

# ISA Brown Chicken Breed Guide



## Breed type

egg



## Egg color

Brown



## Pen or free-range?

Both



## Temperament

Mostly calm and friendly

## ISA Brown quick facts

**Lifespan:** 2-3 years

**Weight:** Females (hens): 4.5 lbs.; Males (roosters): 6.5 lbs.

**Appearance:** Chestnut brown/white (hens); white w/ speckles (roosters)

**Egg Production:** 300+ eggs/year

**Good for Beginners:** Yes

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Although **ISA Brown chickens** are a newer breed, they're also one of the most popular breeds, with many backyard keepers and farms having some in their flocks. It's not hard to see why, given this breed's docile personality and egg-laying capabilities. Learn more about ISA Browns from Tractor Supply, America's largest rural lifestyle retailer and provider of multiple **chicken breeds**.

### History of ISA Brown Chickens

ISA is an acronym – it stands for Institut de Sélection Animale, a French company that first developed the breed in 1978. ISA wanted a chicken with an optimized egg production. In 1997, ISA merged with Merck and Co., and the breed's new name became Hubbard ISA before finally being called ISA Brown.

Given that this breed was developed by a company, its genetic makeup is akin to trade secrets. It's believed **Rhode Island Reds** and Whites and **White Leghorns** are involved in their development.

ISA Browns are a hybrid breed, so the American Poultry Association (APA) offers no standards of perfection for it. However, this breed is copyrighted by ISA. In other words, you cannot pass off similar-looking chickens as ISA Browns.

### Temperament and Good-to-Knows

A key concern among all keepers when **starting a flock** or **introducing new chickens** is a breed's temperament. Given their history, it may seem that ISA Browns are exclusive birds. In truth, this is a common breed with the same down-to-earth personality as many other favorite breeds. Here are some good things to know about ISA Browns:

- **Calm, people-loving chickens:** Docile and friendly, ISA Browns enjoy interacting with humans and may even let you hold or cuddle with them.
- **A great choice for keepers with kids:** Since they like attention from people, ISA Browns aren't very flighty. This also makes them perfect for families with small children.
- **Not very noisy:** ISA Browns are quiet compared to some other breeds, making them ideal for backyard flocks.
- **Like to forage:** Although ISA Browns don't mind confinement, they also like to forage. Be sure to provide ample space for them to explore, whether in a spacious run or as free-range chickens.
- **Can be aggressive with other breeds:** Sometimes, ISA Browns can be assertive when introducing new breeds into the flock. It's a good rule to monitor initial encounters when introducing new birds, and you want to be especially careful with ISA Browns. Understanding the **pecking order** is also essential to maintaining peace within your flock.
- **Adaptable to different climates:** Popular in the U.S. and Australia, which have a wide range of climates and weather conditions, ISA Browns are a very hardy bird. They thrive in hot and cold environments.

### Visual and Egg Characteristics

A hybrid breed, ISA Brown chickens have the desired traits of other breeds that many keepers seek. Consider the physical and egg-laying characteristics of these chickens:

#### *Physical Characteristics of ISA Browns*

ISA Browns look similar to Rhode Island Reds, their feathers have a lighter shade of reddish-brown that appears more chestnut brown. They may also have white tail feathers. These are the hens – the roosters are white with brown speckles. Whereas hens are medium-bodied, the roosters are stockier and broader. These chickens have single red combs and red wattles. Their eyes may be yellow, bay red or a color in between.

#### *ISA Brown Egg Production*

If you purchase ISA Brown because you want a great egg layer, you've made the right choice. ISA Brown hens begin laying at around 20-22 weeks old and lay over 300 eggs per year. What's more, they barely molt before getting right back into laying eggs. Even during the colder months, hens continue to lay, although they might lay fewer than at peak times of the year.

There's no doubt ISA Browns lay an impressive number of eggs each year, but there's a catch. This period only lasts about two years. After that, don't expect nearly as much egg production, although your hens might lay an egg now and then. ISA Browns aren't considered very broody chickens. If the setting

is right, they might become broody. So, you want an incubator to ensure the healthy development of ISA Brown eggs.

## Health and Care

One drawback of ISA Brown chickens is their reduced lifespan. Compared to other chicken breeds, many of which live five to eight years, most ISA Browns only live two to three years. Their high egg production explains their lower life expectancy, and these chickens are bred to lay all year long, which prevents the reproductive system from taking a break. This can overwhelm these birds and cause early death.

However, some keepers have had ISA Browns live for five to eight years. This breed can experience an extended lifespan only because of proper care that protects their **health and wellness**. Thankfully for keepers, ISA Browns are known as a low-maintenance breed. Follow these care tips when keeping ISA Browns:

- **Support healthy egg production with a well-balanced diet:** As such incredible egg layers, ISA Browns use a lot of protein and calcium. You want to provide your birds with a high-quality **poultry feed** to boost nutrients. Consider supplementing their diet with mealworms and other **treats**.
- **A safe coop to call home:** A stable and secure coop is critical, given how much time ISA Brown hens spend laying eggs. **Coops** should be fitted with **nesting boxes**, proper ventilation and other features that ensure a comfortable space for your chickens.
- **Maintaining plumage:** ISA Browns don't have any special grooming needs. Providing dust baths allows these birds to groom their feathers themselves. Inspect your chickens periodically for lice, mites and other parasites to prevent outbreaks of illness that may affect the whole flock.
- **Susceptibility to health problems:** A high egg production rate makes ISA Browns more prone to some health issues than other breeds. Specifically, ISA Browns are more vulnerable to kidney problems, which often lead to early death. Antibiotics can help these chickens recover from illnesses. Consult a veterinarian on the best ways to preserve your chickens' health.

## Find ISA Browns and Other Chicken Breeds at Tractor Supply

The ISA Brown offers a great chicken for egg laying, and you can find other breeds for egg production, meat production and exhibition at Tractor Supply. With over 85 years of experience, we offer live birds and poultry supplies to meet the needs of every keeper. We also provide resources in **The Coop** on **how to care for baby chicks** and more to help you make the most of Life Out Here. To shop for ISA Browns, place an order with us online or **visit your local Tractor Supply store**.