



RECORD HOLDERS AMONG THE DOMESTIC FOWLS

By: Hristo Lukanov (Bulgaria)



Modern Game Bantams.
Photo: Rupert Stephenson.

Ga Ho chicken, Vietnam.
Photo: ganoi.com

Domestic fowl originate mainly from the Red Junglefowl (Fig. 1). They were domesticated about 8000 years ago in Southeast Asia and have undergone a great metamorphosis ever since. Numerous breeds have been created, each with unique appearance, various productivity and purpose.



Figure 1. *Gallus gallus bankiva* (Hume and Marshall, 1881 in "Game Birds of India, Burmah and Ceylon").

Among all birds, only the domestic chicken and the domestic pigeon have achieved such great intraspecies diversity of shapes, sizes, colour mutations and productivity. There are a number of changes in the other domestic species due to domestication, but they seem to be mostly in the productive direction. This article will attempt to highlight the peculiar record holders in domestic birds.

As far as weight and size are concerned, the smallest chickens in the world are the representatives of the Serama breed. The original Malaysian Seramas often weigh from 200 to 400 g (Fig. 2). The interesting thing is that they lay eggs with a mass between 12-28 g, which makes them the breed which lays eggs with the highest relative weight. Other 'small ones' among domestic chickens are Sebright, Rosecomb, Dutch Bantam etc, weighing about 500 g.

The small size and unique appearance made Serama the most popular pet in Malaysia and Indonesia in the last decade.



Figure 2. Serama rooster from the A-class, with a body weight under 300 g and under 16 cm high.

Photo: Emil Dzhalev (www.serama.bg)

Unlike the small bantams, one of the largest representatives of the *Gallus gallus domesticus* are the Jersey Giant breed, Taiwan game fowl, Indian giants (Fig. 3).

The mature and well-fed roosters can reach and even surpass 10 kg, which is almost 10 times the weight of the Red Junglefowl.

The heaviest cock,

according to the Guinness Book of Records, was weighed in Australia in 1992, and a weight of 10,51 kg was registered.

Figure 3. A really massive Asil from the 70s of the last century, with a body weight of 10 kilos. Photo credits Mr. Mullapudi Narendranath from Hyderabad in the state Andhra Pradesh in southern India. With kind help from Mr Willem van Ballekom (NL)



This is an OLD LINE of NELLORE ASEEL I had in the 70's. He was 6 years old when this photo was taken.

He measured 27" from tip of Beak to tip of middle toe while in this position and weighed 10 kilos. He was a dark Mahogany brown colour.

Narendranath
To keep.



The tallest breed of chickens is called Indian giant (Galo Índio Gigante) and is intended for meat production under extensive conditions in Brazil, being the result of crossing large Asian game fowls with meat-chickens. The height of the roosters even exceeds 1 meter (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Galo Índio Gigante rooster with a height of over 1 m. Photo: www.serraniaagronegocios.com.br

The unique frizzled mutation of Padovana chicken, the Holland crested chicken, Silkies, featherless meat-type broiler, Vietnamese Ga Dong Tao and Ga Ho, black Cemani and many others that have unique traits can be mentioned as the most extravagant chickens (Fig. 5, 6 and 17).

Figure 5. Ga Ho rooster, Vietnam, with very thick legs. Photo: ganoi.com



Figure 6. Ayam Cemany rooster. Photo: Courtesy of my friend Paulina Schneider.

The Red Junglefowl has a tail similar to our most familiar breeds of chickens. There are also breeds in which the tail is missing (some European standard and bantam breeds, Araucana, etc.) or birds with rapid growth of the tail feathers like Phoenix and Yokohama, where the tail of the roosters reaches the



ground. In the Japanese breed, called Onagadori, the tail feathers and the saddle feathers, apart from the rapid growth, are distinguished by the absence of moulting. The record in this breed is a 11.3 meter long tail, which is unprecedented in the bird world (Fig. 7).

Figure 7. Four kids holding up the tail feathers of a Long-Tailed Fowl (Onagadori) in Japan. Photo credit: The Rob Oechsle Collection.



The wild ancestors of chickens lay about 12-20 eggs during the year, but there are breeds that are record holders for total egg production in the entire bird world. The White Leghorn is the world most common chicken and this is not accidental. The hybrid forms, derived from its highly productive lines, have the ability to lay more than 330 eggs per year (Fig. 8). Cases of 365 eggs laid in 365 days are not as rare as one might think, even though such an egg production was recorded for the first time in the Australorp breed. The record for the largest number of eggs laid per hen belongs to a hen (No. 2988) from the White Leghorn breed, reported in the Experimental Station of the Agricultural University in Missouri, USA in 1979, with 371 eggs for 364 days.



Figure 8. The modern white laying hybrids are real egg machines, producing more than two-thirds of the eggs in the world. Photo: Secretaria de Agricultura e Abastecimento do Estado de São Paulo Agriculturasp, 2007.

Usually the domestic hens lay eggs with a mass of 28-40 g for the bantams and about 50-75 g for the standard breeds. The largest chicken egg was laid by a White Leghorn hen and weighed 320 g, it is kept at the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

According to the Guinness World Records, the largest hen egg ever was a five-yolked egg measuring 31cm (12.2in) around the long axis, 22.8cm (9in) around the short and weighing nearly 340g (12oz). It was laid by a Black Minorca at Mr

Stafford's Damsteads Farm, Mellor, Lancs, in 1896.

The smallest chicken egg weighs about 1 g and has dimensions of a 2 cents coin.

Except for the production of eggs, the chickens are widely used for the production of meat in the world. The global poultry meat production increased mainly due to broilers. Today's usual broilers, products of crossing highly productive lines from white Cornish and White Plymouth Rock breeds, are characterized by exceptional growth capabilities. Today a broiler chicken can reach 2 kg on the 35th day of age, by which time it will have consumed about 3,5 kg feed (Fig. 9).

Figure 9. Broiler vs layer chick on the same age: 3 weeks old.

Photo: Hristo Drukanov.

There is not a very large group breeds of chickens called Long-crowers, characterized by the prolonged crowing of the roosters. One of the longest songs, sung in one breath, is the performance of Denizli and Serbian/Kosovo long-crowers, lasting more than 60 sec.



The oldest chicken breed was created for cock-fights, more than 2,000 years ago in today's India and Pakistan, and this is the Asil breed. From these birds originated the majority of the today game fowl breeds. These are the gladiators among the poultry, fighting between the roosters can continue for hours until the death of one of the competitors (Fig. 10). Today cock-fighting is practiced primarily in the Southeast and Central Asia and South and Central America.



**Figure 10. Cock Fighting - A traditional sport in Tamil Nadu, India.
Photo: Amshudhagar, Wikipedia commons.**

Among the domestic birds, there are other record holders, the most expensive pigeon ever sold (May 2013) is a Homer pigeon; a Belgian pigeon named Bolt (named after the Olympic champion Usain Bolt) sold for 310,000 euro to a Chinese businessman (Fig. 11). This pigeon was bred by the famous pigeon-breeder Leo Heremans who sold his pigeon family of 530 pigeons for a record 4,346,500 euro, at an auction.

**Figure 11.
The most expensive pigeon in the world:
Bolt. Breeder Leo Heremans. Photo:
Still image from
[Youtube video.](#)**

A pigeon can travel 1100 km in one day. Pigeons were the fastest means of communication, before the invention



of telegraph and telephone, and they were used to carry messages until the Second World War. Today, the armies of China, Iraq, Israel, Switzerland and Britain still have pigeons. In the XIX century it was reported for a pigeon to have traveled the 11,300 kilometers from Africa to England in 55 days. According to surveys, the pigeon is one of the smartest creatures on the planet. The pigeon is the only bird that drinks water without rearing its head.

The heaviest pigeon (Fig. 12), according to the book of Guinness Records belongs to the Giant Runt breed and weighs a bit over 2 kg, as opposed to the tiny Portuguese tumbler.



Figure 12. Manny de Medeiros, holding one of his Giant Runts. Photo courtesy of www.giantruntclubofcanada.com

There are giants and dwarfs not only in chickens and pigeons, but also in ducks. One of the oldest breeds of ducks being selected in Europe are the Call ducks. Males weigh only around 900 g and females 800 g (Fig. 13). One of the largest ducks belongs to the Aylesbury and Rouen duck breeds, the male of which can reach 6 kg.

Figure 13. Katie Neale with her Call duck. Photo: Rupert Stephenson.





Speaking of waterfowl, one should mention the large Emden geese as well, the males of which weigh up to 14 kg. Other giants among domestic geese are Toulouse and African goose. (Fig. 14).

Figure 14: Rupert Stephenson holding a huge African gander.
Photo: Tim Daniels.

Turkeys are the largest species of poultry, a mature male of the broad breasted bronze and white turkey breeds may reach over 30 kg. The heaviest turkey in the world, called Tyson, was weighed in 1989 in London and had a body weight of 39,09 kg. It was sold for charity for 4400 pounds. From the offspring produced from one turkey hen per year can be produced over 1 ton turkey meat (Fig. 15).

Figure 15. President Barack Obama officially pardons the Thanksgiving Turkey 2009, a tradition which the American Presidents do.
Photo by Lawrence Jackson, Official Whitehouse Photographer.



The Japanese quail is grown by man beginning with XI-XII century. In the early XX century a purposeful selection was begun, focusing on egg production in this species. In less than half a century, the Japanese quail breeders achieved a unique egg production of these small birds, a female can lay over 300 eggs per year. This is the only bird species that has been hatched in Space. The Japanese



quail are among the most commonly used laboratory animals, because of its short interval between generations: the quail chicks hatch after 17 days and reach sexual maturity at about 35 days of age (Fig. 16).

Figure 16. Male meat type Japanese quail, wild plumage colour. Photo Hristo Lukanov.

Aviculture Europe is still engaged in a quest to find new records of the poultry world. If you happen to have really amazing birds - in appearance, size or other qualities - please send us a photo and details.

Figure 17. People who do not know the different breeds of chickens, could be hesitant in liking chicken breeds like these Frizzled Padovanas/ Bearded Polands. Photo: Courtesy of Suzie Baldwin of [Golden Valley Poultry](#).



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