



My Drift

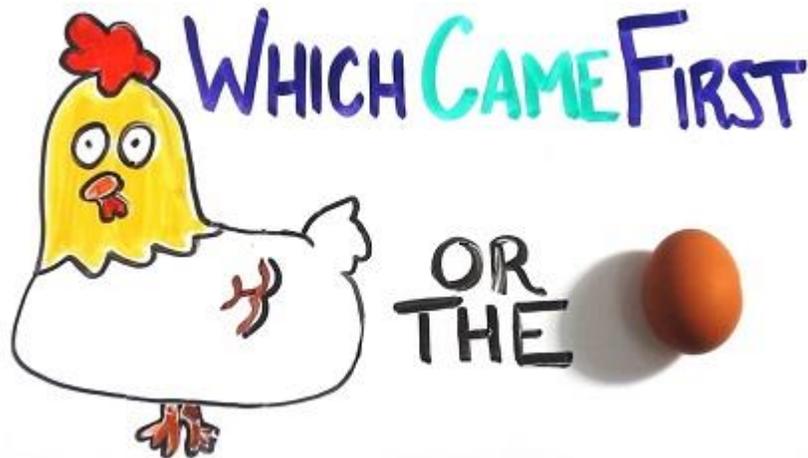
Title: Chickens

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Have you ever wondered, which come first, the chicken or the egg?



This age-old puzzle that's stumped generations of scientists has finally been answered. I will provide you with the answer at the end of this article. I know that you have been trying to figure this out for years. Right?

History

The history of chickens is also a bit of a puzzle. They were first domesticated from a wild form called red junglefowl, a bird that still runs wild in most of southeast Asia. That occurred probably about 10,000 years ago. However, recent research suggests there may have been multiple origins in distinct areas of South and Southeast Asia, southern China, Thailand, Burma and India.



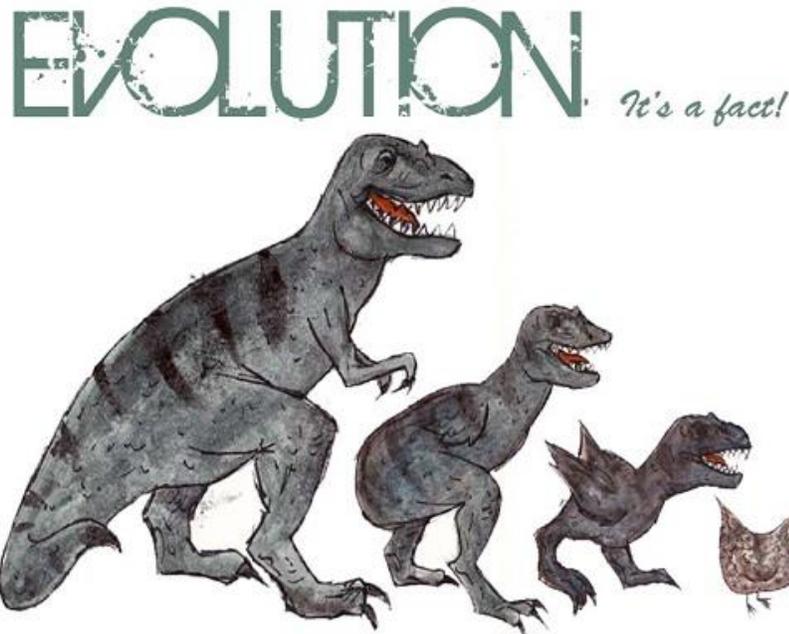
Red Junglefowl

Scientists have identified three closely related species that might have bred with the red junglefowl. Precisely how much genetic material these other birds contributed to the DNA of domesticated chickens remains a matter of conjecture. Recent research suggests that modern chickens inherited at least one trait, their yellow skin, from the gray junglefowl of southern India. Did a domesticated breed of chickens spread initially from Southeast Asia, traveling either north to China or southwest to India? Or were there two separate heartlands of domestication: ancient India and Southeast Asia? Either scenario is possible, but probing more deeply into chicken origins is hindered by an inconclusive DNA trail. Because domesticated and wild birds mixed over time, it's difficult to pinpoint the exact origin.

Did the Chicken Evolve from the Dinosaur?

Well, it sure looks like it. The chicken took the spotlight in 2004, when an international team of geneticists produced a complete map of the chicken genome. It showed that the chicken was the first domesticated animal, the first bird—and consequently, the first descendant of the dinosaurs.

More proof came when scientists dug up an adolescent female Tyrannosaurus rex that died 68 million years ago, but its bones still contained intact soft tissue, including the oldest preserved proteins ever found. A comparison of the protein's chemical structure to a slew of other species showed an evolutionary link between T. rex and chickens, bolstering the idea that birds evolved from dinosaurs. This finding supports the idea that chickens and T. rex share an evolutionary link and bolsters previous research showing that birds evolved from dinosaurs and that birds are living dinosaurs.



How and when did Chickens get to the Americas?

The first chickens in the Americas were brought across the Pacific Ocean by Polynesian canoes. These chickens arrived in South America at least 100 years before Europeans settled the continent. Historians believe that the first chickens related to today's egg layers were brought to America by Columbus' ships.

Terminology

In the U.S., adult male chickens over the age of one year are primarily known as roosters but in some parts of the world they are called cocks. Males less than a year old are cockerels. Castrated roosters are called capons. Females over a year old are known as hens and younger females as pullets although in the egg-laying industry, a pullet becomes a hen when she begins to lay eggs at 16 to 20 weeks of age. The young are called chicks and the meat is called chicken.

If I see a group of hens, chicks, and/or roosters, I call them all chickens.



Hen with a clutch of Chicks



Rooster

Poultry are domesticated birds kept by humans for the eggs they produce, their meat, or their feathers. These birds are most typically members of the superorder Galloanserae (fowl) which includes chickens, quails and turkeys.

What Chickens Eat

Like humans (and dinosaurs) chickens are omnivores which means they eat both plants and animals. In the wild, they often scratch at the soil to search for seeds, insects and even animals as large as lizards, small snakes or young mice.

Lifespan

Chickens may live for five to ten years, depending on the breed. The world's oldest chicken was a hen which died of heart failure at the age of 16 according to Guinness World Records.

Roosters

Roosters can usually be differentiated from hens by their striking plumage of long flowing tails and shiny, pointed feathers on their necks and backs, which are typically of brighter, bolder colors than those of females of the same breed.



Adult chickens have a fleshy crest on their heads called a comb and hanging flaps of skin either side under their beaks called wattles. Collectively, these and other fleshy protuberances on the head and throat are called caruncles. Both the adult male and female have wattles and combs, but in most breeds, these are more prominent in males.

Can Chickens Fly?

Domestic chickens are not capable of long distance flight, although lighter birds are generally capable of flying for short distances, such as over fences or into trees (where they would naturally roost). Chickens may occasionally fly briefly to explore their surroundings, but generally do so only to flee perceived danger.

Behavior

Chickens are social birds and live together in flocks. They have a communal approach to the incubation of eggs and raising of young. Individual chickens in a flock will dominate others, establishing a "pecking order", with dominant individuals having priority for food access and nesting locations. Removing hens or roosters from a flock causes a temporary disruption to this social order until a new pecking order is established.

A rooster's crowing is a loud and sometimes shrill call that sends a territorial signal to other roosters. However, roosters may also crow in response to sudden disturbances within their surroundings. Hens cluck loudly after laying an egg and also to call her chicks. Chickens will give a low "warning call" when they think they see a predator approaching.

Nesting

Hens will often try to lay in nests that already contain eggs and have been known to move eggs from neighboring nests into their own. The result of this behavior is that a flock will use only a few preferred locations, rather than having a different nest for every bird. Hens will often express a preference to lay in the same location. It is not unknown for two (or more) hens to try to share the same nest at the same time.

Eggs

Chicken eggs vary in color depending on the hen, typically ranging from bright white to shades of brown.

Do brown chickens lay brown eggs?

Yes. White Leghorn chickens are white and lay white eggs. Rhode Island Red, New Hampshire and Plymouth Rock chickens are all reddish brown and lay brown or brown-speckled eggs.



Hatching and Early Life



Fertile chicken eggs hatch at the end of the incubation period, about 21 days. Development of the chick starts only when incubation begins, so all chicks hatch within a day or two of each other. Before hatching, the hen can hear the chicks peeping inside the eggs, and will gently cluck to stimulate them to break out of their shells. The chick begins by "pipping"; pecking a breathing hole with its egg tooth towards the blunt end of the egg, usually on the upper side. The chick then rests for some hours, absorbing the remaining egg yolk and withdrawing the blood supply from the membrane beneath the shell (used earlier for breathing through the shell). The chick then enlarges the hole, gradually turning around as it goes, and eventually severing the blunt end of the shell completely to make a lid. The chick crawls out of the remaining shell, and the wet down dries out in the warmth of the nest.

Hens usually remain on the nest for about two days after the first chick hatches, and during this time the newly hatched chicks feed by absorbing the internal yolk sac. Hens fiercely guard their chicks, and brood them when necessary to keep them warm, at first often returning to the nest at night.

She leads them to food and water and will call them toward edible items, but seldom feeds them directly. She continues to care for them until they are several weeks old.



Diseases and Ailments

Chickens are susceptible to several parasites, including lice, mites, ticks, fleas, and intestinal worms, as well as other diseases. Despite the name, they are not affected by chickenpox, which is generally restricted to humans.

Religion and Mythology

Since antiquity, chickens have been, and still are, a sacred animal in some cultures and deeply embedded within belief systems and religious worship. The term "Persian bird" for the cock appears to have been given by the Greeks after Persian contact "because of his great importance and his religious use among the Persians"



In Indonesia, the chicken has great significance during the Hindu cremation ceremony. A chicken is considered a channel for evil spirits which may be present during the ceremony. A chicken is tethered by the leg and kept present at the ceremony for its duration to ensure that any evil spirits present go into the chicken and not the family members. The chicken is then taken home and returns to its normal life.

In ancient Greece, the chicken was not normally used for sacrifices, perhaps because it was still considered an exotic animal. Because of its valor, the cock is found as an attribute of Ares, Heracles, and Athena. The alleged last words of Socrates as he died from hemlock poisoning, as recounted by Plato, were "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?", signifying that death was a cure for the illness of life. The Greeks believed that even lions were afraid of roosters.

In the New Testament, Jesus prophesied the betrayal by Peter: "Jesus answered, 'I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.'" It happened, and Peter cried bitterly. This made the rooster a symbol for both vigilance and betrayal.

Earlier, Jesus compares himself to a mother hen when talking about Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

In many Central European folk tales, the devil is believed to flee at the first crowing of a rooster.

Chinese Zodiac

2017 is the Year of the Rooster

Rooster is almost the epitome of fidelity and punctuality. For ancestors who had no alarm clocks, the crowing was significant, as it could awaken people to get up and start to work.

In Chinese culture, another symbolic meaning of chicken carries is exorcising evil spirits.



Chick Breeds

There are hundreds of chicken breeds in existence today. Domesticated for thousands of years, distinguishable breeds of chicken have been present since the combined factors of geographical isolation and selection for desired characteristics created regional types with distinct physical and behavioral traits passed on to their offspring.

The physical traits used to distinguish chicken breeds are size, plumage color, comb type, skin color, number of toes, amount of feathering, egg color, and place of origin. They are also roughly divided by primary use, whether for eggs or meat. However, some chickens are raised for ornamental purposes, fighting, and even pets.

Here are some chicken breeds:



Breeds of Chicken that lay lots of eggs

I can still remember walking out back to the Chicken Coop to gather the warm fresh eggs every day. I liked this chore better than milking the cow. So, anyway, here are some chicken breeds that lay a lot of eggs:



Golden Comet (Hybrid)
280 eggs per year
Medium sized
Brown eggs



White Leghorn
250 eggs per year
Large sized
White eggs



Plymouth Rock
200 eggs per year
Small to medium sized
Light brown-speckled eggs



Rhode Island Red
250 eggs per year
Medium sized
Brown eggs



Sussex
250 eggs per year
Medium to large sized
Creamy white eggs



Marans
200 eggs per year
Medium sized
Dark brown eggs

Breeds of Chicken that are primarily used for meat

Broiler chickens are domesticated fowl, bred and raised specifically for meat production. They are a hybrid of the egg-laying chicken. Typical broilers have white feathers and yellowish skin. Most commercial broilers are slaughtered at 5-8 weeks with an average carcass weight of 4 pounds with a live weight 5.3 pounds.

In the United States, approximately 9 billion chickens are killed for their flesh (meat) each year, and 305 million hens are used for their eggs. Worldwide over 50 billion chickens are now being slaughtered every year. That is a lot of chickens! More chickens are killed than any other animal species. However, if you go by weight or tons of meat consumed, more pig is eaten worldwide than chicken. What makes this

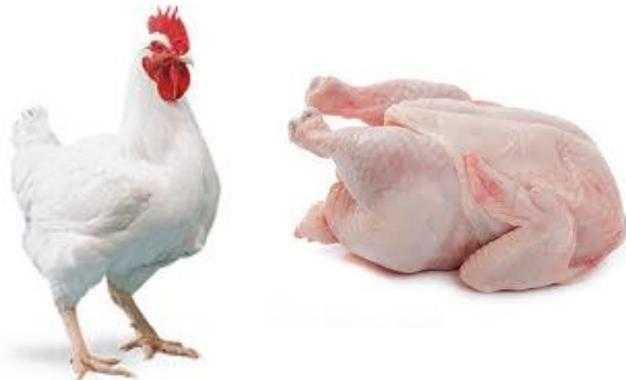
statistic even more interesting is Muslims don't eat pig so there is very little pig meat consumed in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Chart below shows meat quantity consumed worldwide per year in tons and number of animals:

Animal	Tons Consumed	Number of Animals
Pig	108 million	1.4 billion
Chicken	77 million	50 billion
Cattle	65 million	300 million
Sheep	9 million	540 million
Turkey	6 million	640 million
Goat	5 million	390 million
Duck	4 million	2.7 billion

The 35-day life of a KFC chicken

1,000 farms supply fast food chain KFC with 23 million broiler chickens a year. They are raised in large sheds that contains about 34,000 chickens. The birds live for just 35 days before they are gassed to death, immersed in scalding hot water to remove their feathers, chopped into nine pieces and sent to warehouses in large trays where they are frozen and distributed to KFC restaurants worldwide.



Dual-Purpose Chicken Breeds

Dual-purpose breeds are raised for both meat and egg production. Many of these are raised by backyard chicken farmers. Here are three of the most common dual-purpose chickens:



Cornish



Jersey Giant



Freedom Ranger

Cockfighting



A cockfight is a blood sport between two gamecocks, held in a ring called a cockpit. The history of raising fowl for fighting goes back 6,000 years. The fact is that the male of the species can be quite a fierce animal, especially when bred and trained for fighting. Nature armed the rooster with a bony leg spur; humans have supplemented that feature with an arsenal of metal spurs and small knives strapped to the bird's leg.

Cockfighting is illegal in the United States—Louisiana was the last state to ban it, in 2008—and generally viewed by Americans as inhumane. But in the parts of the world where it is still practiced, legally or illegally, it has claims to be the world's oldest continual sport. Artistic depictions of rooster combatants are scattered throughout the ancient world, such as in a first century A.D. mosaic adorning a house in Pompeii. The ancient Greek city of Pergamum established a cockfighting amphitheater to teach valor to future generations of soldiers.

Cockfighting in the Philippines

The World Slasher Cup is the Super Bowl of cockfighting, a five-day series of 648 matches held in a coliseum in downtown Quezon City in metro Manila. Outside the sleek chrome entrance, a 30-foot high inflated rooster sways in the hot breeze, advertising the event. The 20,000-seat arena where Joe Frazier once fought Muhammad Ali for the world heavyweight title belongs to the Filipinos' favorite traditional pastime. Cockfighting is also the world's oldest sport and one of humanity's most ubiquitous gambling games. Though now illegal around much of the world, you can still find cockfights in many places including Hawaii.

Here in Hawaii, where cock fighting has long been accepted as a cultural tradition by many residents, it's doubtful that the laws against it will ever be strictly enforced. Will federal agents be rappelling from helicopters to arrest a bunch of guys betting on a battle of the beaks? It seems like tax dollars could be better spent elsewhere, especially when the critters you're rescuing are closely related to the wings you snarf down during almost every TV football game.



Chicken Breeds raised for Ornamental Purposes



Yokohama



Pet Polish



Polish Crested



Black Silkie Bantam



Bantam



White Sultan

Do Chickens Make Good Pets?

That depends what you want from a pet. Here are a few reasons for having a few chickens for pets:

- 1. They have individual personalities (Curious, brave, timid, loud, bossy, friendly, or standoffish) - chickens have just as much personality as humans.**
- 2. You get fresh eggs every day.**
- 3. Chickens are fun! From the way they walk, run, take dust baths, lay out, cackle and chase bugs. They are a constant source of laughter.**
- 4. Chickens are pretty low maintenance. You need a Chicken Coop, maybe three or four chickens, make sure they have a food source, give them water daily, and clean out the coop monthly.**
- 5. Another one of the benefits of having backyard chickens is the natural pest control they provide. When your chickens scratch around and forages for food, they are eating a wide variety of bugs, including insects. A chicken can eat any insect she comes across, as well as spiders and worms.**



Some reasons for not having chickens for pets:

- 1. Before purchasing or adopting a chicken, check your local city ordinances to make sure chickens are allowed.**
- 2. Chickens don't get along with dogs and cats. They do like ducks, however.**
- 3. Roosters make that loud iconic "Cockadoodledo!" early in the morning and might make your neighbors a little unhappy.**
- 4. They do not mind being picked up, stroked, cuddled or hugged, but they can peck at human eyes.**

Our family had chickens when I was a kid and I never saw a friendly chicken. I will stick to dogs for my pets.

A Few More Fun Facts About Chickens



- 1. Chickens can distinguish between more than 100 faces of their own species. Looks like elephants aren't the only ones who have a great memory.**
- 2. Chickens know who's boss—they form complex social structures known as “pecking orders,” and every chicken knows his or her place on the social ladder.**
- 3. Chickens have full-color vision—no color-blindness here!**
- 4. Who likes to sunbathe? Apparently, everyone—humans, cats, dogs, and chickens too! You can't blame them, and they don't even need sunscreen.**
- 5. Chickens are real sleeping beauties—they experience rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, which means they dream just like we do.**
- 6. Chickens have pain receptors that give them the ability to feel pain and distress.**
- 7. Hens will defend their young from predators.**
- 8. Chickens have more than 30 types of vocalizations to distinguish between threats.**
- 9. Chickens are just like human mothers who talk to their babies in the womb—a mother hen begins to teach calls to her chicks before they even hatch.**
- 10. The rooster's wattle is used to bring attention to him when dancing for the hens.**
- 11. Chickens love to play!**
- 12. A chicken can live for a short while without a head!**
- 13. The record number of eggs laid in one day by a chicken is seven.**
- 14. The fear of chickens is called Alektorophobia.**
- 15. There are more chickens than people on the Earth.**
- 16. Chickens will lay fewer, but larger eggs as they grow older.**
- 17. A chicken heart beats more than 300 times a minute.**
- 18. Chickens can't taste sweetness. They can taste saltiness.**
- 19. A chicken loses feathers when stressed.**
- 20. The record number of yolks in an egg is nine!**
- 21. Chickens don't pee. It is just mixed into the poop.**

Finally answered! Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? The chicken, no, the egg, no, the chicken, no, the egg. It's enough to make your head spin right off your neck. We've all been through the logic; most of us end up at the same place. Confused and unsure!

Most scientists finally agree on what happened in creating the first chicken. Basically, many, many moons ago there was a chicken-like bird. It was genetically close to a chicken but wasn't a full-blown chicken yet. They called it a proto-chicken. So, proto-hen laid an egg, and proto-rooster fertilized it. But when the genes from ma and pa almost-chicken fused, they combined in a new way, creating a mutation that accidentally made the baby different from its parents. Although it would take millennia for the difference to be noticed, that egg was different enough to become the official progenitor of a new species, now known as... the chicken! So, in a nutshell (or an eggshell, if you like), two birds that weren't really chickens created a chicken egg, and hence, we have an answer: **The egg came first, and then it hatched a chicken.**



Now you are probably wondering why the chicken crossed the road?

A Short Chicken Story

Here in Hawaii a lot of people (especially Filipinos) have chickens. There used to be a lot more before they were banned in most residential areas. Many of these chickens moved to the less populated fields, hills, mountains, and beaches. Well, every Saturday and Sunday morning I take our two Rottweilers for a ride in my truck and sometimes we go looking for chickens. They are not hard to find! Three of the places we go is the military training area behind Leilehua Golf Course, Mililani Tech Park area, and in the back of the Central Oahu Regional Park in Waipio. And it seems wherever you find chickens, you will also find several feral cats nearby. My dogs enjoy barking at both of these critters and would love to get out of the truck and chase them.



I have always thought that cats would kill and eat the chickens but I was mistaken. The cats would like to kill and eat the chickens but the chickens (especially the roosters) are tougher and meaner than the cats. Whenever the cats get too close to the flock, the rooster will chase the cats away.

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