

# Heritage Chickens a Specialty at Sugar Feather Farm

by Charles C. Sutton

When thinking about endangered species one would not ordinarily think of barnyard chickens and other fowl, considering they are so abundant.

Although we purchase plenty of chicken and eggs at well-stocked markets, there are many unique, exotic and heritage species of chickens (good egg layers) and other fowl that would become extinct except for a few breeders and growers that are making the save.

One of them is Sugar Feather Farm in West Berlin, VT, operated by Nicolle Ferrier and her partner Robert McCulloch, which specializes in heritage chickens, ducks, turkeys, quail, geese and guinea fowl (newborn to adult) and their fertile eggs. The farm also offers classes in beginning backyard poultry for children and adults and markets non-GMO fresh fowl feed, honey from their own bees, and kombucha, a special tea drink.

Most of the farm eggs are used to produce baby poultry, but Nicolle says certain times of the year “we actually use our eggs for recipes and eats!” One of their specialties for eggs is a frittata recipe, available on their website. But she says, “My favorite product is an egg hatching into a life, it’s amazing.”

## Becoming Vermont farmers

Nicolle, with a background in water quality projects for a civil engineering firm, and her partner Robert, formerly a long-time cross-country truck driver, hadn’t had any background or experience with farming while living in the San Diego area of Southern California. But they decided to relocate to Vermont, desiring to do something related to nature and connected to the environment.

These entrepreneurs chose to breed exotic chickens. Nicolle had become fascinated with heritage birds because of the extra care involving science and genetics. Their farm definitely is not be like the usual factory-farm today with emphasis on volume not quality.

Half of their poultry sources are from the United States, but others have origins in foreign countries including France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Iceland, Poland, Germany, and countries as far away as Indonesia.

Most of their poultry looks as it should (like chickens) so we do see Rhode Island Reds, now being white. Check their website at [www.sugar-feather.com](http://www.sugar-feather.com) to view an array of exotic and heritage offerings. Because of their rarity, some breeds may not always be available.

## Many unusual varieties offered

Among the unusual chickens displayed, we did a double-take on these:

- **Tolbunt Polish Chicken**—Birds with poofs on the top of their heads with small V-shapes combs hidden by a large crest of feathers. Unusual color with deep golden feathers outlined in black with a white tip. Known for their silly personalities.
- **Cream Legbar**—A British breed almost a hundred years old. Silver-grey with salmon-colored breast, known for their beautiful blue eggs. Loves to free-range, calm and friendly.
- **Favaucana**—A cold-hardy, sweet dispositioned bird with



Polish Chickens out for a stroll at Sugar Feather Farm in West Berlin, VT. The spotted ones are called Tolbunt Polish. photo courtesy of Sugar Feather Farm

beautiful plumage producing sage green eggs. An American cross between a cross between Faverolles and Ameraucanas, they are excellent foragers.

• **Swedish Flower Hens**—The largest chicken native to Sweden. Beautiful, cold-hardy and friendly whose eggs are cream-colored to pale brown. Feathers feature polka dots and light hackles. Considered an ideal pet.

• **Icelandic Chickens**—A ‘landrace’ bird meaning developed all over Iceland for its in-common utilitarian traits. Originated there in the 10th century by the Norse. This bird features many feather colors and patterns, a visual kaleidoscope.

## And not just chickens

Their chicken varieties include nine rare and 12 unique breeds. They have Guinea Fowl, originating in the Central African plains, two varieties of Quail, Cuyuga and Heritage Ducks from the U.S. and Silver Appleyard Ducks from Brit-

ain. Looking for something larger? They also have Pilgrim Geese from the U.S. and Roman Tufted Geese from Italy; three varieties of turkeys: Black Spanish Turkeys from Europe and from the U.S., Heritage Turkeys and Narrangansett Turkeys, which also make good pets. Thirteen of their poultry breeds are heritage breeds.

Because of their uniqueness and scarcity the birds and eggs are priced accordingly. Eggs start at \$15 each; baby chicks \$15-\$50; pullets (five weeks or older) \$15 to \$50; and fully-grown birds \$30 to \$80. They can be ordered and picked up at the farm or shipped to buyers in special boxes by U.S. Postal Service’s express mail.

The Sugar Feather Farm website has a wealth of how-to information on raising and caring for poultry. Give them a visit.

Sugar Feather Farm is located at 1671 Chandler Rd., West Berlin, VT 05663. (802) 560-5606. E-mail: [contact@sugar-feather.com](mailto:contact@sugar-feather.com). [www.sugar-featherfarm.com](http://www.sugar-featherfarm.com).



photo courtesy of Sugar Feather Farm  
Sugar Feather Farm welcomes you!



photo courtesy of Sugar Feather Farm  
Nicolle with two Lyonnaise Chickens, a rare French breed.

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— Bob Bushee, Owner —

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