



LEGHORN, ITALIENER OR LIVORNO

By Luuk Hans (NL)

Leghorns have many descriptions, names and many (different) standards! I will try to describe them and differentiate among them. The Leghorn is called by names that differ from country to country. In the Netherlands, United States and Great Britain the breed is called Leghorn. In Italy, the country of origin, the breed is called Livorno; Belgium has also adopted the name Livorno which coexists together with the name in use in German speaking countries, which is Italiener (German for 'Italian'). Since Belgium is also a French-speaking country, the French name "Leghorn type moderne" (Italiener type)" is another description being used in this country. However, in German speaking countries the name Leghorn is specific for the American Leghorn.

We will start with the American Leghorn, but first some general comments.

The Leghorn in general

The breed originates from Italy, but its various forms were developed in America, England, Germany, Netherlands and Italy (the English word "Leghorn" refers to the Italian city Livorno).

The strains across the world are generally all hardy and prolific egg-layers. The breed is very popular in many countries; for example it is the most popular breed in Germany and the Netherlands (and maybe other countries of which I have no data).

They are also recognised in many colour varieties, which helped to increase the breed's popularity. A special variety is the Exchequer variety (black and white unevenly distributed with some white in under-colour) which is only recognised in the United Kingdom, Australia and the Netherlands.

The breed is most known for its large single comb and wattles. The comb of the hen is lopped to one side; i.e. the front is upright with the comb falling to one

side. The wings are large, but well-folded and carried well up. The Leghorn has yellow shanks and feet. The oval-shaped earlobes are white.

The breed is an excellent (white) egg-layer and hence is the foundation of many egg-laying hybrids. A fully-grown cock weighs approximately six pounds (3.5 kilograms) and the adult hen, 4.5 pounds (2.75 kilograms). The Leghorn belongs to the lightweight breeds.

In the United States and elsewhere, rose combed varieties of Leghorns are also standardised, yet we seldom see these.

The American Leghorn

The American Leghorn (large and bantam) is the most lustrous of all with a long, well-spread tail, coverts, saddle and neck. The black, white and single combed dark and light brown Leghorns were already admitted in the American Standard of Perfection in 1874.

The (single) comb is medium-sized, fine in texture, with five distinct, serrated points. The comb extends well over the back of the head with no tendency to follow the shape of the neck. The rose comb is also medium-sized, square in the front, firm and even on the small head, ending in a well-developed spike.



**Above: Leghorn, American type, LF rooster.
Photo: Klaas van de Hoek.**

**Left: In America, the Leghorn is also recognised in the buff colour.
Photo: Dan Honour.**



The bantam variety was first admitted into the American Poultry Association's Standard of Perfection and American Bantam Association's Bantam Standards, in both single and rose comb, in the last century.

The English Leghorn

The comb of the hen falls gracefully over either side of the face (without obstructing the sight). The comb of the cock is firmly upright. The English strains are very large, in comparison to Leghorns standardised elsewhere in the world. The wattles are larger than in other types of Leghorn and the tail is large, but carried somewhat whipped up.

The legs appear quite long, but the (English) standard describes them as being moderately long. The back is long and flat, sloping backwards.

The English Leghorn was created by crossing in Malay and Minorcas which accounts for their bigger size. In general the English Leghorn is somewhat heavier than elsewhere: a full-grown cock weighs 7.5 pounds (3.5 kilograms) and the hen, 5.5 pounds (3 kilograms).



Left: White Leghorn hen, English type. Photo: Terry Beebe.



Right: Cock, English type. Photo: Terry Beebe.



The Dutch Leghorn (in Europe: Livorno)

The Dutch and the German types were considered the same for a while, but breeders from the two countries could not agree on the shape of the body. Now the Dutch Leghorn is called 'Livorno' in European context and the German type is known as 'Italiener'. Nevertheless, the differences between the two types are negligible for non-Leghorn breeders.

Left: Leghorn hen, Dutch type. Photo: Klaas van de Hoek.

The Dutch (and the German) types are somewhere between the American and English styles, however they look more like the American type. The Dutch type is about the same weight as the American.

Right: Leghorn rooster, Dutch type.
Photo: Klaas van de Hoek.



The German Leghorn (Italiener)

The German Leghorn is more-or-less described in the same way as the Livorno, but the type is different. The type is more like a brick with the back slightly longer and horizontal. The tail is also carried more horizontally.

As such, it has a different European name: Italiener (meaning: Italian). The same name is also used in France and (French speaking) Belgium.

Left: German Italiener hen at a show in Germany.
Photo: Luuk Hans.

The Italian Leghorn (Livorno)

Italy copied its standard from the Netherlands since it is of the opinion that the Dutch Leghorn best meets the requirements of a proper Livorno. Many Dutch Leghorns find their way to Italy to improve the breed there. Also in the European context the Dutch Leghorn is called Livorno. The Livorno is standardised in many colours and also with rose combs.



Above: Italian Livornos, pair at A. Mazzeo, in Italy. Photo: Luuk Hans.

Leghorn Bantams

The Leghorn is so popular that in many counties a bantam variety exists. Mostly national preferences are followed, with the bantams being miniatures of the standard type preferred in the particular country. In the United States of America the American-type bantam was standardised (according to the APA) in 1940 and at a similar period in Germany. So the bantam is quite a young breed but already very popular. Bantam Leghorns are also recognised in the United Kingdom.

Right: Leghorn bantam pullet, GB. Photo: Rupert Stephenson.



Left: Leghorn (Livorno) bantam cockerel, silver. Photo: Klaas van de Hoek.



Not surprisingly this bantam is somewhat heavier than in other countries. Normally a bantam cock weighs 26 ounces (750 grams) and a

hen 22 ounces (625 grams), but in the United Kingdom a cock may weigh closer to 36 ounces (one kilogram) and a hen 32 ounces (900 grams). Also the British birds have much larger combs and wattles.

**Right: Buff Leghorn bantams,
American type.
Breeder and photographer:
Arie van Bijsterveld.**

In general

It is quite remarkable that all the mentioned countries were able to make such good Leghorns out of the first imports—and in so many attractive colours.

What do all these varieties have in common? They all look like Leghorns to the layman. They all have elegance, hardiness and good egg-laying capabilities, and yellow shanks and toes and white earlobes. So they are all Leghorns!



NL type Exchequer Leghorn hen. Photo: Monique de Vrijer.



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