Peafowl Information Sheet

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** This information sheet is provided only as a starting point for raising peafowl. It is highly recommended that you read multiple articles from the Internet to include:

- **Peafowl 101:** http://www.backyardchickens.com/t/388465/peafowl-101-basic-care-genetics-and-answers
- **Peafowl:** http://www.hopkinslivestock.com/peafowl.htm

Peafowl have an average lifespan of 20 years. Peafowl mature at a much slower rate than domestic chickens and do not fully mature until year three; some hens may lay a few eggs late during their first year and most males have a small train their second year. Peachicks are generally babied during their first year of life.

1. **PEACHICKS:** Young peachicks are extremely fragile and have a high mortality rate until they are several months old. In general, peachicks mature at only 1/3 the rate of chickens requiring supplemental heat and protection from the weather for three times longer than chicken chicks. Additionally, peachicks are much more susceptible to intestinal parasites than chickens and should not be placed on ground where older birds have been until they are at least 21 weeks old:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Temp.°F</th>
<th>Protein Level</th>
<th>Feed Type</th>
<th>Housing</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st week</td>
<td>91-95°F</td>
<td>24% Protein</td>
<td>½ Gamebird Starter + ½ Medicated Chick Starter</td>
<td>Brooder²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd week</td>
<td>87-91°F</td>
<td>24% Protein</td>
<td>½ Gamebird Starter + ½ Medicated Chick Starter</td>
<td>Brooder²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd week</td>
<td>83-87°F</td>
<td>24% Protein</td>
<td>½ Gamebird Starter + ½ Medicated Chick Starter</td>
<td>Brooder²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th week</td>
<td>79-83°F</td>
<td>24% Protein</td>
<td>½ Gamebird Starter + ½ Medicated Chick Starter</td>
<td>Brooder²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>75-79°F</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th week</td>
<td>71-75°F</td>
<td>24% Protein</td>
<td>½ Gamebird Starter + ½ Medicated Chick Starter</td>
<td>Brooder²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th week</td>
<td>67-71°F</td>
<td>20% Protein</td>
<td>Medicated Chick Starter</td>
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<td>Raised Pen or Concrete³</td>
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<td>20% Protein</td>
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<td>16th week</td>
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<td>20% Protein</td>
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<td>Fresh Ground²</td>
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<tr>
<td>17th week</td>
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<td>20% Protein</td>
<td>Medicated Chick Starter</td>
<td>Fresh Ground²</td>
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<td>20th week</td>
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<td>20% Protein</td>
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<td>Fresh Ground²</td>
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<tr>
<td>21st week</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20% Protein</td>
<td>Laying Mash in pellet form</td>
<td>Protected Ground³</td>
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</table>

¹ **Brooder:** a small enclosed pen with sidewalls to prevent drafts, a heat source, and a thermometer to monitor temperature.
² **Raised Pen:** a larger pen raised off the ground with hardware cloth flooring, a means to collect droppings underneath, a heat source, and a thermometer to monitor temperature.
³ **Concrete:** a less preferred alternative to a raised pen. Flooring should be covered with large flake pine shavings that should be changed frequently to avoid moisture buildup and the development of mold.
⁴ **Fresh Ground:** an outdoor pen where no adult birds have resided within the previous three years. The pen must have solid housing that will enable juvenile birds to escape the sun, heat, rain, wind, and other adverse weather conditions.
⁵ **Protected Ground:** It is highly recommended that Peafowl should not be kept in areas where high concentrations of chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, or other poultry reside.

2. **FRESH FEED:** Feed is a perishable commodity. The older it becomes the less nutritional value it contains. The best and most expensive feed has little value if it older than three months. Unfortunately, much of the feed sold in farm stores and rural feed stores is old. If the feed is fresh, you’ll be able to detect a strong organic smell without opening the bag. Feed produced by national brands such as Purina will also contain a lot number than you can use to look up the mill date. Many, if not most, health issues can be avoided by providing only quality fresh feed.
3. **FEEDING ADULTS:** Gamebird Maintenance/Layer is generally recommended but what you feed largely depends upon what is available in your area. I feed **Lone Star** 19% protein game bird conditioner in the pelleted form for most of the year. Using pellets instead of crumbles reduces waste, discourages rodents, and enhances general cleanliness. **Lone Star** 20% Gamebird Breeder-Layer is only available in crumble form. Just prior to and throughout breeding season I feed **Lone Star** 28% Gamebird Grower-Starter supplemented with crushed oyster shells. Peafowl consume less feed than most poultry so quality of feed should be a major concern. Why do I choose **Lone Star** feed? Because it is the only guaranteed source of high quality FRESH feed in my area.

4. **RAISING WITH CHICKENS:** Unlike chickens that have been domesticated for thousands of years and can endure prolonged confinement in relatively small areas, peafowl are much more susceptible to coccidiosis, blackhead (histomoniasis), and other intestinal parasites that do have little impact on other backyard poultry. While many hobbyists report success in raising peafowl and chickens together, most experienced breeders do not recommend raising peafowl in the same pens where chickens have been during the previous three years. Free ranging peafowl, where birds are dispersed over a large area, tend to have fewer parasitic problems than those confined in smaller pens.

5. **WORMING:** Breeders recommend worming at least twice a year worming in March before the Peacock laying season and in September when it is over. Panacur or Safeguard (Fenbendazole Suspension 10%) is frequently recommended and is available at Tractor Supply. To break the life cycle of parasites for birds not regularly wormed, repeat the worming process in 10 days.

6. **FREE RANGE:** Peafowl have been successfully free ranged in many parts of the country including here in East Texas. For best success, birds should be penned for long enough to ensure that they know where home is. Male peacocks may wonder off seeking a mate if a peahen is not available. Free range birds will roost in trees and of roof tops and have been known to enjoy pooping on guest and neighbor automobiles.

7. **HOUSING:** Peafowl require a minimum of 80 square feet per bird with a minimum height of 6 feet (a male’s train is often 5 feet long). They generally do well during the winter cold in shelters with three sides with a southerly side open. A shelter of 8 ft x 8 ft x 8 ft should be sufficient to house two or three birds.

8. **PREDATORS:** Peafowl kept in pens have no means to escape predators should one enter their pen. Personally, I avoid the use of regular chicken wire and, at minimum, use 5 ft tall welded wire with the bottom of the wire being buried in a trench 8-12” deep. I also use 2 inch nylon knotted netting to cover all pens.

9. **FLIGHT:** Peafowl are excellent flyers preferring to roost in trees or on roof tops and they can easily jump a 6 foot fence even with clipped wings. Peafowl that are not free ranged are kept in flight pens with netting tops.

10. **NOISE:** My peafowl are for the most part quiet birds; however, that changes during breeding season where the male becomes extremely loud calling for a mate. Raising peafowl where noise is a concern is not recommended.

11. **GENDER:** Determining the gender of young peafowl can be difficult and generally not accurate until they are at least 8 weeks old, ten months for Whites. The following Internet links provide photographs on how to sex peafowl:

   - **Blackshoulder:** [http://calvinroberts.us/peafowl/bs_sex.jpg](http://calvinroberts.us/peafowl/bs_sex.jpg)
   - **India Blue:** [http://calvinroberts.us/peafowl/ib_sex.jpg](http://calvinroberts.us/peafowl/ib_sex.jpg)

12. **COLORS & PATTERNS:** Unlike most poultry, peafowl only come in two breeds (species) Green and Blue. Green peafowl are temperamentally, more susceptible to cold, and rarer than the better known India Blue. India Blues generally come in different patterns: barred, black shoulder, pied, silver pied, and white. They also have come in a variety of colors such as Blue, Purple, Cameo, Violet, etc. Frequently, a bird may carry the genes for more than one pattern/color but only display the dominate pattern/color with the less dominate pattern/color showing up in subsequent generations. The following Internet link provides examples of the different colors and patterns that we carry. It also provide charts that help illustrate the outcome of various breeding mixes:

   - **Peafowl Photos:** [http://calvinroberts.us/index.php?_page=7](http://calvinroberts.us/index.php?_page=7)

**HUMAN SALMONELLA INFECTIONS FROM BABY POULTRY:** Baby poultry can carry harmful germs called Salmonella. After you touch a chick, duckling, or other baby bird, or anything in the area where they live and roam, WASH YOUR HANDS so you don’t get sick!
Peafowl Information Sheet

**SPECIES:** Peafowl are classified into three general species with India Blue being the most common kept domestically.

- **INDIA BLUE:** The most common species of peafowl is the India Blue (*Pavo cristatus*), a large and brightly colored bird native to South Asia. Males are distinguished primarily by the blue coloration in the neck and breast feathers.

- **CONGO:** The Congo peafowl (*Afropavo congensis*) is a species of peafowl native to the Congo Basin. Congo peafowl can only be found in their native habitat or zoos.

- **GREEN:** The green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*) is a species of peafowl that is found in the tropical forests of Southeast Asia. Males are distinguished primarily by the green coloration in their neck and breast feathers. Green peafowl are known to be more aggressive and less tolerant of colder climates than their India Blue cousins.
  - **Java Peafowl:** (*Pavo muticus muticus*) found in the wild state on the Indonesian island of Java.
  - **Burmese Peafowl:** (*Pavo muticus spicifer*) inhabits northwestern Myanmar.
  - **Indo-Chinese Peafowl:** (*Pavo muticus imperator*) inhabits the largest area from all green peacock subspecies: Myanmar, Thailand, Indochina and South China.

- **SPALDING:** Within the United States, pure green peafowl are very rare. Spalding peafowl are a hybrid cross between the India Blue and Java Green. Crossings that have higher concentrations of Java Green genetics (+75%) are often called Emeralds.

**VOCABULARY:**

- **PEAFOWL:** generic term for the species, without gender. Can be plural or singular.
- **PEACOCK:** Male peafowl
- **PEAHEN:** Female peafowl
- **PEACHICK:** Young peafowl under one year of age.
- **TRAIN:** The long feathers peacocks show off during courting rituals. These are not actually tail feathers but are the greatly elongated coverts above the tail.
- **PARTY:** Term for a group of peafowl
- **BEVY:** Term for a family of peafowl

**BASIC FACTS:**

- **MATURITY:** Peafowl can live up to 25 years in the wild, but the average is around 20 years due to predation, disease, and injury. In captivity the maximum lifespan is 23.2 years with 16 being the average. Peafowl mature at a much slower rate than other backyard poultry. Females are capable of laying fertile eggs as yearlings when penned with a mature peacock; however, they do not reach sexual maturity until their second year and will not lay a full complement of eggs until their third or fourth year. Males will develop a small train their second year and may be capable of fertilizing eggs but do not reach full maturity until their third year with the train reaching its maximum length during year five. Mature females will 16-20 eggs per year when the eggs are removed on a daily basis.

- **FERTILIZATION:** A mature peacock can successfully mate with five peahens with a 1:4 ratio is generally preferred. Males may become aggressive during the breeding season and keeping two males within a confined area is not recommended. The breeding season varies with geographical location but is generally between April and June in North America. At the close of the breeding season, the male will shed their train feathers. Peafowl copulate only once or a few times during a breeding cycle with viable sperm being stored from 9 to 33 days with a mean maximum of 26 days. It can take up to five days after insemination for sperm numbers to reach their maximum. It is not uncommon for eggs laid late in the breeding season to be infertile.

- **INCUBATION:** Peafowl eggs can be successfully hatched using artificial incubation and require 28 days of incubation; however, they require greater precision in temperature (99.6°F circulated air) and humidity controls (42-45% days 1-25). Eggs should be placed on their side and rotated 45° every two hours and flipped 180° daily. At the beginning of day 25, eggs should be removed from the turner and the humidity increased to 60-65%.
**LEUCISM:** (lack of feather pigment)

**WHITE:** White is a genetic mutation (alteration) resulting in the complete lack of pigment (coloring) in the feathering. Unlike albinism where the bird lacks the pigment known as melanin, White peafowl produce melanin but do not deposit it into their feathers, a condition known as **leucism.** At hatch, peachicks are yellow with white flight feathers. In order for a bird to display complete White, it must inherit two White genetic markers – one from each parent.

**PIED:** Pied is a genetic mutation resulting in a partial lack of pigment in the feathering. Unlike White peafowl, Pied birds display their regular coloring but that coloring is interrupted by various patches of white (partial leucism). At hatch, peachicks have the same coloring as chicks of similar color and pattern except that that coloring will be interrupted by patches of yellow in the down and/or some white flight feathers. In order for a bird to display Pied, it must inherit one White genetic marker and one Pied marker from its parents.

**WHITE-EYED:** White-Eyed is a genetic mutation resulting in the lack of pigment or the partial lack of pigment in the eyespots (ocelli)... the black spot in the eye will be white or partially white. Although similar to White-Pied traits, the White-Eyed mutation involves a separate genetic marker that works independently from White-Pied marker. At hatch, peachicks are typically lighter in color than their peers. In order for a bird to display White-Eyed, it must inherit at least one White-Eyed marker from one of its parents.

**SILVER PIED:** Silver Pied is a genetic mutation involving both the White-Pied and White-Eyed genetic markers. Silver Pied birds are 80-90% white with small patches of regular color. Silver Pieds were originally created breeding India Blue White-Eyed to India Blue Pied eventually leading to a new mutation. Silver Pied is a true mutation and cannot be replicated by simply breeding White-Eye to Pied birds. At hatch, chicks have a small grey smudge on their neck or head and occasionally a smudge of grey on their back or wings. In order for a bird to display Silver Pied, it must inherit one White genetic marker from one parent and Silver Pied/White-Eyed markers from the other.

**GENETICS:**

**ALLELES:** (Marker) Peafowl have a total of 38 pairs of chromosomes; 38 individual chromosomes from the father and 38 from the mother. These chromosomes contain thousands of genes and each gene contains thousands of markers (locations or loci). The variations among individual genetic markers are called **alleles.** These alleles are represented in symbols. For example, the symbol “W” is used to represent White (leucism) in India Blue; the symbol “p” is used to represent Pied (partial leucism).

**HOMOGENEOUS:** (Pure) Peachicks inheriting identical genetic alleles from each parent are considered **homogeneous** (the same). For example, White peafowl are homogeneous – they have two White alleles (WW) – one White allele (W) from each parent. When you breed two homogeneous birds, their offspring will display the same traits as their parents – breed two White peafowl (WW) and all of their offspring will be White (WW).

**HETEROGENEOUS:** (Mixed) Peachicks inheriting different genetic alleles from each parent are considered **heterogeneous** (different). For example, Pied peafowl are heterogeneous – they have one White allele (W) and one Pied allele (p). When you breed two heterogeneous birds, some of their offspring will display different traits than their parents – breed two Pied (Tp) peafowl and one-fourth of their offspring will be White (WW), one-fourth will be Dark Pied (pp), and one-half will be Pied (Wp).

**DOMINANCE:** Peafowl colors, patterns, and leucism generally do not blend. Breed a homogeneous (pure) Blue peacock to a Purple peahen and their offspring will not be violet but rather their offspring will all appear to be Blue… their colors do not mix. That is because the Blue allele is **dominant** and the Purple allele is **recessive** – the dominant allele is displayed and the recessive allele is hidden. Some alleles are considered **incomplete dominant** – partial dominant – an intermediary state where the trait is only partially expressed. Breed a homogeneous (pure) Blue peacock (BB) with a homogeneous (pure) White peahen (WW) and the offspring will be heterogeneous Blue split White (BW). Because the Blue allele (B) is dominant, the offspring will look like regular Blue; however, because the White allele (W) is incomplete dominant, the White will reveal its presence though some white flight feathers and perhaps a small patch of white on the neck.
SPLITS/GENOTYPE/PHENOTYPE: A heterogeneous bird (mixed) that carries two different alleles for the same trait is referred to as a split. An India Blue split Black Shoulder peacock carries two different alleles for its pattern: one allele for the wild type barred wing (B) and one allele for the Black Shoulder mutation (bs). An India Blue split Black Shoulder peacock’s genotype – genetic identity – would be designated Bbs. However, because the Black Shoulder mutation (bs) is recessive and the wild type barred wing (B) allele is dominant, the peacock would look like a regular India Blue – the Black Shoulder trait would be hidden. Thus, an India Blue split Black Shoulder peacock’s phenotype – what the bird looks like – would be designated as India Blue.

DARK PIED: Peafowl inheriting two Pied or Silver Pied alleles are called Dark Pied or Dark Silver Pied because these pied alleles are recessive and overshadowed by the dominate, default coloring. Like a split White bird, the double pied alleles will reveal their presence though some white flight feathers and perhaps a small patch of white on the neck.

SEX-LINKED & SOMATIC COLOR TRAITS: The gender linked chromosomes in peafowl are labeled (Z) and (W). A peacock will possess two (Z) chromosomes (ZZ) while a peahen will possess one (Z) chromosome and one W chromosome (ZW). Four color traits are carried only on the (Z) chromosome and are called sex-linked colors: Peach, Purple, Cameo, Sonja’s Violeta. The other six color mutations are carried on other chromosomes and are called somatic colors: Charcoal, Bronze, Opal, Midnight, Jade, and Taupe.

EXAMPLES:

- **INDIA BLUE**: Wild Type (Homogeneous)

  Peacocks: India Blue peacocks have a blue chest, neck, and head with eyespots (ocelli) of bronze and blue. Their shoulders are white and black striped.

  Peahens: India Blue peahens are brownish-grey, green chests and necks, and a cream colored underside.

  Peachicks: India Blue peachicks are multiple shades of brown.

  **Genotype**: Homogeneous • **BB**

  **Phenotype**: Barred wing pattern • Blue color • No mutations

  **Offspring**: Mating an India Blue peacock to an India Blue peahen will result in 100% India Blue offspring.

- **BLACK SHOULDER**: Pattern Mutation (Homogeneous)

  Peacocks: Black Shoulder peacocks resemble India Blues except the black and white striping on the shoulders is replaced with solid black with bluish-green sheen.

  Peahens: Black Shoulder peahens are very light beige with splotches of dark brown and reddish-brown coloring on the neck.

  Peachicks: Black Shoulder peachicks have yellow down with light peach coloring flight feathers. As the chick matures, the amount and depth of coloring will increase

  **Genotype**: Homogeneous • **bsbs**

  **Phenotype**: Black Shoulder pattern • Blue color • Pattern mutation

  **Offspring**: Mating a Black Shoulder peacock to a Black Shoulder peahen will result in 100% Black Shoulder offspring.

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1 Photo images originate from https://www.backyardchickens.com/content/type/61/id/6579189/.
• **INDIA BLUE split BLACK SHOULDERS**: Heterogeneous (mixed)

  - **Peacocks**: Displays India Blue peacock traits.
  - **Peahens**: Displays India Blue peahen traits.
  - **Peachicks**: Displays India Blue peachick traits.
  - **Genotype**: Heterogeneous • $Bbs$
  - **Phenotype**: Barred wing pattern • Blue color

  **Offspring:**
  1. Mating an India Blue to a Black Shoulder will result in 100% India Blue split Black Shoulder offspring.
  2. Mating of an India Blue split Black Shoulder to an India Blue split Black Shoulder will result in 25% India Blue, 25% Black Shoulder, and 50% India Blue split Black Shoulder.
  3. Mating of an India Blue to an India Blue split Black Shoulder will result in 50% India Blue and 50% India Blue split Black Shoulder.

• **INDIA BLUE - WHITE**: Leucism

  - **Peacocks**: White peacocks are white lacking pigmentation in feathering.
  - **Peahens**: White peahens are white lacking pigmentation in feathering.
  - **Peachicks**: White peachicks have yellow down and white flight feather.

  **Genotype**: Homogeneous • $WW$
  **Phenotype**: White • White color

  **Offspring**: Mating a White peacock to a White peahen will result in 100% White offspring.

• **INDIA BLUE split WHITE**: Heterogeneous

  - **Peacocks**: Displays India Blue peacock traits with a few white flight feathers and perhaps a patch of white on the throat.
  - **Peahens**: Displays India Blue peahen traits with a few white flight feathers and perhaps a patch of white on the throat.
  - **Peachicks**: Displays India Blue peachick traits with a few white flight feathers

  **Genotype**: Heterogeneous • $BW$
  **Phenotype**: India Blue • some White flight feathers

  **Offspring:**
  1. Mating an India Blue to a White will result in 100% India Blue split White offspring.
  2. Mating an India Blue split White to an India Blue split White will result in 25% India Blue, 25% White, and 50% India Blue split White.
  3. Mating an India Blue to an India Blue split White will result in 25% India Blue, 25% White, and 50% India Blue split White.
• **PIED**: Partial Leucism - Heterogeneous

**Peacocks**: Pied peacocks may display any pattern and color but also have white patches in the feathering. The size and number of patches vary from bird to bird.

**Peahens**: Pied peahens may display any pattern and color but also have white patches in the feathering. The size and number of patches vary from bird to bird.

**Peachicks**: Pied peachicks look like other peachick of similar pattern and colors but also have patches of yellow in their down.

**Genotype**: Heterogeneous • \( Wpd \)

**Phenotype**: Pied • Patches of White coloring

**Offspring**: Mating a Pied to a Pied will result in 25% White, 50% Pied, and 25% Dark Pied offspring.

• **DARK PIED**: Partial Leucism - (Homogeneous)

**Peacocks**: Dark Pied peacocks may display any pattern and color but also have a few white flight feathers and perhaps a small white patch on their throat.

**Peahens**: Dark Pied peahens may display any pattern and color but also have a few white flight feathers and perhaps a small white patch on their throat.

**Peachicks**: Pied peachicks look like other peachick of similar pattern and colors but also have a few white flight feathers.

**Genotype**: Homogeneous • \( pdpdp \)

**Phenotype**: A few White flight feathers and patch of white near throat.

**Offspring**:

1. Mating a Dark Pied to a Dark Pied will result in 100% Dark Pied offspring.
2. Mating a Dark Pied to a White will result in 100% Pied offspring.
3. Mating a Dark Pied to a Pied will result in 50% Pied and 50% Dark Pied offspring.

• To be continued...