

<https://www.deuka.de/en/current/laying-quails-are-very-much-in-vogue/>

Keeping quail in your own garden: Part 2

## JAPANESE QUAIL & CO: IDEAL FOR BEGINNERS



Whether for self-sufficiency with eggs or just for decoration: Keeping laying quails is becoming increasingly popular. Due to their reserved, endearing character and easy-care, uncomplicated husbandry, laying quails are also suitable for beginners in quail keeping. But which laying quail is best suited to whom? There is also a wide variety of laying quails due to different breeding lines and different colours - including in terms of laying performance. The following article provides information about the special features of each laying quail.

The **laying quails** known today are the **domesticated** wild form of the Japanese quail (lat. *Coturnix japonica*), which has been further developed **through targeted breeding**. It originally comes from Japan, Korea and the north-western regions of China. In Japan, these small animals, which belong to the order of chicken birds, have been kept **as ornamental birds since the 13th century**. **About 100 years ago, Japanese quails** began to be **bred for good laying performance**. This is how the common name "Japanese laying quail" came about. **Japanese laying quails** are now **widespread worldwide** and come in several **different colours** (feather colouring). There are **three breeding lines** for each colour. A "breeding line" is a selectively bred group of an animal breed in order to develop or strengthen desired characteristics over several generations.

### The three breeding lines of Japanese laying quails

- **The light line of laying quails**

Laying quails of the light line have a "good laying performance" similar to the medium line. They weigh **up to 240 g** and are similar in body size to the original wild form.

- **The medium line of laying quails**

The breeding goal of this line is a "very good laying performance", i.e. around 300 eggs per year. With a weight of **up to 350 g**, the laying quails of the medium line also offer a good meat set. For this reason, this line is also known as the "dual-purpose type". Laying quails of the medium line are considered the ideal laying quails and are therefore the most widespread.

- **The heavy line of laying quails**

In addition to "good laying performance", the focus of breeding in the heavy line is primarily on body weight. This is why these animals are also known as meat quails or fattening quails. Quails of the heavy

line weigh **up to 500 g**, which is why this breeding line is mainly used for fattening quails.

In general, there is a recognisable trend towards more body weight among all laying quails, which is why different weight specifications can be found for the different breeding lines. Good to know: There are only Japanese laying quails in the three described breeding lines.

We hear more and more about "**French laying quails**". However, the animals also known as "French fattening quails" are also Japanese laying quails, more precisely quails of the heavy line. These are bred in France specifically for their high weight.

## Japanese laying quails and European field quails - the laying performance makes the difference

The **European field quail** is the only quail species that is native to almost all of Europe. It is also known as **field quail** or simply "quail" (lat. *Coturnix coturnix*). Compared to the Japanese quail, the European field quail is significantly smaller at around 17 cm and only weighs a maximum of 128 g. The appearance of its plumage is very similar to that of the wild-coloured Japanese quail.

There are also major differences in laying performance: the Japanese **laying quail** has been bred for high laying performance and lays **up to over 300 eggs a year**, whereas the wild **European quail** only lays **four to eight eggs a year**.



Depending on the outside temperature, a quail can lay up to two eggs a day (©stock.adobe.com - Africa Studio).

## Quails: The basis for good laying performance and long life expectancy



A suitable environment in which the quails feel comfortable is essential for good laying performance (©stock.adobe.com - José 16).

If you want to produce as many flavoured quail eggs as possible by keeping laying quails, you should know the **factors that determine laying performance**. One important factor is the **housing conditions**. The birds need an **environment in which they feel comfortable**. The basic requirement is an enclosure that offers the quails a **secure run** from predators. On the other hand, a roofed **retreat protected** from moisture and wind for laying eggs and, if necessary, as a breeding place. A suitably equipped barn or aviary is suitable for keeping **laying quails**, which are generally **hardy**. This should be dimensioned so that there is room for a maximum of four to six quails per square metre. Keeping quails in a cage does not fulfil their needs.

Another factor that influences laying performance is the age of the quails. **Laying maturity** - this is when the hens start laying eggs - begins **at around eight weeks of age**. They lay the most eggs in their first year of life. In the following two years, laying performance slowly declines. In their third and fourth year, which also corresponds to their **life expectancy**, they only lay a few eggs.

### Colourful variety: Japanese laying quails come in a wide range of colours

In addition to wild-coloured laying quails, whose appearance resembles that of quails living in the wild, there are **many different colour varieties**. The best known and now recognised by the BZA (Bundes-Zucht- und Anerkennungsausschuss des Bundes Deutscher Rassegeflügelzüchter) are the most widespread and are therefore briefly described below:

## Wild coloured

The wild colour is the **original colour form of the Japanese quail**. All other colours are the result of breeding. Unlike other colour varieties, the cock and hen are clearly different from each other. The **hen's plumage is lighter** in colour and **more contrasting** than that of the cock. The **breast of the cock** is usually **beige with reddish-brown speckles**. The cocks also have a white ring around their neck.

## Yellow-wild coloured (gold speckled, gold, Isabell)

The **yellow-wild colour** (also known as gold speckled, gold or Isabell) is also one of the **oldest colour forms** and is therefore widespread. The **base colour** of both the cock and hen is **golden yellow** and both have **red to dark brown markings** on the wing coverts. The breast and belly of the cock are beige with a light keel and light-coloured feather tips. The hen has a golden-yellow breast with a light-coloured keel and feather edges as well as red to dark brown flake markings.

## Brown-wild coloured

Compared to the wild-coloured quails, the basic colour tone of the brown-wild-coloured varieties is **warmer** and lighter in brown, more towards reddish brown than grey-brown. The cock can be recognised by three creamy yellow stripes above the eyes, which start at the root of the beak and run down to the neck. The **hen's plumage is lighter in colour and more contrasting**. Their breast is beige in colour and the upper half is evenly streaked with brown flakes.

## Silver-wild coloured (Falbfée)

As the name suggests, the **silver-wild colour** is also similar to the original colour form. However, the basic coat colour here is neither red-brown nor yellowish, but a blackish lead grey. In addition, there are **ivory to silver-white colour accents** in the crossbands of the mantle plumage and the wings as well as in the lanceolate pattern (elongated arrow shape) of the back, the shaft lines of the flanks and the crown and transition stripes. The **hen can be recognised** by its **blackish-lead-grey fluff markings**.

## Other colours

The **darkest colour "Tenebrosus"**, in which the cock and hen have dark brown or black plumage, is also quite common. Laying quails with different, clearly defined colour tones are called pided. They come in a wide variety of tenebrosus pided, white pided and, more recently, grey pided. The so-called **fairy quails** should not go unmentioned. These colour varieties are characterised by reduced melanin synthesis, which means that the animals have hardly any brown tones in their plumage and a pale overall appearance.

Another colour pattern is the red-headed quail, in which the quails have a distinctly reddish head, combined with a light base colour, which, however, has a strong, dark mottling.

## Celadon quails - the quail with the blue eggs

When we talk about colour patterns, we are primarily referring to the colour and pattern of the plumage. With celadon **quails** (also known as celadon or blue quail), **on the other hand, we are talking about the colour of the eggshells**. Quails that carry the **unusual celadon gene** lay **eggs** in shades of **light blue, turquoise or dark blue**. The name "celadon" came about because the bluish or grey-green eggs are reminiscent of the Chinese ceramics of the 9th to 15th centuries, named after their "celadon green" (grey-green) glaze.

## Conclusion

- Laying quails, also known as Japanese laying quails, are hardy little chicken birds with great potential and are ideal for beginners to quail keeping.
- There are no different species of laying quail, but there are three different breeding lines.
- Regardless of the breeding line, laying quails come in a wide variety of colours.
- For self-sufficiency with delicious quail eggs, the medium breeding line is recommended due to its excellent laying performance.
- The most common colours are wild, yellow-wild, brown-wild, silver-wild, white and Tenebrosus light and dark pied.
- The so-called celadon quails are a speciality. These lay eggs with light blue, turquoise or dark blue shells due to an unusual colour mutation.

## FAQ

### What breeds of laying quail are there?

There is only one species of laying quail, the **Japanese laying quail**, also known as Japanese quail.

French laying quails are not a separate breed, but are also Japanese laying quails from the heavy breeding line. When European laying quails are mentioned, either Japanese laying quails are also meant or the wild form of quail living in Europe, **the European field quail** (lat. *Coturnix coturnix*).

### Which quails have the best laying performance?

Japanese laying quails from the **middle breeding line lay the most eggs**, as they are bred for very good laying performance.

## How many eggs can a quail lay per day or per year?

Under optimal conditions, a laying quail can **lay up to two eggs per day**. In the course of their first year of life, laying quails can lay up to 300 eggs. However, laying activity decreases significantly depending on the outside temperature and light conditions. In domesticated housing in quail barns or enclosures, laying activity can also be stimulated in winter by artificial light and barn heating. However, the lack of a natural regeneration phase has an impact on life expectancy.

## What is the life expectancy of laying quails?

With species-appropriate, good husbandry and care, the **average** life expectancy of **female laying quails** is **three years**. **Roosters**, on the other hand, can live **up to five years**.

## How long can quails lay eggs?

Laying quails have **their highest laying performance** up to an age of **one and a half to a maximum of two years**. Three or four-year-old laying quails only lay eggs occasionally.

## What are the possible causes of quails not laying eggs?

- The housing conditions are not optimal and/or the animals are under **constant stress**.
- The **feed composition is not suitable** and provides too little crude protein, for example, or an insufficient supply of minerals such as calcium.
- The quails are **moulting**, which is the case in spring and autumn.
- The quails have **only just arrived** and need time to settle in.
- The animals are already **too old**.
- The animal **may be ill**.

## When and for how long do quails moult?

Quails moult **twice a year**, in **spring and autumn**. The duration of the moult varies greatly. Some birds renew their plumage quickly and inconspicuously. For others, the moult can **last up to six weeks**.

## Das passende Futter für die Wachtel

- **Laying quail food** (<https://www.deuka.de/en/pets/poultry/quailfood/>)
- **Laying quail mix** (<https://www.deuka.de/en/pets/poultry/quail-mix/>)

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