

New research project to uncover the history of chickens

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A new research project looking at the history of chickens is hoping to shed light on how the relationship between people and chickens has developed over the last 8,000 years.

The [project](#) will see researchers dive into archaeological records to investigate the history of the world's most widely established livestock species, which is descended from the wild jungle fowl of SE Asia.

Researchers from Bournemouth University, as well as the Universities of Durham, Nottingham, Leicester, Roehampton and York, will be examining when and how rapidly domesticated [chickens](#) spread across Europe and the history of their exploitation for meat and eggs. The project will also investigate the ancient and modern cultural significance of the birds in, for example, [religious rituals](#) and cockfighting. Research will include metrical and DNA analysis of modern and ancient chicken bones to trace the development of different breeds.

Principal Investigator for the project, Bournemouth University's Dr Mark Maltby said, "This is a fantastic opportunity to work with a team of high international esteem drawn from a wide range of disciplines that includes genetics, [cultural anthropology](#), history and archaeological science. We are united by our mutual research interests in how chickens and people have interacted in the past and the present."

The results of the research will form the basis a series of exhibitions in museums and other venues throughout the UK making up 'The Chicken

Trail' that will tell the story of the chicken's [domestication](#) in Europe and there are also plans to display some of the research findings in butchers shops.

The project, entitled "Cultural and Scientific Perceptions of Human-Chicken Interactions", was made possible with the help of a £1.94 million grant from the AHRC under the Science In Culture Awards Large Grants call. The project will also involve collaboration with academic colleagues across Europe and with poultry breeders and other interested members of the public.

Work is due to begin in January 2014 and the research will be completed in 2017 – coinciding with The Chinese Year of the Rooster. The work is supported by an interactive research network "The Chicken Coop" and the latest information and breaking news about the research can be found at www.chickenco-op.net.

Provided by Bournemouth University

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