

Ameraucanas, by John W Blehm

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To say that Ameraucana, Araucana and Easter Egg chickens are the same would be like saying Cornish, Brahma and Sex-Linked brown egg layers are the same. The chickens in the first group all possess the gene for blue shelled eggs and the birds in the second group produce brown shelled eggs. Having one or even several traits in common does not make two different breeds the same breed.

Ameraucana and Araucana chickens are completely different breeds just as Cornish and Brahma chickens are different. Each breed is different from all the others and the differences are listed in the American Poultry Association's Standard of Perfection. We generally

refer to it as the APA Standard and it tells what characteristics or traits are needed to classify a chicken under any of many different recognized breed descriptions. The Standard is the final word in the world of exhibition poultry in North America

An Araucana chicken has ear tufts (not the same as muffs) and is rumpless, meaning it doesn't have a tail. An Ameraucana has muffs and a tail. Both breeds have pea combs and lay blue eggs, but have just as many differences as similarities or common traits according to the Standard.

What is referred to as an Easter Egg chicken or Easter Egger is not a recognized breed, but rather a mixed breed bird that possesses the gene for blue eggs. These birds can be of any physical description. As far as "Americana" chickens go there is no such breed. It is just that many commercial hatcheries can't spell Ameraucana and try to pawn off their mongrel chickens as such. When you see Araucana/Americana chicks for sale you can bet they are really Easter Eggers. Generally speaking these are fine chickens for the backyard, but would be disqualified at an APA sanctioned poultry show. Many novice poultry fanciers have fallen for the false advertising of these hatcheries and been very disappointed. Some hatcheries now have disclaimers saying their Araucana/Americana chickens are not for exhibition yet they continue to advertise them using APA breed names.

Araucana and Ameraucana chickens are both relatively new breeds. The APA accepted Araucanas as a breed in 1976 and Ameraucanas in 1984. Before Araucanas were accepted and became a standard breed the term Araucana was used interchangeable with Easter Egger to describe all chickens that possessed the blue egg gene. Today some people still mistakenly get it wrong and that is partly due to all the misinformation and outdated information on the Internet and elsewhere.

Myth Busting

While on the subject of misinformation let's try some myth busting. For many decades some commercial hatcheries promoted "Araucana" eggs as being lower in cholesterol and higher in nutritional value than other chicken eggs. Even though those claims were proven false over 27 years ago many people still believe them to be true. Remember that Araucana, back in the day, meant any chicken with the blue egg gene. Heck, those same commercial hatcheries even claimed that "Araucana" meat had a taste similar to quail! Imagine that-chicken that doesn't taste like chicken.



Oh, and how about those pink, green, olive drab and gold colored eggs that the catalogs advertised. The reason the egg colors vary so much is because the birds are of mixed parentage. There are only two true egg shell colors, blue and white. The gene that makes blue egg shells is dominant over the gene for white eggs. Brown eggs are really white eggs with a brown tint or coating. Green eggs are really blue eggs with a brown tint or coating. Just as there are many shades of brown eggs there are many shades of green eggs. You can tell if an egg is truly white or blue when the inside egg shell color matches the outside. Blue chicken eggs are not a robin's egg blue color. They are a light pastel blue. Getting that good true blue color is still a problem that dedicated Ameraucana breeders are trying to get right especially in some of the large fowl varieties.



Which came first the Araucana or the Ameraucana? Actually since both are now legitimate names of official APA breeds let's say the Easter Eggers came first. They came to this country as mongrel chickens and were bred to other types of chickens. Over the past several decades some breeders bred them to look the way they wanted. Some bred for tufted and rumpless characteristics, some bred for muffs and tails and others bred for whatever they wanted.

Araucanas were not developed from Ameraucanas and Ameraucanas were not developed from Araucanas. They were both bred up from Easter Eggers or mixed breed chickens.

The tufted and rumpless breed was officially accepted first into the Standard. They took the name Araucana. There was still a large following breeding the muffed and tailed blue egg layers, so they had to come up with a new name for their breed that they had also referred to as Araucana up to that time. They organized a breed club and chose the name Ameraucana over American Araucana by a 9 to 5 vote.

Bantam Ameraucanas and large fowl Ameraucanas actually add up to two standard breeds of Ameraucana chickens. The big difference between the two is size. Bantams are just miniature versions of large fowl chickens or maybe large fowl are big versions of bantams. Either way the APA recognizes the same eight varieties in each breed. They are: black, blue, blue wheaten, brown red, buff, silver, wheaten, and white. Some breeders are working on new varieties such as lavender and black gold.



More Breed Information

There are photos and much more information about Ameraucana chickens on the Ameraucana website : AmeraucanaAlliance.org. The website includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), a breed and club "History," Ameraucana Directory and more. There is also a link on the site to our Ameraucana Forum.

John W Blehm, Birch Run, Michigan offers Ameraucana chicks through his website: FowlStuff.com. He is a lifetime member of the Ameraucana Alliance and joined the original Ameraucana Bantam Club in 1982, receiving the Ameraucana Breeders Award (Lifetime Achievement Award) in 2001. John created several varieties of Ameraucanas, including large fowl black, blue, white, buff, lavender and others.