

# English Orpington Breed Guide



A charming and cuddly breed, English Orpingtons are great egg layers and make a versatile addition to your flock. Beginner and experienced keepers and homesteaders appreciate these **chickens**, and their friendly, docile personality makes them ideal for families with young children. Learn the basics of English Orpington chickens, and if you're looking for these **live birds** to add to your homestead, **farm or ranch**, turn to Tractor Supply.

- **Breed type:** Egg
- **Egg color:** Light brown/pink
- **Pen or free-range:** Both
- **Temperament:** Docile, friendly
- **English Orpington quick facts:**
  - **Lifespan:** 5-8 years (some live 10 or more)
  - **Weight:** Females (hens): 6-8 lbs.; Males (roosters): 8-10 lbs.
  - **Appearance:** Numerous color varieties (buff, black, lavender, etc.)
  - **Egg production:** 150-200 eggs/year (3-4 eggs/week)
  - **Good for beginners:** Yes

### **History of English Orpington Chickens**

Famous poultry breeder William Cook is credited with having created Orpington chickens in the late 1800s, which are named after the village of Orpington in Kent County, England. Cook's goal was to have a dual-purpose breed ideal for eggs and meat, and these qualities helped the bird's popularity quickly rise. In 1902, the American Poultry Association accepted the **Buff Orpington**, followed by the Black and White Orpington in 1905 and the Blue Orpington in 1923.

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

It's not just their usefulness that makes Orpingtons a favorite breed – these birds are known for their friendliness. Even the roosters tend to be calmer than the males of other breeds. This docile disposition allows you to easily introduce them into an existing or mixed flock, and they get along with kids for homesteads and farms with little ones.

You might live in the suburbs and worry about noisy birds disturbing the neighbors. In this case, English Orpingtons can be the perfect breed to start with – they're not the most talkative chickens, and the people next door won't be bothered by soft clucking.

Handling Orpingtons is often easier than managing other breeds but remember that all chickens are one-of-a-kind with distinct personality quirks. You might have a few birds in your flock that are a little more active than others, so make sure you have all the **poultry supplies** you need to provide the best possible care.

### ***Hardiness in Different Climates***

Life Out Here means you're used to changing weather patterns, but can Orpington chickens handle temperature differences? In general, these birds can adapt to both hot and cold environments, although they tend to be cold hardy. Their size and feathers give them the natural warmth they need to thrive in the winter months, and small combs and wattles mean they're less susceptible to frostbite.

Even so, you want to properly winterize their **coop or pen** to ensure adequate warmth during the colder times of the year. **Coop heaters**, for instance, can ensure their living spaces stay at comfortable temperatures when the outdoor air gets chillier. Coops and pens should also stay dry, as the dense feathers of Orpington chickens take a while to dry, so they can get cold quickly if they get wet.

Although Orpingtons can still do well in the spring and summer, their large size and thick feathers make them less heat tolerant. As temperatures rise, ensure they have plenty of access to shade and consider adding a few extra **poultry waterers** around the backyard or farm.

### **Visual and Egg Characteristics**

From the sleek feathers of Black Orpingtons that glimmer in the sunlight to the silver-blue hue of the Lavender Orpingtons, these birds boast many eye-catching color patterns. Despite the rainbow of colors used to categorize these chickens, some physical characteristics make them stand out from other breeds – no matter their color. The coloring of males and females of the same Orpington variety is so similar that it's difficult to determine the sex of your chicks until they reach full maturity, typically between eight to 10 weeks.

Their broad feathering holds tightly to their round, heart-shaped bodies, while deep red wattles and medium-sized combs add to their striking appearance. Their legs support a low stance, and their color may differ depending on the Orpington variety.

### ***English Orpington Egg Production***

As mentioned, Orpingtons were originally intended as dual-purpose birds. You can still use the breed for meat production, but most keepers rely on them for egg production. It stands to reason – Orpington hens lay an average of 150 to 200 eggs a year, with some hens reaching 250 eggs. Their eggs are generally light brown, but they can sometimes have a pinkish tint – as if their feathers weren't pretty enough.

These chickens are cold hardy, so the hens aren't as affected by the cold weather and will lay eggs all winter. They also go broody, so make sure you have **poultry nesting boxes** in the coop to keep them comfortable. They'll need at least 12 to 16 hours of light every day to induce laying, so consider supplemental lighting for the months when it gets darker earlier.

### **Health and Care for English Orpingtons**

The average life span of Orpington chickens is five to eight years, but since these are a heritage breed, some may live 10 years or more. It depends in part on why your chickens were bred – Orpingtons bred for eggs tend to have shorter lifespans than those generated through standard breeding. The other half of these birds' longevity is their overall health and wellness, so ensure you support them with quality food, adequate shelter and care for illnesses.

### ***Poultry Feed for Orpington Chickens***

You can provide a happy and healthy Life Out Here for your Orpingtons with a balanced diet of nutritious **poultry feed**. They will forage, but these chickens are more likely to wait by **poultry feeders** in the coop for their next meal.

Look for poultry feed formulated with specific diets in mind, such as **all natural, probiotics** or **organic** to support their development according to your preferences. It's hard not to love these cuddly chickens, so you can also reward them with the occasional **poultry treat**.

### ***Comfort in Confinement and Roaming Around***

Keeping in step with their easy-going nature, Orpingtons thrive whether in confinement or as free-range birds (although they aren't great foragers). If you need to keep your chickens confined, be sure to give them ample space, ideally 10 to 12 square feet of run space for every bird and four to five feet of

coop space. Also be sure to have the right supplies, including [coops, pens and nesting boxes](#), plus [poultry bedding](#) such as [shavings](#) for comfort.

Have [brooders](#) ready for when eggs hatch and facilitate a calming and safe environment for laying eggs with [nesting pads](#) and [herbs](#). Although Orpington hens are very broody, you might consider [incubators](#) and related supplies for additional needs.

#### ***Protecting Orpington Chickens Against Common Illnesses***

Another advantage of raising English Orpingtons is that they're not especially prone to many diseases, but it's always wise to keep coops and pens clean to prevent the spread of pathogens. [Poultry health and wellness products](#), such as [vitamins and supplements](#) that offer [immune system support](#), are another way to give their well-being a boost.

Obesity can occur when chickens don't get enough physical activity, which is why adequate space in the coop or pen and run is essential. More than being overweight, an obese chicken might also have problems laying eggs. Frostbite is still possible, even with smaller combs and wattles, so keep these birds warm when temperatures drop.

As with other chickens that have dense feathering, Orpingtons can be more susceptible to pests such as lice and mites, so consider performing monthly checks for external parasites. Giving chickens dust baths and using [poultry fly and pest control](#) in their living spaces can limit the risk of infestations.

#### **Get Ready to Introduce Orpington Chickens with Tractor Supply**

Between their egg-laying abilities and friendly personalities, English Orpingtons can be the perfect bird to add to your flock – or when starting to raise chickens for the first time. To find the supplies you need to prepare for Orpington chickens, visit your [local Tractor Supply store](#) or browse our selection online.