

Interview with Richard Swale: THE FEDERATION RESERVE CHAMP!

Richard, congratulations on achieving Reserve Champion at the Fed with your White Pekin female, as well as best of breed at the Scottish with a male. How did it feel?

Thank you. It was amazing to get Reserve Show Champion at the Fed; I certainly wasn't expecting that. Although it does sit in the back of your mind just how close you were to getting show champ - you don't get opportunities like that often. It was also great to get Best Pekin at the Scottish as it was Dean Kay and Richard Bett judging: two top Pekin judges and showmen. I won all four White Pekin classes, so was a great feeling knowing they thought highly of them.

What other wins of note have you secured?

I only attend about six or seven shows a year due to my work, but I also had Show Champion at Peebles in February with a White Pekin male, and managed to get Best Pekin male and 'Best Current Year Bird' at the three major shows (out of all colours), so that was one to celebrate.

How long have you kept Pekins, what other colours / breeds do you keep, and what drew you to the Whites?

I have kept Pekins for about six years and previously had them for about seven years when I was young, but had to sell due to moving away to the city for work. As well as White Pekins I also have Black and Blue Pekins, Black Orpington bantams and White Call Ducks. As for what drew me to Pekins, I think it's probably the

character of them. I have kept many breeds over the years and these will always be the ones I will not let go. Keeping the Orps too, I must have an eye for round fluffy things and like the challenge of getting a White bird 'snow white' with yellow legs and bright red comb. They always stand out at shows when prepped well.

Where did your original stock from and how did you create your line?

My original stock came from about five different breeders, but I would say that the main blood is Dean Kay's.

How many do you aim to breed per year, and what incubators do you use?

I bred about 140 last year, 70 of them being White; was far too many! I will aim for 40-50 Whites this year, if all



■ LEFT Richard receiving his award from Nancie Hutchinson ■ ABOVE The work pond - handy for keeping a few Calls back



goes well, but I'm sure I will find it hard cracking eggs open for scrambled eggs when they could go into the incubator to be a potential winner! I use Heka and Brinsea incubators, and I don't often use broodies; only for the Call Ducks.

How is fertility with your Pekins, as I believe that sometimes it can be a bit hit or miss?

Touch wood, fertility is good,

although I could be calling in a few days to change this answer as the first lot have just gone into the incubator two days ago!

How many Whites are there in the classes at the big shows nowadays?

The Whites and Blacks are very strong classes, and at the big shows you can see between 60 to 80 Whites over 4 classes and 260+ Pekins in total,

including all colours.

Do you pair- or trio-mate or breed from larger pens?

I'm using 4 males for the White Pekins this year, either trios or pairs, plus a trio of Black Pekins and a trio of Blue Pekins using a Black male on Blue females.

Did you have your eye on any birds coming on last year or do you wait until fully grown before making an assessment?

Let's face it, you can't stop looking at them and getting excited from day one. I picked a few out last year over a period of two days old to six weeks old and marked them. Most of the ones I marked were in the show team by the end.

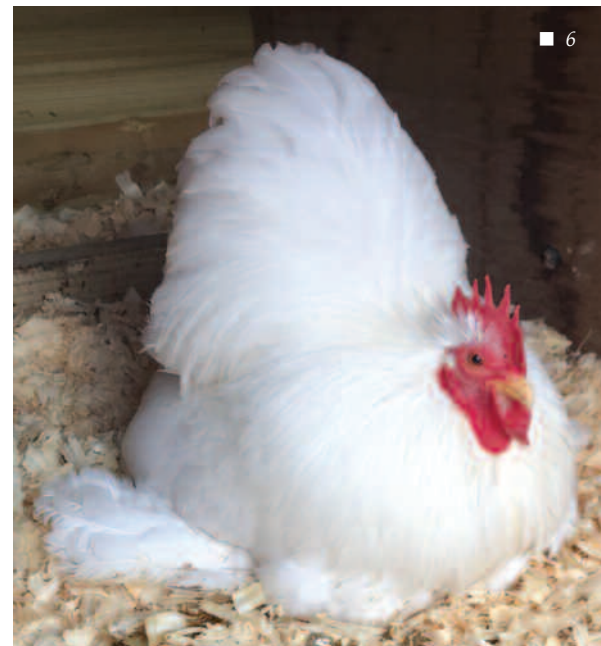
Do your birds get any special feed / treats and what kind of set-up do they live in?

I try to feed them a mixed diet, veg scraps, grass trimmings and boiled egg whites etc, as it keeps them entertained as well. All my sheds are very open with lots of air. I try to place the sheds so that at some point of the day the birds will get a bit of direct sunlight for a while.



■ MAIN The Federation 2018 Reserve Champion ■ ABOVE Pekin breeding pens, which will be used after for rearing and then into 12 individual pens for show season





What is your personal method of pen-training your Pekins?

To be honest, I don't do that much pen-training, just handle them a lot and try to get different people to handle them also. If they're happy and confident around people they should show fine.

What is the best part about this great hobby?

The best part of this amazing hobby is that I can get away from everything. I have a stressful job being a chef, so there is nothing better in the summer months than grabbing a glass of wine after work and pottering around the sheds filling a few drinkers etc. Before it gets dark or if I get a break in the afternoon, it's great just to have a wander around and hopefully spot a few potentials!

What parts of the breeding season do you enjoy?

I still get excited on hatching day and I have to keep telling myself not to open the incubator just yet! But I enjoy the whole process, especially the big shows. At least in our hobby we can look forward to the winter months.

Which shows do you get to and which Fanciers inspire you?

The main shows I attend are the Federation, National, Scottish National, Peebles and a few championship shows in autumn time: Eden Valley, Egremont and Ribble Valley and that's about it. There are loads of fanciers that I respect and admire and it would be wrong to name them, as I would probably forget some of them by accident! But I certainly respect the people that take on the roles of club secretary and for the guys that run the shows and have to clean up after everyone has gone home. It's a thankless task and they do such an amazing job!

Is it difficult to get yellow legs with a snow white plumage?

Selective breeding and plenty of grass, veg scraps etc help.

Commercial layers pellets can be good as they have yellow dye in the feed for the yolks.

What would your advice be to aspiring Pekin keepers and anyone thinking of taking up the breed?

Pekins are definitely one of the best breeds to keep and probably has one of the best clubs and members also. The main thing is to enjoy it.

I would certainly recommend joining the Pekin Club as there is so much knowledge amongst members and they are a very friendly and helpful bunch. If you are serious about showing I would save up and buy the best birds you can afford.

■ 1 Reserve Show Champion Fed 2018 ■ 2 Entry to the penning room ■ 3 Reserve Club Champion 2017 ■ 4 Penning Room
■ 5 The breeding male that's bred many winners, in the breeding pen ■ 6 The Peebles Champ & Scottish best of breed 2019 ■ 7 Chick rearing pens ■ 8 Best Opposite Size Pekin at both the National and Fed shows ■ 9 Winners together ■ 10 Reserve Club Champion 2016