

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy Defines: Heritage Chicken

DEFINITION

Heritage Chicken must adhere to all the following:

1. **APA Standard Breed.** Heritage Chicken must be from parent and grandparent stock of breeds recognized by the American Poultry Association (APA) prior to the mid-20th century; whose genetic line can be traced back multiple generations; and with traits that meet the APA Standard of Perfection guidelines for the breed. Heritage Chicken must be produced and sired by an APA Standard breed. Heritage eggs must be laid by an APA Standard breed.
2. **Naturally mating.** Heritage Chicken must be reproduced and genetically maintained through natural mating. Chickens marketed as “heritage” must be the result of naturally mating pairs of both grandparent and parent stock.
3. **Long, productive outdoor lifespan.** Heritage Chicken must have the genetic ability to live a long, vigorous life and thrive in the rigors of pasture-based, outdoor production systems. Breeding hens should be productive for 5-7 years and roosters for 3-5 years.
4. **Slow growth rate.** Heritage Chicken must have a moderate to slow rate of growth, reaching appropriate market weight for the breed in no less than 16 weeks. This gives the chicken time to develop strong skeletal structure and healthy organs prior to building muscle mass.

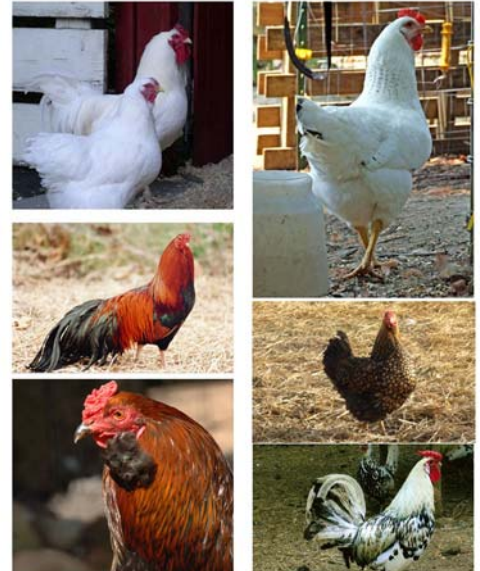
Chickens marketed as ‘heritage’ must include the variety and breed name on the label. Terms like “heirloom,” “antique,” “old-fashioned,” and “old timey” imply “heritage” and are understood to be synonymous with the definition provided here.

Abbreviated Definition: A Heritage Egg can only be produced by an American Poultry Association Standard breed. A Heritage Chicken is hatched from a heritage egg sired by an American Poultry Association Standard breed established prior to the mid-20th century, is slow growing, naturally mated with a long productive outdoor life.

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy has over 30 years of experience, knowledge, and understanding of endangered breeds, genetic conservation, and breeder networks.

Endorsed by the following individuals:

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Purpose

Chickens have been a part of the American diet since the arrival of the Spanish explorers. Since that time, different breeds have been developed to provide meat, eggs, and pleasure.

The American Poultry Association began defining breeds in 1873 and publishing the definitions in the *Standard of Perfection*. These standard breeds were well adapted to outdoor production in various climatic regions. They were hearty, long-lived, and reproductively vital birds that provided an important source of protein to the growing population of the country until the mid-20th century. With the industrialization of chickens many breeds were sidelined in preference for a few rapidly growing hybrids. The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy now lists over three-dozen breeds of chickens in danger of extinction. Extinction of a breed would mean the irrevocable loss of the genetic resources and options it embodies.

Therefore, to draw attention to these endangered breeds, to support their long-term conservation, to support efforts to recover these breeds to historic levels of productivity, and to re-introduce these culinary and cultural treasures to the marketplace, the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy is defining “Heritage Chicken.” Chickens must meet all of the following criteria to be marketed as Heritage.



Definition

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