Some individuals are blessed with genetically strong and shapely calves without stepping foot into a gym or dedicating their entire young lives to athletics, while the other half of us look down wondering why our calves resemble something closer the chicken family rather than human.

Personally I fell into the average group of people who luckily had enough muscle to avoid humiliation, but not enough to stand out whatsoever. I was always envious of the guys with the diamond shaped calves. Heck, I was even envious of a lot of female’s calves! I started lifting early on at the age of 16 and while at the time my chest, arms, and abs were of most importance to grow, as beginner lifters, I did train my calves quite a bit. No matter what I did, growth did not seem to happen for my average-sized calves. It wasn’t until my 6th year of training did I learn what I needed to do.

**Calf 101**

To understand how to produce substantial growth to your calves, you must understand the specific characteristics of the muscles first. Otherwise, you’ll be wasting valuable effort to watch those chicken legs remain the same.

The calves, while comprised of multiple muscles, have two major muscles responsible for size development; the gastrocnemius and the soleus. The gastrocnemius sits closer to the knee and is stimulated when the knee is extended, as when performing standing calf raises. The soleus, while is still stimulated when the knee is extended, receives much more stimulation when the knee is flexed, as in a seated calf raise.

Both muscles of the calves comprise predominately of slow-twitch muscle fibers, the soleus ~80% and the gastrocnemius ~55%. Slow-twitch muscle fibers are higher endurance and less force outputting than fast-twitch muscle fibers. Understanding the make-up of each can allow us to conclude that higher volume training is more ideal for substantial growth than is heavier workloads.

**The Solution**

Expanding rep range beyond 20 reps seems foreign to most bodybuilders, gym goers, and even weekend gym warriors, but escalated rep ranges for calves just might be the key you have been missing! Now doing a million half reps at an uncontrollable pace is NOT what I mean by this. Each rep needs to be under complete control with a consistent tempo, stretch, and contraction to yield the benefits of this training.

One of the best aspects of this style of training is that a gym isn’t even required to train. Your body weight is plenty to stimulate calf growth as is. Now, if you do have a gym I would recommend incorporating this strategy to your regiment as you can add various weights to this training as you progressively get stronger with your own bodyweight.

I recommend starting with soleus training as it is affected in both seated and standing variations of training, which will allow you to target the most effective version of training it first followed by hitting it secondarily when training the gastrocnemius and thus emphasizing the gastrocnemius when the soleus fatigues.

Start with 25 reps of seated calf raises at a tempo that allows for a 1 second contraction at the top, 2 seconds to reach the lowest position (as low as your flexibility allows), followed by a 2 second hold at the bottom, and a 1 second return to the top. I promise you that it will not take much weight to reach failure with this technique. Work your way up to 50 reps and then and only then add weight! Follow the exact same protocol for standing calf raises. Perform 3 sets of each 3 times a week and watch the growth happen!

With a bit of patience, a tolerance to some pain, and a whole lot of soreness, your calves will slowly begin to balance out your physique and long gone will be the days of getting made fun of for small calves!