

The Omlet guide to acquiring chickens

The egglu is fantastically well equipped: it has an eggport, nesting box, roosting bars and a dropping tray but there is something missing – the chickens!

It's great to choose your own chickens but to make it easier we've put together a guide covering the different breeds available, what to look for in a healthy chicken and a comprehensive list of breeders across the country.

The chickens that we supply have been carefully chosen for a variety of reasons. Miss Pepperpot and the Gingernut Ranger are great egg layers as well as being hardy and docile. As a general rule hybrid hens (like Miss Pepperpot and the Gingernut Ranger) combine the qualities of two or more pure breed hens to create a better all round chicken. Hybrid hens are justifiably popular because they lay consistent numbers of delicious eggs, are very easy to look after and make excellent pets for children.

A lot of the suppliers listed in this guide also supply these chickens but you may find them under different names. Beside the pictures below we have given their pseudonyms as well as some other very similar suitable breeds.



Miss Pepperpot:

Bovans Nera (Rhode Island Red/Plymouth Rock cross)

Similar suitable hybrids:

Black Rock

Maran Cuivre (Rhode Island Red/Maran cross)



Gingernut Ranger:

Meadowsweet Ranger (Rhode Island Red cross)

Similar suitable hybrids:

Calder Ranger

Warren

Things to look out for in a healthy chicken

It is best to buy your chickens when it is light and the chickens are out and about. A healthy chicken will be bright, alert and active during the day. Her feathers will be glossy, and if she is already laying her comb will be pronounced and bright red. Younger birds, not yet laying eggs, have smaller combs which grow in size and colour. The legs should be smooth, and if you pick her up she should feel firm not flabby. You may see some hens with bald patches. This could be because they are in moult, an annual period where they loose quite a lot of feathers or because you are looking at the chicken at the bottom of the pecking order. If you buy a chicken like this, she will normally grow new feathers in a few weeks and look as good as new.

Know what you want

It is important to go along to the chicken supplier with a good idea of what you want. The most important questions you should consider before buying are: do you require lots of eggs, are the chickens pets for children, how much space do you have in the garden and what will the neighbours think!?

Pure Breeds, Hybrids or Bantams?

The eglu is suitable for two medium size chickens or three bantams. Bantams are like bonsai versions of big chickens; they are delightful and well suited to smaller gardens and make good pets for children. The eggs they lay are about half the size of a full size egg and they also scratch less. Nearly all bantams are pure breeds and as such command a premium price.

Pure breed chickens are often flamboyantly feathered and as some are becoming quite rare, by buying them you are helping to preserve them – which is a good thing. However, pure breeds are on the whole unable to match the egg laying capabilities of the hybrid hens and are often not as docile.

Vaccinated?

Another advantage of hybrid chickens is that they have almost always been vaccinated against a range of common diseases making them very hardy and unlikely to get ill. Because it is very expensive to vaccinate chickens, not many small breeders do this and it is rare for pure breed hens to be vaccinated.

Breed Guide, suitability for eglu and laying capability:

The list we have provided is by no means exhaustive, there are a huge number of chicken breeds and we have left out those that are primarily bred for show, but it gives a fair cross section of what is available. Some of these chickens are not suitable for the eglu but we have included them so that you know what to expect on a visit to a supplier.

Simply: Light Weight/Medium Weight – perfectly suited to the eglu
 Heavy Weight – NOT suitable for the eglu

If you would like to research the different breeds in more detail, then we would recommend popping in to your library which should hold a copy of the British Poultry Standards. Alternatively you can order a copy of Poultry for Anyone by Victoria Roberts from Omlet which has good pictures and descriptions of over 90 breeds.

How much should you pay?

The price of chickens is fairly stable; movements in world stock markets, changes in governments or the results of Saturdays match tend not to affect things too much. Having said that prices do vary from place to place. Here is a rough guide to what you should be paying for a chicken at Point of Lay (meaning the chicken will lay the first egg in 4-6 weeks, also written abbreviated as P.O.L)

Hybrid – £8 to £12
Pure breed – up to £30
Bantam – up to £20

Organic birds will attract a premium of around £2-3.

Table showing particulars of various breeds you may come across:

Breed	Type	Weight	Egg colour	Eggs p.a.
Black Rock	Hybrid	Medium	Beige	300
Maran Cuivre	Hybrid	Medium	Chestnut	200
Bovans Nera	Hybrid	Medium	Beige	300
Calder Ranger	Hybrid	Medium	Brown	300
Meadowsweet Ranger	Hybrid	Medium	Brown	300
Ancona	Pure breed	light	White	200
White Star	Hybrid	light	White	300
Sussex Star	Hybrid	medium	white	250
Andalusian	Pure breed	light	White	200
Aruraucana	Pure breed	light	Greeny blue	150
Australorp	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	180
Barnevelder	Pure breed	heavy	Brown	180
Brahma	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	150
Campine	Pure breed	light	White	200
Cochin	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	100
Dorking	Pure breed	heavy	White	190
Faverolles	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	180
Fayoumi	Pure breed	light	Beige	250
Friesian	Pure breed	light	White	230
Frizzle	Pure breed	Heavy	Beige	175
Hamburg	Pure breed	Light	White	200
Indian Game	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	100
Leghorn	Pure breed	light	White	240
Marans	Pure breed	heavy	Chestnut	200
Minorca	Pure breed	light	White	200
Old English Game	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	200
Orpington	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	180
Plymouth Rock	Pure breed	medium	Beige	200
Poland	Pure breed	light	White	200
Derbyshire Redcap	Pure breed	light	Beige	200
Rhode Island Red	Pure breed	heavy	Brown	260
Scots Dumpy	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	180
Scots Grey	Pure breed	light	Beige	200
Silkie	Pure breed	light	Beige	150
Sussex	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	260
Welsummer	Pure breed	heavy	Reddish brown	200
Wyandotte	Pure breed	heavy	Beige	200
Pekin	Bantam	light	Beige	<125
Barbu D'Ucle	Bantam	light	Beige	<125
Rosecomb	Bantam	light	Beige	<125
Sebright	Bantam	light	Beige	<125
Isa Brown	Hybrid	medium	Beige	300
Warren	Hybrid	medium	Beige	300

Suppliers:

Omlet have spoken to all the people on this list; all are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about chickens but the breeds and quantities of chickens that they stock vary. It's a good idea to give them a quick call before going to visit them to check what they have in stock and whether it is convenient for you to visit. Explain what you are after and they will be more than happy to recommend which chickens from their stock are best suited to your requirements.

East Anglia		
Barry Edwards	Point Farm Clenchwarton Norfolk PE34 4DA	01553 765739
Jack Gibbs	Horseshoe farm Wilby road Stradbroke Eye Suffolk IP21 5JP	01379 384325
David Jay	33 Queens road Bungay Suffolk NR35 1RN	01986 895666
Norman Potter	One-Stop Poultry Shop Mill Lane Weybread Diss Norfolk IP21 5TP	01379 586288
Kim & John Rushforth	Poplar Farm Long Street Great Ellingham Norfolk NR17 1LN	01953455428
S&T	S&T Poultry 3 Windsor Drive Wisbeech Cambridge PE13 3HJ	01945 585618 07885 718195
Mr Barry Papworth	Highgate Country Store Over Road Willingham Cambridgeshire CB4 5EU	01954 260798
Roland & Mavis Axman	Dew-f-now Brisley Dereham Norfolk, NR20 5LH	01362 668410

Midlands		
Alistair Gilchrist	Goldsmith Grange Melton Spinney Road Thorpe Arnold Melton Mowbray Leicestershire LE14 4SB	01664 444233 07778 549876
Ashley Warren	Bell Plantation Garden Centre Towcester Northampton NN12 6GX	01327 354126 07764 244889
Ducks and Drakes Galore	The Birches Farm Risbury Hereford and Leicest HR7 4SL	07931 275275
Howard John	Westgate Poultry Gwern-Y-Brenin Oswestry Shropshire SY10 8AS	01691 652558
Janie Fordham	Southcombe Farm Services Southcombe House Southcombe Chipping Norton Oxfordshire OX7 5QH	01608 646303 07966 188547
Margaret Dover	Kirkby Mallory Leicestershire	01455 823344
Martin Anker	Keepers Lodge Poultry Woodhouses Burntwood Litchfield Staffs	01543 673399 07774 699007
Mike Sumner	Field Cottage Moorby Boston PE22 7PL	01507 568735
Mr Hockey	Sturt Farm Burford Oxfordshire	01993 822866 07900 805352

North East		
Edward W Boothman	Howden Park Farm Silsden Keighley West Yorkshire BD20 0LS	01535 652222
Gylian Brown	Walterstead Ladykirk Berwick Upon Tweed TD15 1XW	01289 382331
Mr Millward	10 Forestry Cottages Laughton Gainsborough Lincolnshire DN21 3QB	01427 628317
David Renwick	3 bridge view Simonburn Hexham Northumberland NE48 3AL	01434 681559
Ian Barns	Bankside Poultry Bankside Farm Kildale North Yorkshire YO21 2RT	01642 722634
Peter Whiteshead	Glencoft Poult Hipswell North Yorkshire DL9 4AY	01748 832786
Joanna Bedford	Beweshill House Beweshill lane Blaydon Newcastle Tyne and Wear NE21 4ST	0191 4143966
Brenda Williamson	Meadowvale Poultry North Pesspool Farm Pesspool Lane Haswell Durham DH6 2AH	0191 5170601
Graham Mortimer	Storrs Poultry Storrs Farm Storrs Lane Oxspring Sheffield S368YS	07855 829846

North West		
C Dickenson	Holdsworth Farm Eggleston Barnard Castle DL12 0DN	01833 650357
R Miller	The Poultry farm Moss House Lane Much Hoole Preston PR4 4TE	01772 613719
Bill Turner	The Stables Medlock road Failsworth Woodhouses Manchester M35 9NR	0161 688 8710

Scotland		
F Cocker	Cairn Field Fintry Aberdeen Aberdeenshire AB21 0YR	01224 791263
Amanda Darvill	Kernsary Cottage Poolewe Achnasheen Wester Ross IV22 2LB	01445 781215 07747 806350
Trevor Hogarth	Croft 5 Balloan Lairg Southerland Inverness IV27 4DG	01549 402553 07791 055832
Eddy Lovett	3 Kaimhill Bridge of Weir Renfrewshire PA11 3RQ	01505 613075
George Ogilvie	Ballencriefmains Longniddry East Lothian EH32 0PJ	01875 870238
Bruckhills Croft	Rothienorman Inverurie Aberdeenshire	AB51 8YB

South East		
Jane Barkway	Angel Cottage Hollywater Road Holly Water Nr Borden Hampshire GU35 0AG	01428 751402
David Bland	Greenfields farm Fontwell Avenue Eastergate Chichester W.Sussex PO203RU	01243542815
Alison Botting	Lodge Land Farm Newchurch Lane Ruckinge Ashford Kent TN26 2QE	01797344765
Michael Faiers	Stirling House Station Hill Little Welnetham Bury St. Edmunds IP30 0DT	07932 163017
Luke Gates	P,T&G Poultry Hollybush farm Woodstreet Village Guildford Surrey GU3 3BP	07729 786272
Anne Hope-Jacobson	Pikes Peak Reading road Finchampstead Berkshire RG40 4RD	01180 9733435
Sharon Jackson	Foxfield Fowls Foxfield House Narrow Lane Ringwood Hampshire BH24 3EN	01425 478528
Tracy Jenner	Folly Cottage Mill Lane Frittenden Cranbrook Kent TN17 2DS	01580 852192

Dudley Mallet	High Down Poultry High Down Salehirst Robertsbridge E.Sussex TN32 5SS	01580 860426
Andrew Mew	3 Ham Cottages Ham road Fabersham Kent ME13 7TS	01795 532848
Ian & Marjory Miller	Crofters Chinnor Road Bledlow Ridge High Wycombe Buckingham HP14 4AJ	01494 481416
Michael Neve	Denmans Fontwell W.Sussex BN18 0SU	01243 542808
Patty Thorne	Thornes Garden and Poultry centre Stotfold Road Letchworth Herts SG6 4JR	01462 675767
Mrs Watchorn	Surney Farmhouse Lickfold Road Fernhurst Surrey GU27 3JG	01428 658776
Beech Lodge Waterfowl	Beech Lodge Emmetts Lane Idehill Sevenoaks TH14 6BB	01732 750452
Ben & Cathy Wetherden	Downacerey Bridge St.Giles on the Heath Launceton Cornwall PL15 9RT	01566 775732
Byways Poultry	Byways Poultry Chichester	01243 264796

High Down Poultry	13 Grange Close Fyfield Andover Hampshire FP11 8 DX	01580 860426
Pete Chapman	Martinswood Chickens Dean Land Road Ripe Nr Lewes East Sussex BN8 6AR	01323 811877 07855 013808
Robert Withington	Isle of Wight	01983 551295

South West		
Janet Brinson	The Timber Yard Bridgewater Road Axbridge Cheddar Somerset BS26 2EA	07712 762026
Anthony Cross	The Burgage West End North Leach Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL54 3HF	01451 860322
Mr Gabriel	Fenton Farm Holcombe Rogus Wellington Somerset TA21 0NF	01823 672075
Kathy Griffiths	Merryfields West Hay Glastonbury Somerset BA6 9TU	01458 860232
David Hookin	Windy Ridge Farm Bay Road Ginningham Dorset FP8 4EP	01747 822312

Mr Kidd	Sunnymeade Brinsea Congresbury Somerset BS49 5JR	01934 852215
Mr Peter Patrick	Devonshire Chickens Cobble Cottage 3 Church Street Harborton Nr Totnes Devon TY9 7SF	07967 646702
M.J.Anstey	Devonshire Rare Breeds Downes Home Farm Crediton Devon EX17 3PL	01363 774721
Nick Meagor	Poultry Suppliers St. Minver Wadebridge Cornwall PL27 6RF	01208 813235 07977 431055
Tuell chickens	2 Tuell Cottages Tavistock Devon PL19 8PY	01822 870295

Wales

Mr Flyn	Emlyn West Wales SA38 9ER	01239 851780 07980 809312
Jane Jones	Maesgwian Llanbrynmair Powys FY19 7DL	01650 521283
Mr Hywel Davies	Greenaway Poultry & Waterfowl Greenaway Farm Rosebush Glynderen Pembrokeshire SA66 7QY	01437 532585