

What *is* 'Utility?'



Utility Barred Rocks (UK)



Utility Light Sussex (UK)

- Having established that 'utility' doesn't just mean 'not good enough to show,' it is time to look at what the poultrymen of yesteryear regarded as 'utility' and see if we can learn a little bit about their philosophies.
- Utility breeders selected for many things in the past, but why not have 'looks' as well? Surely that is the whole package - to keep a pure breed of poultry going that is invigorated and productive...
- First we must look at what makes a good utility fowl, then we can look at selecting for and/or introducing these qualities into our heritage pure breeds.
- Utility breeders select for many things (and this may surprise you). These include:
 - **Size, shape, shell quality and number of eggs per year**
 - **Lack of broodiness**
 - **Growth and feathering rate**
 - **How early they lay (18 weeks old, ideally)**
 - **Length of moult (how quickly they come back into lay)**
 - **Feed conversion ratios**
 - **Feed consumption**
 - **Hardiness**
 - **Quality of contents / egg weight**
 - **Hatch rates**
 - **Fertility**
 - **Foraging ability**