

# GUINEAFOWL



CRESTED GUINEAFOWL  
*Guttera pucherani*

Guineafowl are a family of birds from Africa related to pheasants, turkeys and partridges. They have a long history of domestication, mainly the Helmeted Guineafowl. The subject species of the rest of this article.



3 DAY OLD CHICKS

The Helmeted Guineafowl is the best known of the Guineafowl family, *Numididae*, and the only member of the genus *Numida*. It breeds in Africa, mainly south of the Sahara, in warm, fairly dry open habitats with scattered shrubs and trees and in farmland. The hen lays a large clutch of twenty to thirty eggs in a well hidden, lined, scrape, which she incubates for twenty-six to twenty-eight days. The chicks are cryptically coloured and their rapid wing growth enables them to flutter onto low branches within a week of hatching. They have been known to live as long as twelve years in the wild.



PLUMED GUINEAFOWL  
*Guttera plumifera*



HELMETED GUINEAFOWL  
*Numida meleagris*

The Helmeted Guineafowl is a large (53-58 cm) bird with a round body and small head. They weigh about 1.3 kg., and like other Guineafowl species have an unfeathered head, in this species decorated with a muted yellow or reddish bony knob, and red and blue skin patches. The wings are short and rounded, and the tail is short.

They are a sociable species, forming flocks outside of the breeding season, usually of about twenty-five birds, who roost communally. They are terrestrial, and are more likely to run than fly when alarmed. They are, however, like most short broad-winged birds, very agile and powerful flyers, capable of hovering and even flying backwards when necessary. Helmeted Guineafowl are great runners, and can easily cover 10 km or more in a day. They emit loud harsh calls when alarmed, and are often housed with poultry as an early warning system for birds of prey.



VULTURINE  
GUINEAFOWL  
*Acryllium vulturinum*

Their diet consists of a variety of animal and plant food; seeds, fruits, greens, snails, spiders, worms, insects (they are renowned for consuming massive quantities of insect pests), frogs, lizards, small snakes and even small mammals. Guineafowl are equipped with strong claws and scratch in soil for food much like domestic fowls. They have well developed spurs which they use to great effect when fighting.

Many colour mutations of the Helmeted Guineafowl have been established, not all of which are available in Australia.



WHITE-BREASTED  
GUINEAFOWL  
*Agelastes meleagrides*



BLACK  
GUINEAFOWL  
*Agelastes niger*

**Reference:** *Wikipedia*

**Photos:**

1, 2, 4 & 5—"eboy"

3 — "peepe"

6 & 7 — lithograph [Daniel Giraud Elliot](#) (1835-1915)