection.

### ***Housing***

Although one of the hardier chicken breeds, Dominiques still need a comfortable and secure place to stay at night. **Coops** should have at least 4 square feet and 8 inches of roosting space per chicken. Ensure the coop has adequate ventilation, **nesting boxes, bedding, brooders** and other accessories chickens need.

As mentioned, Dominiques love to forage. Free-range environments are ideal, but if that's not possible, provide a run with ample space. 8-10 square feet per chicken in the run provides enough space for foraging and exercising. Consider **swings, perches and toys**, which encourage mental stimulation.

### ***Health and Hardiness***

Part of why Dominiques were popular historically was a hardiness to thrive in the harsh environments and rugged terrains of the American Northeast. This breed even survived through the Great Depression. Dominiques have maintained their hardiness over the years. Their close feathers help protect them in cold weather and rose combs make them less prone to frostbite than breeds with single combs. This breed also adapts well to warm, humid environments.

Of course, any chicken subjected to harsh climates without proper protection can experience illness. That's why you should consider accessories like **coop heaters** during the winter and ensure access to shade and extra water during the summer.

Dominique chickens are healthy birds but may still experience lice, mites or other common diseases. You can decrease the likelihood of these health issues through proper care and monitoring of your chickens' well-being. Consult a veterinarian whenever you notice symptoms of a possible health concern.

## **Support Your Flock with Help from Tractor Supply**

The Dominique is a heritage breed that new and experienced keepers might consider for meat or egg production. For more about Dominique chickens and other poultry breeds, trust America's largest rural lifestyle retailer, Tractor Supply. Explore topics related to **starting your flock** and more in The Coop. You can also browse our inventory of live birds, including numerous **chicken breeds**. To shop for Dominique chickens or poultry supplies, place an order with us online or **visit your local Tractor Supply store**.