

## Hybrid Poultry: Insights into the Crossbred Birds Shaping the Modern Poultry Industry

Zhiyong Zhang\*

Department of Cell Biology, Hedmark University, Hedmark, Norway

### DESCRIPTION

Hybrid poultry, also known as crossbred poultry, plays a vital role in modern poultry farming, especially in commercial production. Hybrid birds are created by selectively breeding different parent lines to combine desirable traits, resulting in offspring that grow faster, produce more meat or eggs and have enhanced resistance to diseases. This crossbreeding is not the same as genetic modification; rather, it relies on traditional breeding methods to achieve a genetic combination that maximizes performance.

### Key types of hybrid poultry

Hybrid poultry is mainly divided into two categories: Hybrid broilers (meat-producing chickens) and hybrid layers (egg-producing chickens). Both types have unique characteristics suited to their purpose, making them highly efficient in their respective roles.

Hybrid broilers are bred specifically for meat production. These birds are optimized for fast growth, large breast muscle development and efficient feed conversion, allowing farmers to achieve a high meat yield in a relatively short period. Some of the most popular hybrid broiler types include:

**Cornish cross:** Perhaps the most famous hybrid broiler, the Cornish cross is a cross between Cornish and White Plymouth Rock breeds. This hybrid grows rapidly and can reach market weight in just six to eight weeks. Its white feathers and broad breast make it ideal for meat production, especially in commercial settings.

**Ross and Cobb:** Ross and Cobb are two globally recognized broiler strains developed by major breeding companies. These hybrids are bred to have high feed conversion rates, rapid growth and low mortality, meeting the needs of large-scale producers. They are especially common in intensive poultry farming, where uniform growth and size are critical.

**Red ranger and freedom ranger:** These hybrids are slower-growing than Cornish cross but offer an alternative for those

seeking higher-quality meat with a more natural growth process. They are often raised in free-range or pasture-based systems, where their slower growth rate and foraging ability make them well-suited.

### Benefits of hybrid poultry

The primary advantage of hybrid poultry is increased productivity. Hybrid birds are designed to meet specific needs, making them ideal for large-scale commercial production.

Hybrid layers like ISA Browns and Lohmann Browns have high laying capacities, often producing more than 300 eggs per year. This is significantly higher than most traditional egg-laying breeds, making them valuable for commercial egg production. They are also less prone to seasonal declines in laying, ensuring steady output year-round.

Hybrid poultry often has greater resistance to diseases, as breeders selectively choose parent lines that are hardy and resilient. This resilience is especially important in large commercial farms where the risk of disease outbreaks is high. Hybrids reduce the reliance on medications, which can be beneficial for public health and animal welfare.

### Challenges and considerations of hybrid poultry

Hybrid broilers, especially fast-growing varieties like the Cornish cross, are prone to health issues due to their rapid growth. Leg problems, cardiovascular issues and a lack of natural behaviors are common in fast-growing hybrids, raising animal welfare concerns. Slow-growing hybrids, while healthier, do not yield meat as quickly, which may be less economically attractive to some producers.

The development and distribution of hybrid poultry are largely controlled by a few large breeding companies. Farmers often rely on these companies for consistent hybrid stock, creating dependency and reducing genetic diversity on farms. This dependency also limits the options available to small-scale farmers, who may prefer breeds that are less demanding.

**Correspondence to:** Zhiyong Zhang, Department of Cell Biology, Hedmark University, Hedmark, Norway, E-mail: zhang@gmail.com

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Many hybrid broilers are unable to reproduce naturally or are less efficient at it. Consequently, farmers must purchase new chicks each season instead of breeding their own. This can lead to higher operational costs and increased reliance on commercial hatcheries, as hybrid poultry typically cannot be self-sustaining.

### **The future of hybrid poultry**

As the poultry industry continues to evolve, hybrid poultry will likely play an even greater role in meeting global food demands. Researchers and breeders are focusing on creating hybrids that are not only productive but also prioritize animal welfare,

environmental sustainability and adaptability to alternative production systems like free-range or pasture-raised operations.

Hybrid poultry represents a significant innovation in the poultry industry, combining productivity with specific desirable traits to meet modern farming demands. While there are challenges associated with hybrid poultry, its benefits in terms of meat and egg production, disease resistance and efficiency make it indispensable in commercial farming. The future of hybrid poultry will likely focus on improving both productivity and animal welfare, ensuring that hybrid birds continue to contribute to a sustainable, ethical and productive poultry industry.