Hen myths versus facts

Ten claims, set beside the record.

Some of the best hen stories are true. Some are official wording that is easy to over-read. Each reply is drawn from a government release, a museum, an official history, or a carefully attributed news feature.

The claim	What the sources actually say
Any chicken on an English farm is, officially, a hen laying eggs for eating.	The official England table has a named column, “Hens and pullets laying eggs for eating.” Table chickens (broilers) are counted separately, and they account for 72% of all poultry.
If you subtract England’s laying-hen total from the United Kingdom’s laying-flock total, you get a reliable official figure for the rest of the UK.	The UK figure quoted on the website is for 2025, under “Laying flock (including pullets).” England’s is for 1 June 2026, under a different heading. They are not added or subtracted.
Hens and pullets laying eggs for eating are about 73% of all poultry, just as table chickens are about 72%.	The 73% is a share of the breeding and laying fowl, not of all poultry. The 72% is a share of all poultry.
An official poultry total of zero must mean the farm has gone.	If a poultry shed is empty on 1 June, the England release asks for “0 animals” and a tick that the shed is temporarily empty, between crops, for cleaning.
Egg rationing in Britain ended as soon as the war ended.	The official history says a wartime shortage of animal feed reduced the number of hens, forcing egg rationing to remain in place until 1953.
The Lion mark has been on British eggs, without a break, since the 1950s.	The Little Lion was a Board trademark. The stamp requirement was removed in 1968, the symbol was dropped in 1971, and the Lion Quality mark was reintroduced onto shells of Lion eggs in 2000.
A 1938 photograph proves that air-conditioning is still how British hens are kept, and that they “voice their approval.”	The wording is a 1938 Harris & Ewing caption, in the Library of Congress, about a governmental experimental farm in Washington, D.C.
Mike the headless cockerel is only a pub legend, with no contemporary record.	A BBC News Magazine feature of 10 September 2015 tells the family account, dates the event to 10 September 1945, and uses a Life magazine photograph.
A chemist’s “Poultry Spice” is official proof that a powder will make hens lay more.	The Science Museum Group holds a tin so named, 1920–1940. The promise is in the object’s name, not treated here as a proved result.
Brown eggs are officially healthier than white ones, which is why official tables prefer them.	The official England and United Kingdom figures quoted on the website say nothing of the sort. They count birds under named headings, not the colour of the shell.

ReallyByte — Fun. Educational. Useless. typographic sheet, no photographs. Sources and the longer wording are at hens.farmyard.im/myths/. Checked 17 November 2026.