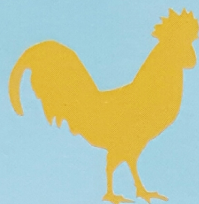


# BREEDING FOR SUCCESS

By Grant Brereton



The  
Gold  
Cockerel  
Series



Foreword by Adam Henson



## Foreword from Adam...



“

As son of one of the founder members of the RBST (Rare Breeds Survival Trust), I am well aware of the importance of maintaining our pure breeds and agricultural heritage. In this book, Grant looks at what it takes to produce your own show quality poultry.

For me, the real success doesn't only lie in taking home red cards and trophies at shows, but reproducing the kind of specimens that are true representations of their breed, as set out in the British Poultry Standards.

The information contained here provides you with all the required knowledge to do just that; soon you'll be '*Breeding for Success.*'

### **Adam Henson**

Farmer and director of the Cotswold Farm Park.

[www.cotswoldfarmpark.co.uk](http://www.cotswoldfarmpark.co.uk)



## Understanding Your Breed

The first question you may want the answer to is: How much is my breed worth? The truth is that all breeds vary in price, depending on the circumstances in which they are sold.

One thing is for certain and that is that 'price' doesn't necessarily reflect quality! Until recently, a prominent breeder of Partridge Wyandotte bantams was selling surplus stock for £15 a bird, when lesser specimens were fetching £20 and above at auction.

Over 10 years ago, some Rare Breeds Centres were selling poor-quality Laced Wyandottes for £40 per bird. This was unheard of among breeders whose average price for good stock was more like £20 per bird at the time.

Often, people bemoan the prices charged by breeders who are at the top of their game, which is somewhat perplexing. If you are serious about wanting the best possible stock, the initial outlay should never be a consideration.

The price you pay for ignoring this advice and settling for average stock will prove much more costly. Good stock should be 'priceless' because you are buying in decades worth of committed breeding by dedicated fanciers, and the ultimate shortcut.

Many breeders won't sell hatching eggs, which is understandable, but most are willing to sell on surplus stock at the end of each year. Only a few have a strict policy of not letting any stock go in fear of being beaten at the shows. However, such people often come unstuck after losing their birds to the fox or some other unfortunate means.



David Speak's magnificent Ancona Bantams - the male was Club Show Champion 2010



## Understanding Breed 'Type'

Most breeds have a definitive shape that, when correct, is most desirable among those wishing to produce perfect show specimens.

However, some breeds are 'subjective' when it comes to the precise shape required and one such example is the Orpington. Since its creation in 1886, the breed has become progressively 'fluffier.' So much so, that a difference can be noted in the last 10 years. Today, many specimens have such an abundance of feather that only the toes can be observed on the feet. This is in contrast to 10 years ago where British Orpingtons tended to show an inch or so of leg where the thigh fluff ended.

A colour to be accused of being too 'fluffy' is the White Wyandotte, and many people believe they to have too much feather compared to the other colours. However, as with the Orpingtons, such specimens always fill the eye (and show pen) and are difficult to ignore.

Though it may be incorrect, sometimes the birds which conform to the 'ideal' in terms of shape, feather and weight, just don't have that 'wow factor' which makes fanciers and judges alike take note.

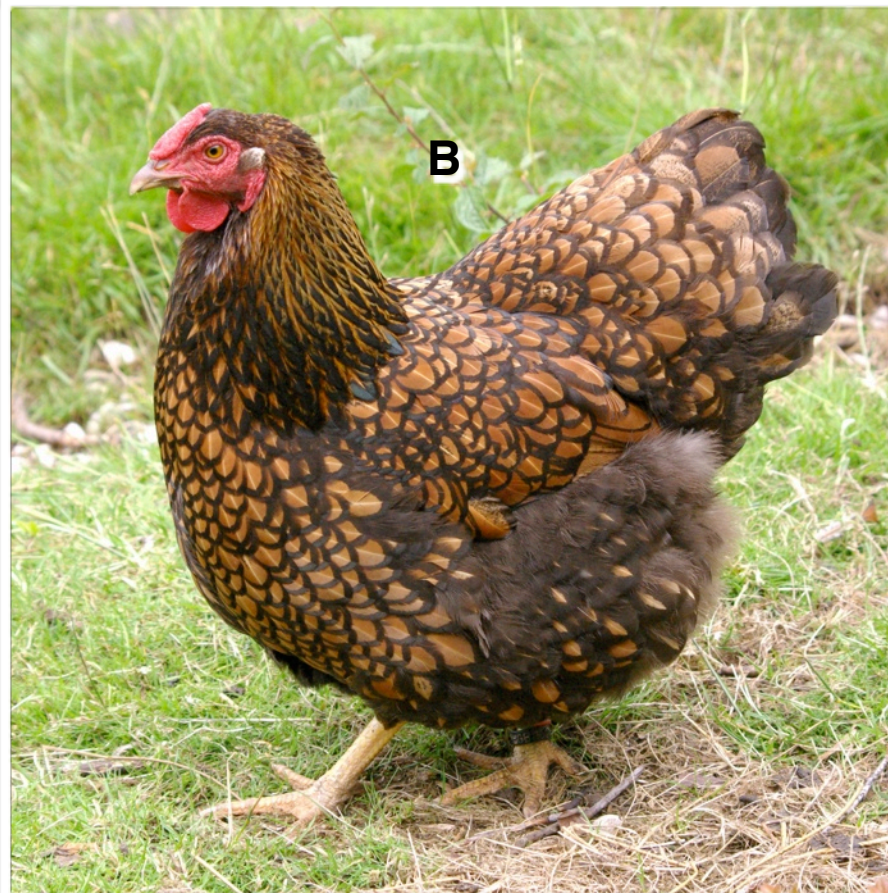
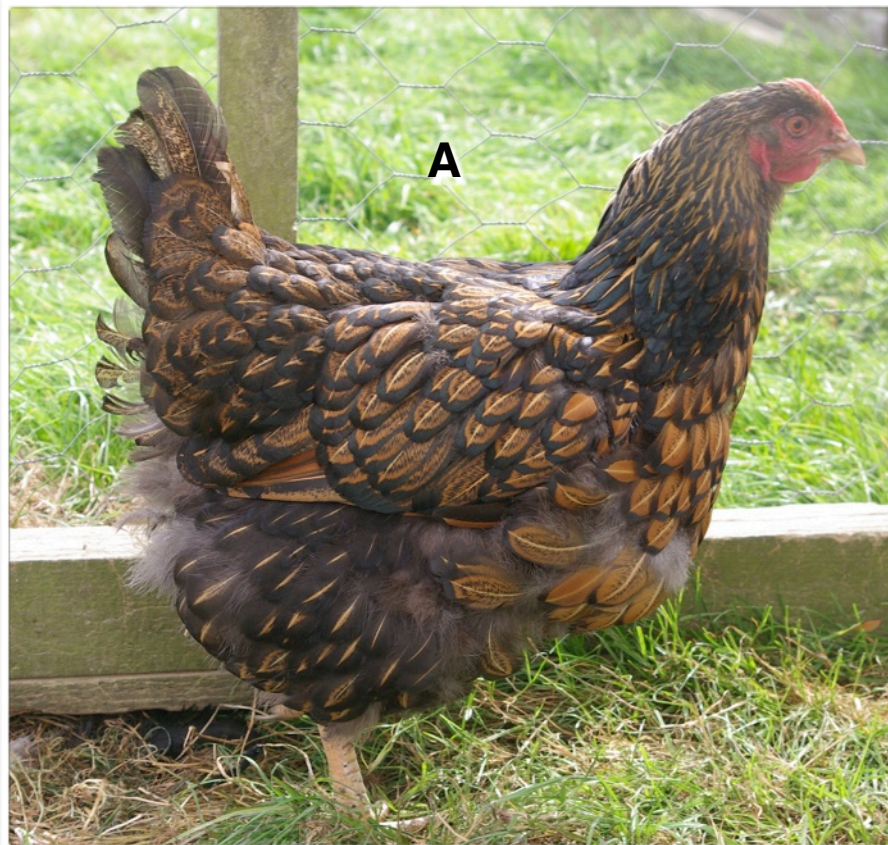
So what is 'type?' The word is used among fanciers of all forms of livestock and refers to the qualities that make for an overall sight that is either pleasing, 'good type' or displeasing, 'poor type.' It refers to conformation, balance and most importantly, shape. As alluded to earlier, without the correct 'type' you don't have a breed. There's a saying in the fancy that goes: 'I want to build my house before I decorate it' which perhaps quite obviously refers to how shape should be correct before any feather pattern.



Nobby Ward's winning German Langshan Bantams: The female (left) wouldn't quite stand for the camera, but the male (right) was very happy to display that much-desired 'wine glass' type



Which of the below birds would you want in your breeding pen?



If the answer to the above question isn't immediately obvious, this is a good opportunity to study breed 'type.' The correct answer is in the back page.



## Understanding Your Breed

If we observe the 2 specimens on the previous page, one has been bred for utility purposes and the other for exhibition. Overlooking the fact that one is slightly out of condition, we should, from a show perspective, still be able to identify the better bird.

To the newcomer, the obvious visual differences between the two birds will be the plumage. However, understanding one's breed goes a lot further than the conformation of its feathers. Aside from type, there are so many other factors to consider when learning about a breed and these include:

**Size:** Just how big should your breed be?

**Markings:** Are your birds displaying the best possible markings?

**Comb:** for example, how many serrations should it have (single comb) and is the back serration supposed to curve upwards or follow the line of the skull?

**Leg colour:** Should it be white, grey, yellow or any other type?

**Leg length:** Is your breed a short, medium or long legged?

**Leg Feather:** Should your breed have clean, sparse or fully feathered legs?

**Eye colour:** Should it be orange, green, solid black or any other type?

**Depth of body:** Should it be narrow, average or quite deep?

**Angle of back (when viewed from the side):** This is very important and the silhouettes in the Breed Standards book offer great assistance.

**Tail conformation:** Should it be pinched, fanned out, sparsely-feathered, open or inbetween?

**Wing Carriage:** Should it be low and to the ground or carried high and tucked out of the way?

The answers to all of these questions can be found in the Poultry Club of Great Britain Standards book.



Simon York's Yellow Dutch Bantam male that was Supreme Champion at the Scottish National 2011  
This bird displays all the correct requirements for the Dutch breed and is an exemplary specimen

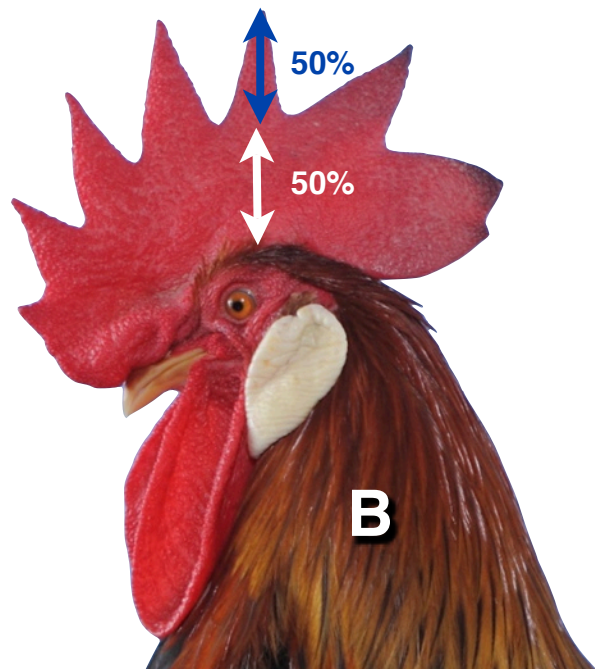
## Understanding Your Breed



There's a line in a famous song that goes: *'If I hadn't seen such riches I could live with being poor....'*

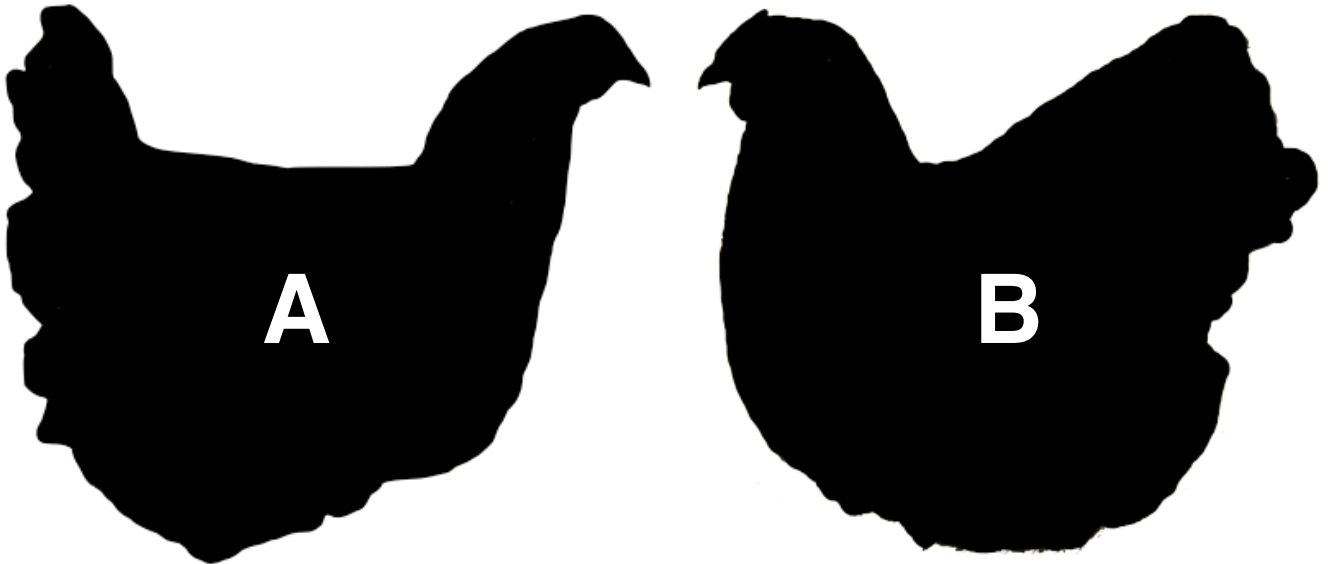
I think it is the same case in the above example. Many newcomers would be more than happy with the comb of bird A. That is, until they are blown out of the water (or should be) by the superior quality of the comb on bird B. Both males are large fowl Brown Leghorns and a breed that is required to have an 'evenly-serrated' comb. Whilst bird A doesn't possess the worst comb to be displayed in this variety, it is certainly no match for bird B.

The number of actual serrations on bird A might be correct, but their depth certainly isn't: look at bird B to see how the distance between the top of the head to the beginning of the spike is virtually the same distance as the beginning to the end of each spike (see below). Notice too the evenness of serrations and how the back spike follows the head on bird B. A good lesson for future breeders!





**Silhouettes from page... Which bird has the better type?**



If your attention was drawn to anything other than the type differences between the two pictures on page...(silhouetted above), then it is time to retrain your mind to a new way of thinking.

This is a case of 'Building your house before you decorate it!' Bird A is supposed to be a Wyandotte (Gold Laced) but fails miserably on type. The back-line would suit a breed such as the Welsummer rather than a Wyandotte. The flat back and pinched, 'vertically protruding' tail is all wrong for the Wyandotte breed.

The bird is all out of balance too - her legs are so far back that she looks as if she should tilt forward and fall over.

When it comes to feather pattern, bird A is once again an instant fail. Her markings are very 'mossy,' she has really bad 'shaftiness' - where the feather shaft is much lighter than the rest of the feather, and her lacing is really narrow in the thigh area.

While most Laced Wyandottes suffer with a small degree of 'moss' near the tail, the quantity on bird A is unacceptable. In many cases, this can be more of a problem after the first moult. The lesson is to breed from birds that have moulted - particularly varieties such as Laced Wyandottes.

Bird B, while obviously much better than bird A, could still do with improvement. Her wattles are rather long for a female and her eye colour is slightly lighter than desirable. Ironically, these are the only areas in which bird A excels.

## Back-line and Underline



David Pownall's Black Orpington bantam that won 'Club Show Champion' at the Federation Show '09  
Her back-line and overall shape is as good as I have seen in Orpington bantams!

Any poultry photographer worth their salt won't only be trying to capture the bird with its head up on the photo stand, but will be paying great attention to the silhouette made by its back and underlines.

I cannot stress enough the importance of 'lines' when it comes to breed type in poultry. For example, it isn't sufficient to think that an Orpington is merely a clean-legged Cochin with a different leg colour. Granted both breeds are profusely-feathered and to the newcomer could look quite similar. However, there is a marked difference in the back-lines of the two varieties. The Cochin has a slightly longer tail than the Orpington which curves downwards at the top.

The back-line and underline of a fowl are made up of its attributes such as correct skeletal structure together with the necessary proportion of feather in each respective part of the body.

Each breed has an 'ideal' silhouetted shape and this requirement shouldn't be underestimated. A Rhode Island Red has a specific back-line angle with a specific tail curvature that has to be correct. Many people make the mistake of overlooking these factors thinking that: 'any old shape will do.'

Breed type doesn't just refer to what a bird looks like from the side, it goes much further. Aside from the points mentioned on the previous pages, a good specimen has to be correct from all angles - not just the side! For example, the best Wyandottes have curved sides when viewed head on, as opposed to 'flat sides' seen in poorer specimens.



The examples below show the importance of the study of a fowl's underline. Bird 1 is a large fowl and although wasn't anywhere near as bad in the flesh, serves to demonstrate the appearance of a 'cut away' chest.

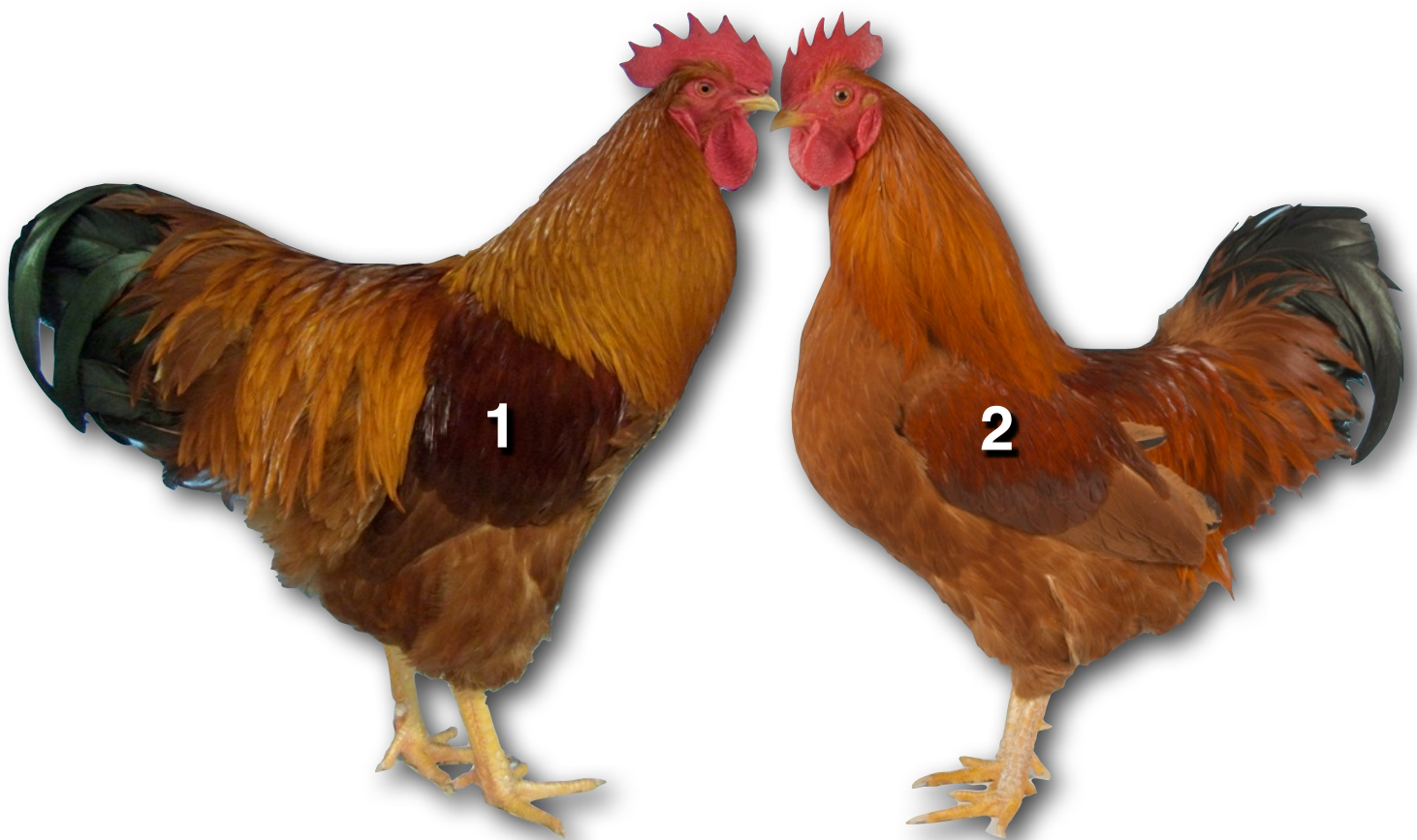
When breeders and fanciers refer to a bird that is 'cut away' they mean the breast (or lack of it) as with bird 1, which in this case is a large fowl New Hampshire Red. The breast, when viewed from the side, looks like it's been cut off, hence the terminology.

The bantam bird in pic 2 shows a much better side angle and appears to have a rather full breast, especially compared to its large fowl counterpart to the left.

As alluded to, both specimens below were good birds and it is the unfortunate angle of the camera that has given the large fowl (bird 1) that 'cut away' look.

This, in my opinion, emphasises the significance of understanding the 'underline' of a fowl, not just the back-line.

'Cut away fowl' don't improve with age and shouldn't be bred from, as they will only pass on the fault. There is nothing worse than an otherwise-good-specimen that is let down badly by a lack of breast.



New Hampshire Red cockerels - both of these are good specimens and winners for their respective prominent breeders. The unfortunate camera angle of bird 1 has given the 'cut away' appearance

## Breeding

When setting up your breeding pen it is worth noting that all visual aspects of the birds contained, can be passed on to their offspring. For this reason alone, it is imperative that only the best stock available is bred from.

Considering that breeding can throw up unexpected faults such as split-wing, comb sprigs and bent toes to name a few examples, it would be illogical to breed from birds that display any obvious visual faults.

It is frustrating when faults occur that you don't expect, but that is part of breeding; as long as you are doing your part to ensure the offspring are good examples of the breed, the rest comes down to selection.

With the example below, the Light Sussex being selected for the breeding pen were scrutinised for several points. These included: good, strong wings (no split wing), no white in the ear lobe (which sometimes happens in Sussex), a good skeletal system with straight keel bone, correct plumage with no 'moss' on the back, a well-marked cape (neck markings), orange iris, correct conformation of type, straight toes, strong legs, no obvious faults and optimum condition.

It is always preferable to breed from 2 year old hens rather than pullets. A bird that is 2 years old has proven its worth in terms of markings (moulting out correctly), as well as eye colour (many orange-eyed birds fade to green after a year or so) and most importantly, congenital weakness. Many breeders make the mistake of breeding from pullets that don't end up surviving past a year old, at which point their offspring also pass on 'suddenly.' Patience is certainly a virtue when it comes to breeding.



Rob Boyd (left) assists the Cheshire Poultry boys in setting up their large Light Sussex breeding pens



## Pair Mating

Many prominent fanciers use the method of pair mating to produce their offspring each season; a principle which allows them to know from exactly which birds each one of their flock derives, and the degree of relationship between them.

I have heard it said many times that the best birds 'don't always produce the best birds.' This may be true to a point but can be quite a misleading statement; the last thing you should infer is that only average birds produce the best birds!

Each breed is different - with large Buff Orpingtons for example, one breeder produces winning specimens from birds he wouldn't show. This isn't because they have any particular faults, just that they are leaner and fitter for breeding and are fed completely different to the wow-factor show specimens.

Pair mating isn't necessarily a process that's applied early in a breeder's career - (unless they only have a pair of birds), rather it is a learned method of stock identification and a way of producing those 'peas in a pod' specimens.

With many large fowl breeds, pair mating should be carried out with due care and attention, as females can easily be damaged. To prevent such disastrous consequences, the male need only be placed in the pen for 20 minutes a day while fertile eggs are being collected.

Another method of safeguarding the backs of breeding females is to fit poultry saddles. These spare the birds in question the wrath of the male's spurs and / or sharp toe nails; both of which should be kept trim and well-rounded off to avoid problems.



Robin Ramus' Buff Plymouth Rock Bantam pullet - the Supreme Champion at the Federation Show 2011 and a bird which comes from a line of pair mated 'line-bred' stock (Note PCGB Leg Ring).

## Opposite Sex Equivalents



Partridge Wyandotte bantam exhibition male  
H. Smith



Partridge Wyandotte bantam exhibition female  
G. Parker

The above Partridge Wyandotte bantams are respective exhibition specimens. They conform very well to the written standard for what is required and both birds won their classes at a major show - the female going on to win Club Show Champion.

The above pair crossed together would produce nothing satisfactory for the show bench. Their opposite sex equivalents (not pictured) serve a purpose for producing show specimens, but themselves have no standard. This practice is known as 'double mating' - a chapter covered in *21st Century Poultry Breeding* and the Partridge Wyandotte is perhaps an obvious example.

Many people are put off by the prospect of 'double mating.' They want to produce superstar specimens in both sexes from the same breeding pen. This is possible with some breeds, but many, when done right, are double mated.

The late Dr Carefoot acknowledged my observation that all breeds would benefit from the applied principle of double mating. This approach may seem to be complicating matters but allow me elaborate:

You may keep a self colour variety of poultry (White Wyandottes for example) and think that double mating can't possibly apply since there is no 'pattern' to get right. However you may find that your males get the best results in the show pen. Their opposite sex equivalents (the females of your line) might have great big combs and wattles - ideal for breeding those outstanding males, but may be too exaggerated for the judge(s) to award them any red cards.

In this example you would be unwittingly breeding a line of exhibition males and may later seek a different line, no doubt with males that have smaller combs and wattles, to produce some desirable pullets.

Of course, it's not only plumage or comb and wattles that factor in double mating - many features of a fowl are correlated with the opposite sex and need selecting accordingly - the 'opposite sex equivalent.'



## A large pile of white, ring-shaped markers, likely for identification purposes, scattered on a light-colored, textured surface. The markers are printed with black text, including the acronym 'PCGB' and various numbers such as '13', '15', '17', '18', '2780', '378', '4817', '5', '60', '86', and '98'. The rings are stacked and overlapping in a disorganized manner.

The rings are fitted when the birds in question are half-grown with the idea that once fully mature, they won't slide off the foot, hence the term 'closed.'

Those who disagree with compulsory leg ringing will have their reasons - some of them most plausible, including citing 'cost' as just one example.

In my view, there is no real hardship involved in ringing your birds officially - even if it does become compulsory. However, because there are so many different breeds and varieties available, this requires the production of many different ring sizes and you have to have the correct ones for your breed.

Some colours tend to be bigger-boned than others. For example, the white Wyandotte is recommended to have larger rings than the other standard colours. If you choose to ring your birds, be sure to do some research on the best sizes for your breed.

As a rule, female leg rings are fitted a few weeks earlier than male leg rings. This is because of the difference in size of ring and growth rates, respectively, of each sex.

Breeding Pen:				Colour:			
Breed:				Size:		Year:	
Male				X	Female(s)		
Leg Ring Number:					Leg Ring Number(s):		
<div style="text-align: center; padding: 20px;">           Paste Male Photo Here         </div>					<div style="text-align: center; padding: 20px;">           Paste Female(s) Photo Here         </div>		

### Female Leg Ring Numbers:

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]



## Applying Closed Leg Rings...

### Step 1



1. When applying leg rings for the first time, it is best to have a helper with you. The typical age to apply the rings is between 6-10 weeks of age, but you should always air on the side of caution when checking - once it's too late, it's too late!

### Step 2



2. Place the ring the correct way up (readable) over the long middle toe and two side toes and pull it up slightly towards the bottom of the leg. Be sure to avoid pulling up any scales at this point.

### Step 3



3. When it comes to the back toe, pull it back gently towards the leg and slide the ring over it until it is on properly and doesn't slide off.

### Step 4



4. Success! The ring should not slide off. In males, as the spur grows, keep an eye out to ensure the leg ring stays above it.





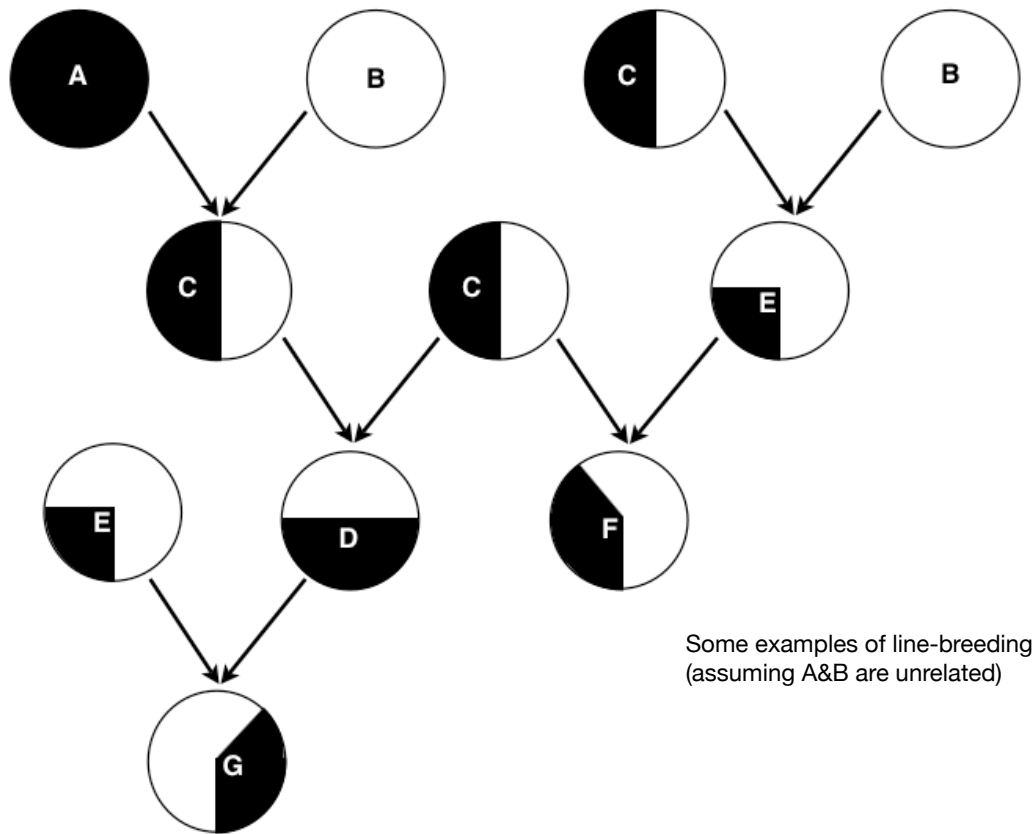
A breeding pen of large Dark Brahmas belonging to renowned poultry breeder Dr Jim Marland of Preston. Specimens as good as these are difficult to find.



A breeding pen of large Welsummers belonging to Peter Thomas of Cornwall. Peter is a prolific winner at the big shows and has supplied Welsummers to PCGB and Welsummer Club Patron, HRH the Prince of Wales.



## Line-breeding



The art of line-breeding needn't be as complicated as it sounds. It means keeping records of stock and perpetuating families of birds that aren't completely related to one another. We want certain traits to be fixed into our strains, but we also want them to be able to reproduce well and thrive.

Generally, breeders don't like making the brother to sister cross (C). For many people it is 'getting too close' and I can understand their point.

However, I would ask you to consider that most trios entered at auctions are almost certainly brothers and sisters, and buyers go on to breed them for generations, often with few problems.

How 'unrelated' is any of our stock? the answer is that none of us really know. Poultry breeding is all about perpetuating desirable features, 'locking them into our strains' but also maintaining enough diversity so that the birds in question continue to flourish.

The above diagram is based on birds A and B being completely unrelated. The subsequent crosses demonstrate some of the possibilities when trying to keep within a family unit. These are just a few of the options when it comes to line-breeding and is far better than 'not having a clue.'

Record keeping is really important - it is imperative to know where each bird came from, as well as its degree of relationship to the previous generations - before any future breeding plans can be considered.

## Line-breeding



Blue German Langshan Bantams: The winners of Best Trio at the National 2012 and belonging to Huw Evans

You may wonder in which scenario a breeder would make cross C in the line-breeding diagram. Why would you breed brother to sister?

One example would be plumage. Let's assume the Blue German Langshans above had a Splash father and a Black mother. This is a very convenient cross because it means all the offspring produced are Blue.

However, let's say the Splash male perishes one day to reasons best known to itself. If the breeder wanted to produce more Splash males, he or she would have no choice but to make a brother-sister mating from the Blue birds.

The sibling mating is carried out to release recessive genes or purify dominant ones. In this case, it would be to purify the incompletely dominant Blue gene and hence produce some Splash breeding birds. Ironically, to avoid waste such as 'Splash' in future generations.

A similar such mating is occasionally carried out by breeders of Frizzle fowl and those breeds that have 'frizzled' versions, such as the Cochin or Poland.

Breeding the exhibition Frizzles together produces a percentage of both smooth (normal) feathered and 'over-frizzled' birds, as well as the 50% desirable for the show bench.

An over-frizzled bird can be crossed to a smooth-feathered in order to produce generally birds with the correct amount of frizzling.

Of course, the aforementioned crosses can be made without the birds in question being brother and sister (or even related to each other). However, sometimes the need arises to stay within a close family unit, and so a sibling mating is necessary.





A White-Crested-Blue 'Frizzled' Poland Bantam female



A Buff Frizzle Bantam female

## Rearing

Assuming you are *au fait* with hatching either by means of artificial incubation (see *Incubation at Home*) or the natural way, the next step is to look at your method of rearing.

It is worth mentioning as a side note that your chicks may not all be the one colour. Whether this comes as a surprise will depend on how well you did your research. Blue versions of breeds only produce 50% true, which is sometimes also the case with white and red versions such as Pile. Back to rearing...

Birds reared naturally under a broody hen will need some consideration: they shouldn't be kept in a small space where ammonia can build up in the litter. It is often assumed that chicks reared by hens develop immunity to bugs from their mother, but this isn't necessarily the case. They develop immunity through low level exposure to the grass / soil when they have access to an outside run.

The most important consideration when rearing chicks, regardless of which method, is protection against 'Coccidiosis.' Many poultry feed manufacturers put ACS (Anticoccidiostat) in their chick crumbs. This lets the chicks develop an immunity to Coccidiosis through 'trickle infection.'

Another option of overcoming Coccidiosis is to vaccinate chicks at day old with the Paracox vaccine. If you choose this route, it is crucial to remember that they require a chick crumbs without ACS (feeding ACS to vaccinated chicks will counter the effects of the vaccine).

Coccidiosis is becoming more of a problem now in backyard flocks than it ever was. Many people don't give it much consideration until their birds look sick, by which point, it is often too late to cure them. There are currently no licensed medicines available without prescription, which doesn't help the problem. They are often expensive and there is also the vet's consultation fee to factor in.



Rearing the natural way; under broody hens





Day old Pile Old English Game chicks (yellow) rearing under an Eco Glow Brooder. Note the brown stripy chicks which are Black-Red sports from the same breeding pen

The above photo shows day old chicks in their fresh and clinical surroundings. However, there's one certainty: they won't stay clean for very long. In a matter of days, the water will be full of faeces and shavings and the top of the brooder will have begun to form what results in a dirty brown carpet of muck.

Although it's impossible to be 'dirt free' in indoor brooding conditions, it does need to be kept to a minimum. Coccidiosis thrives in humid weather and will soon take over a brooder if you're not careful; particularly with the above method as there is no overhead heat lamp to keep the litter dry and 'crumbly.'

After a day or so it is best to move the drinker as far as possible from the feed and raise it by an inch or so. This minimises the chances of feed, shavings or faeces being scratched into it.

The top of the brooder can be covered with a rectangular cutout of cardboard, which can be replaced as and when necessary.

Some people clean out their brooders every day, but I find that every 4 to 5 days is adequate. I like to scrape off all the dirt with a detergent such as washing up liquid, and once spotless, dry it off with some kitchen roll. Once the brooder is fully dry, I spray with an Oocide disinfectant which kills off any Coccidiosis eggs 'Oocysts' that may be present.

Before putting fresh shavings in, I scatter a layer of anti-bacterial powder - this is available from many poultry outlets.

Make sure that no matter where the brooder is located, it always has a degree of fresh air - usually from a nearby window open by an inch or so.



It is very important to clean and disinfect rearing equipment between batches of chicks



A rearing house with a layer of protective 'antibacterial' powder on the floor





A group of 5 week old Partridge Wyandotte Bantam growers, belonging to the author



10 week old Silkie growers belonging to renowned show partnership, Tinson & Hidden



Allowing your growers the freedom of an outside grassy pen, in my view, is when they will really thrive. The combination of fresh air, nutrients in the ground as well as sun on their backs does growing poultry the world of good.

However, as alluded to earlier in the book, breeds that bleach easily such as Partridge Wyandottes or Buff Orpingtons will need consideration: does the pen have a good sheltered area from a high wooden fence or overhead trees?

It is staggering how quickly some birds bleach, particularly in the erratic summers we now seem to get the UK; a combination of rain and sun will render the feathers of some birds 'useless for show' almost immediately. So, it is important to be aware of this and take the necessary preventative measures.

When switching their feed over from chick crumbs to growers pellets - usually at the 6-8 week old mark (depending on breed), it can be a tricky time. Growers love chick crumbs but a sudden jump to the much larger growers pellets overnight can be too much for many of them; they often turn their nose up at it, or flick it out of the feeder in search of something more exciting.

It is best to introduce the new feed by mixing it with the chick crumbs for a week or two until they have got used to it.

It is important to offer your growing stock the availability of 'flint chick grit.' This will assist the gizzard in processing the feed. As they get near the 15 week old mark, this can be switched to 'mixed poultry grit.'



15 week old Black and Blue Orpington Bantam growers belonging to Rob Boyd



Flubenvet medicated premixture wormer available at present in many retail outlets

The importance of worming your youngstock should not be overlooked.

The current product licensed for use in worming poultry is 'Flubenvet' Premixture. It is a white powder-based wormer that is added to the feed for seven days.

It can be used to worm young or adult stock and has quite a long expiry date.

Your growers should first be wormed at 8 weeks of age and then 10 weeks later; every 6 months thereafter.

To get the powdered wormer to stick to the feed, many people stir in a bit of olive oil to the pellets - making sure they are 'slightly tacky' and then adding the Flubenvet and stirring well.

One level blue scoop (provided) does 2 kilos worth of feed. I measure this out in a bag on a scale first, then place in a plastic storage box, add the olive oil and wormer soon after.







Laced Growers: Silver Laced on the left (male) and Gold Laced on the right (female)

Some breeds are tamer than others by nature. The Mediterranean breeds such as Leghorns, Minorcas and Andalusians are regarded as some of the most flighty, whereas the Asiatic-based Cochins, Brahmas and Pekins are among some of the friendliest breeds.

It is, however, possible for the tables to be turned depending on your method of rearing. I find that any breed of poultry reared under a broody hen quickly becomes wild and difficult to catch. Conversely, the traditionally 'flightier' breeds can become much tamer when reared in artificial conditions.

Regardless of breed, the only way to ensure birds become tame, is to regularly handle them. From the day your chicks are born, they should be handled daily to get them used to you and the process of being handled.

It is amazing how quickly a bird will respond to being handled. This allows you to keep an eye on its weight and general condition, particularly as it matures and can be battling one or more parasite infestations.

A bird that has been handled from day old will be calm and a pleasure to hold. Judges at shows will certainly appreciate it. The last thing they need is a wild and squawking lunatic or a bird that just wants to scream and flap its wings in sheer unnecessary panic.

In my view, people make the mistake of having too many birds on, which makes it difficult to handle them all on a regular basis. In such cases, your eye should be a guide. After a few years of keeping poultry, you will soon be able to spot when a bird looks a bit off, and then diagnose / treat it accordingly.

As your birds grow, you may be tempted to feed them all sorts of extra treats and 'homemade' feed mixes. However, this isn't always a good idea, depending on the method of feeding you choose.

It is understandable that breeders want to maximise the potential of their growing stock, in order that they stand a chance of competing at the shows. However, feed companies engineer their feeds to overcome things like Coccidiosis and as a result expect customers to use their products in the relevant stages. For example, growers pellets will have less ACS than chick crumbs, but it will still be present and is part of the process of developing immunity.

To suddenly switch to a different brand of growers pellets which may not contain the ACS is asking for trouble, potentially, and is not a good idea.

If you want to use a fancy and high-quality feed (Garvo for example), then you need to feed it from day one. Many such feeds don't have ACS and rely on immunity developing naturally.

It is essential to take note of the intended recipients of each feed variety. Don't try to be clever and purposely feed the wrong feed to the wrong birds. For example, turkey pellets to poultry or Garvo 'Large Cockerel Pellets' to females or bantams. This can, and does have disastrous consequences. Too much protein leads to weak joints, long wings and prolapse when pullets reach the point of lay stage.

Many breeders of large fowl add a bit of rolled oats to the feed which is deemed to help condition. Others scatter some pigeon conditioner seed in the evening. A popular way of maintaining appetite and condition is to add cider vinegar to the water one week out of the month, at a dose of 10ml:500ml in plastic drinkers (metal drinkers corrode).



Adolescent White Sussex Bantams with males and females still running together



When rearing growers, it will come to a point where the males and females need separating. Many people leave this late, which is fine as long as the cockerels aren't fighting and haven't started pestering the pullets.

Whether separated from his female siblings or not, one young cockerel will invariably assume the role of 'dominant male.' This bird often develops a larger comb and wattles than the rest of his cohort and is usually the first to crow.

This rapid development isn't necessarily a good thing. Many people make the mistake of thinking that such males are best. They often aren't, and what's worse, as their comb and wattles develop, their body seems to stop. You end up with a three quarter grown bird, with a fantastic looking head whose only interest is to procreate.

This isn't always the case, sometimes the dominant male is the biggest and best, and the others will raise their wings in submission in his presence.

The dominant male can become a pain sometimes as he appears to be a bully. However, removing him will only change the dynamic of the group and leave the post open to be contested; resulting in a good 'punch up.'

It can be difficult to know the best course of action when rearing growing males. To combat predictable problems such as fighting and bullying, some people place an adult male with the group. He will usually be so strong compared to them that his authority is quickly established and he will not be challenged. This is what's known as 'the Policeman' and can prevent many problems.

A group of males that are away from females will steadily grow and mature properly. Keeping them separate isn't a good idea as they often fret and go backwards. Keep vigilant, and as long as they aren't fighting you can leave them together until virtually full-grown. It is sensible to separate them once at the adult stage, as it will only be a matter of time before they do begin to fight.



A group of adolescent Large Black Wyandotte males. Note the dominant male on the left. He turned out to be the smallest of the group by the time they had all matured





An indoor rearing pen of Large White Wyandottes ready for separation



A group of young Large Light Sussex males belonging to Nick Smith



## Selection



This bird has an ingrown leader and should have been selected out at an early age



This bird's Rose Comb is much better - the leader follows the line of the neck, as it should.

The ability to learn what to select for in your stock will define you as a breeder. These principles are the 'basics' when it comes to poultry breeding and can be easily learnt.

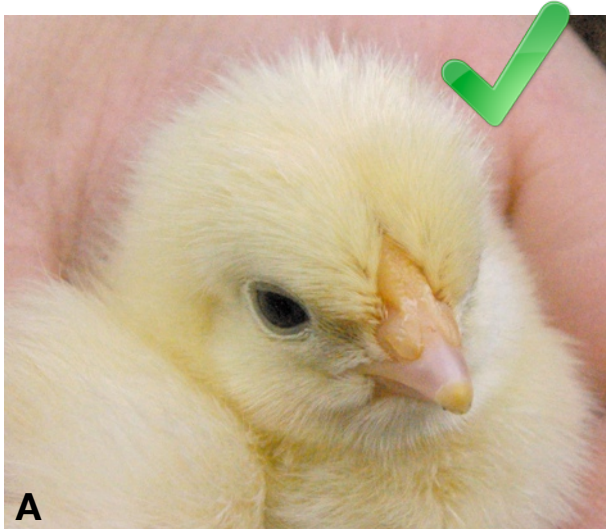
Most faults aren't, as many think, 'pedantic' and singled out by a group of show elitists. Rather, they are deformities that shouldn't be perpetuated, for the benefit of future generations. Although many faults might not be life-threatening, it is certainly not good practice to knowingly breed from birds which display them.

When assessing your rearing stock as it reaches the fully grown stage, there shouldn't be too many unexpected faults cropping up. The majority of undesirable features should have been selected out at a younger age.

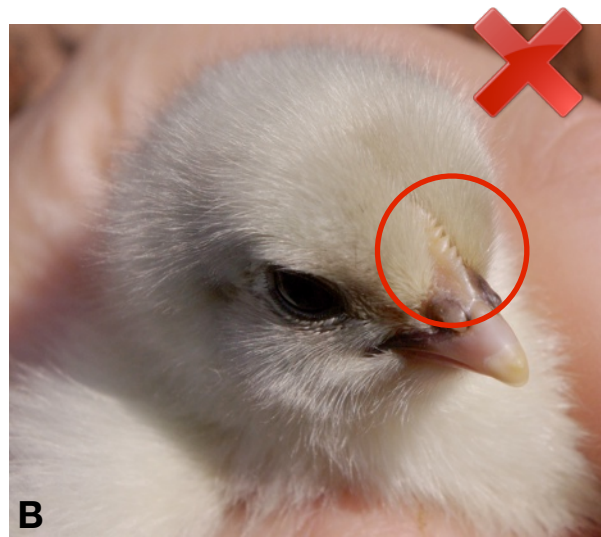
Many faults such as bent toes or ingrown leaders can be identified from a very early age and removed from your rearing pens. Other faults such as 'split-wing' can take longer to identify itself. As a growing bird progresses through the developing stages of maturity, its feathers go through a process of several moults. With this in mind, stock shouldn't be assessed for split-wing until at least 24 weeks of age.

Another fault that won't be obvious until a bird reaches maturity is 'green eye.' In many breeds, the Standard calls for an orange iris which doesn't develop until near maturity. Aside from the breeds that are required to have dark irises, all others begin green. At about 10-12 weeks the iris should begin to change to a yellow colour which progressively gets darker and alters to orange through absorption of carotenoids.

Some birds have good eye colour in the first year which can drastically fade to green in year 2. These birds shouldn't be bred from as they will only pass on this fault to their offspring.



**A** A Wyandotte chick with the correct rose comb, identifiable at day old.

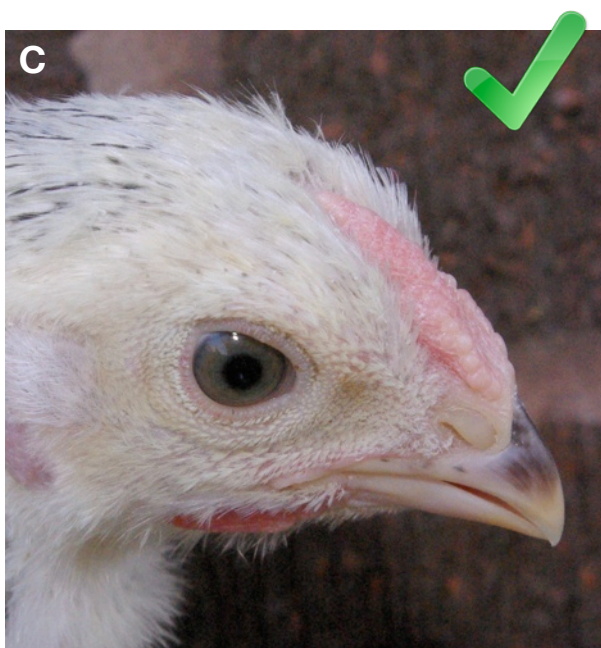


**B** A Wyandotte chick with an incorrect single comb, also identifiable at day old.

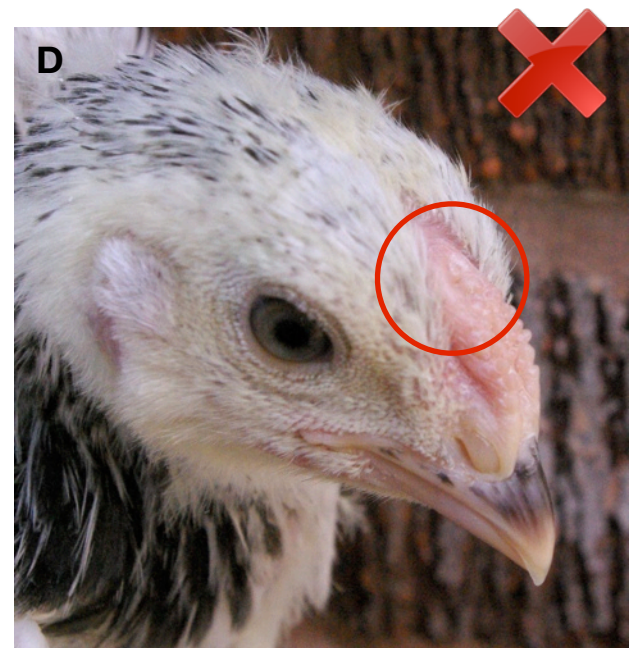
In breeds that have a rose comb, it is possible to identify the 'keepers' from day one. Chicks that have a rather flat area between the top of the beak and the head, are sure to develop rose combs (pic A). Conversely, chicks from a single combed breed display a small comb in this area which is sometimes to one side. It is invariably small with a few tiny serrations (pic B).

When breeding from a line that has a single comb as standard, pic B above is exactly what you want to see in a day old chick. However, when the combs should all be as pic A, (a Wyandotte line), then you can immediately select out the undesirable chicks.

Astute breeders can identify ingrown leaders from day old in rose comb varieties. However, to be certain, it is best to wait a few weeks. Pic C below shows a good rose comb with a strong outward leader. Pic D shows an ingrown leader; a fault which can be selected out this stage. Sometimes they pop out as the bird gets older, but it's not advisable to breed from such birds - they will only produce more of the same in future.



**C** A 6 week old Columbian Wyandotte with a promising rose comb



**D** A 6 week old Columbian Wyandotte with a poor rose comb (ingrown leader)



When assessing your rearing stock and noticing an obvious fault, it can be very disheartening. An otherwise-fine specimen is ruined for show and breeding. However, if the fault in question is observable in the bird's parents or grandparents, perhaps it could have been avoided.

Becoming a breeder is more than understanding the type, colour pattern and headgear of your chosen breed; it goes much further than that. It's about having a vision in your mind of how the stock you're trying to produce, should appear in the flesh.

Because there are lots of factors to get right when breeding poultry, many people settle for second or third best. You have to be better than that! To produce the best, you must settle for nothing less, and become really picky about what birds occupy your breeding pens.

As alluded to earlier in the book, whatever fault the breeding birds display (or carry), can always be passed on to their offspring. By choosing healthy breeding birds with good skeletal systems, you will invariably cut out many possible faults.

No matter how good a specimen the breeding birds, if they were heavily medicated to keep them alive as youngsters, you could be in line for much of the same with their offspring.

It is unrealistic to expect youngsters that derived from troublesome parents to have no problems themselves growing up. Your selection should include observation of the strong with good immune systems that don't look miserable at the slightest thing.

These birds should be marked, and everything else being equal, prioritised as breeding birds. When you select the strong and breed from birds that are hardy and low maintenance, you know you're on the right track to successful breeding.



The left toe of the left leg on this grower is deformed and this bird can be selected out at an early age



A much better foot, showing straight digits and reasonable conformation.

## An Exercise in Plumage Selection

The next few pages will cover the subject of 'feather selection' in one of the most difficult varieties of poultry to get right: the Silver Laced Wyandotte.

If you are new to the hobby, you will likely be attracted to some of the very pretty available breeds. And, while they look superb in the garden, are by no means for the novice when it comes to the show bench.

It is best to begin with a self-coloured breed such as black or white. That way, you can put all your energy into learning about 'type' and breed conformation. When the markings on each feather are also a consideration, it makes breeding good specimens even more challenging.

Laced Wyandottes are double-mated. The exhibition male is required to have a distinctive hackle with clear white shouldering. This is in contrast to the pullet-breeding male who has laced shoulder feathers and produces exhibition females.

An important point to grasp is that many such birds are neither one variety or the other. These days they are very mixed up in the UK. Over the last decade or so, the lines have tended to be pullet-breeding, perhaps for the obvious reason that people can easily keep more pullets than cockerels.

As well as being 'double-mated,' the Silver Laced variety has a strict standard insofar as feather-marking requirements in the respective areas, making it difficult to produce 'ideal' specimens; so many factors have to be correct.



Laced Wyandottes at Cheshire Poultry. Although reasonable specimens, to be hypercritical, the wattles could be half the length, the thigh lacing could be stronger and they are a little on the tall side





### **Breast Feathers**

Feathers A, B and C above all come from the breast area of different Silver Laced Wyandotte pullets. The birds looked good-quality specimens when running around on the floor but very few were exceptional and showed a number of undesirable feathers...

A: This feather has two major flaws - first that the black edging (lacing) becomes less pronounced towards the bottom of the shaft. Secondly, the distal end shows the white ground colour running into the tip at the top. Some fanciers call this fault 'teardrop.'

B: This feather is much better but still has the 'teardrop' problem and is a little jagged at the bottom.

C: This feather has a bad case of 'fringing' where an additional white lace surrounds the black lace. It also has the teardrop problem.

### **Back Feathers**

D: This feather's main fault is the presence of 'moss' on the white ground colour. The lacing is also varying in thickness and it has the teardrop factor also.

E: This feather is quite good. While the lacing may be a little jagged, it is even and doesn't display any of the faults of the other feathers.





This bird has a bad fringing problem in the breast feathers as well as the teardrop problem



This bird is much better but still has the teardrop fault

The above photos show the difference between a bird that has bad fringing (outer white lace) on the breast feathers (pic F) and a bird that doesn't have this fault (pic G).

For some reason 'fringing' only appears to be a problem in the breast feathers - the upper ones for the most part, but quite what causes them will remain a mystery to breeders.

In some specimens, fringing can be their only downfall. They are otherwise near-perfect in all other respects and judges have differing opinions on whether the presence of fringing should constitute a downgrading of the bird in question.

I believe much progress can be made by closely examining breeding stock and only breeding from pairs or trios at the most. Opposite sex equivalents need to be selected carefully. Just because a male is categorised as a 'pullet breeder,' doesn't mean he'll sire daughters of any use.

His feathers should be checked for everything that's desired in his female offspring; the breast feathers should be free of teardrop (as should the back) or fringing, the wing feathers should be correct, the thigh lacing should be wide and abundant and the shoulder feathers should be well-laced and free from jaggedness. His neck hackle should be very similar to what you are hoping to achieve in the female version.

His saddle is rather difficult to gauge (whether he will produce mossy daughters), and for this reason it is best to wait to see how the birds in question moult out. The ones that moult free of moss are the keepers. All too many females are fine in the first year but show an undesirable amount of moss in their back feathers after a moult.





Whilst this bird has a good head, her lack of thigh lacing completely lets her down



This bird is a sister of the one shown above and has much better thigh lacing, making for an overall more aesthetically pleasing effect



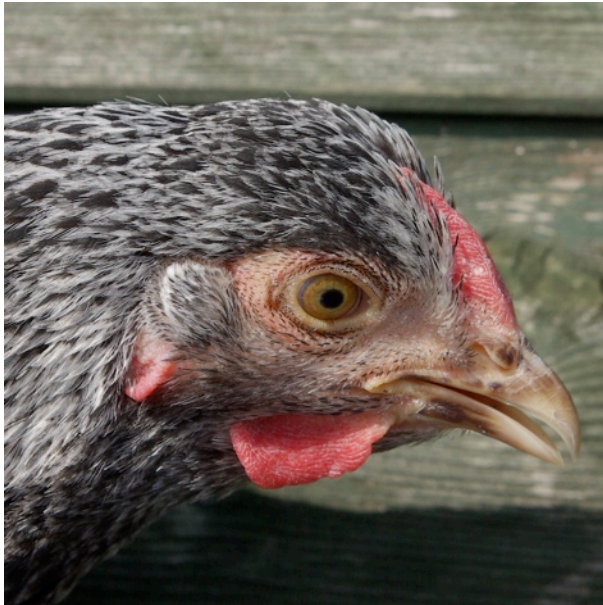


This bird's wing, whilst not the worst, could be much better; the presence of moss in the secondary feathers and tips of the primaries is undesirable



Whilst not perfect, this bird's wing is much better than the one above. The lack of moss in the secondaries and the saturation of black in the primaries, make it quite good. Ironically, birds that have good primary feathers tend to be quite thick in the thigh lacing, so it's a fine balance for judges and breeders alike





This bird has a bad case of 'green eye' which is ok at 12 weeks of age and under, but should be a shade of bright bay or orange at the 20 weeks stage. This fault will only breed on and the bird shouldn't be used for breeding.

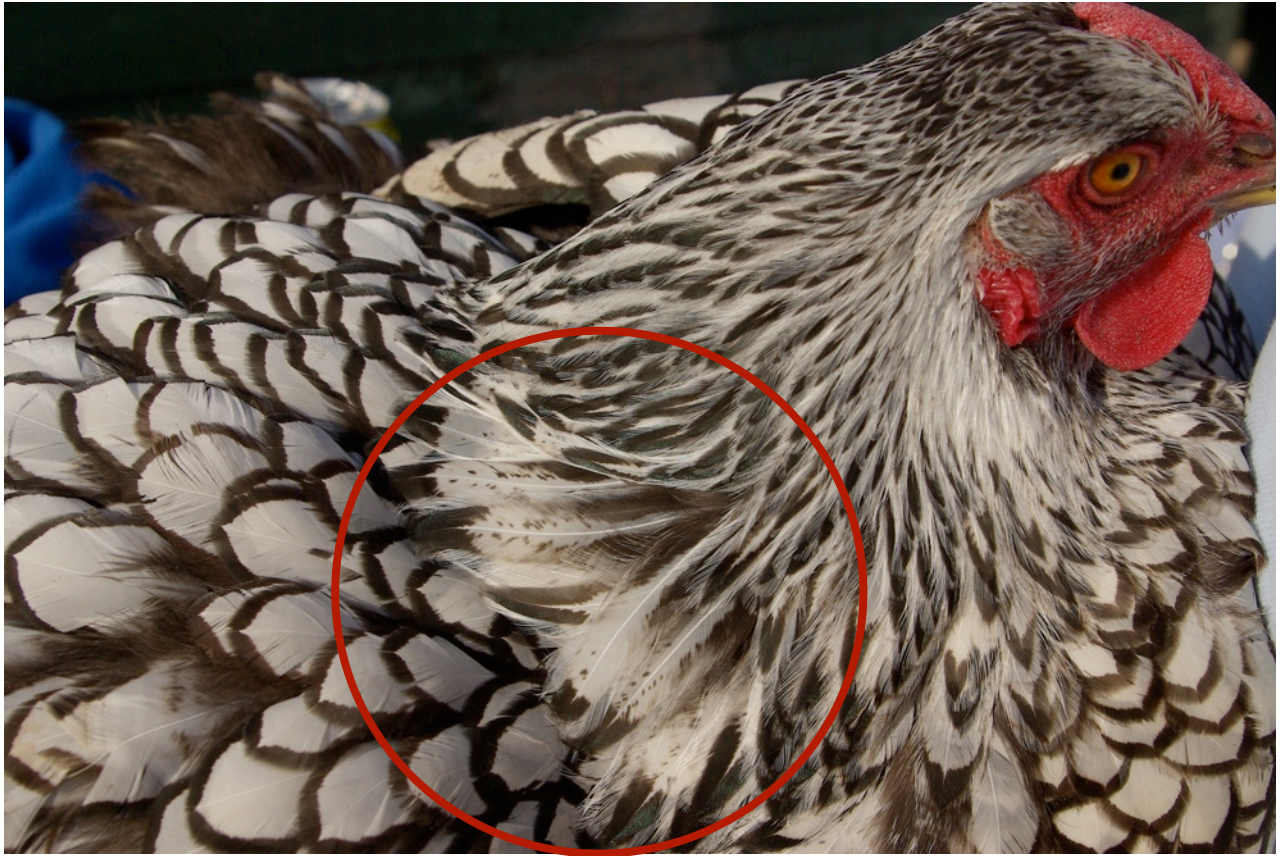


This bird's eye, in my view, is perfect; just the desired shade and can be used in the breeding pen. To be hypercritical, her wattles are a little on the long side, but this doesn't seem to bother breeders or judges too much. This is understandable considering there are so many other factors to get right.

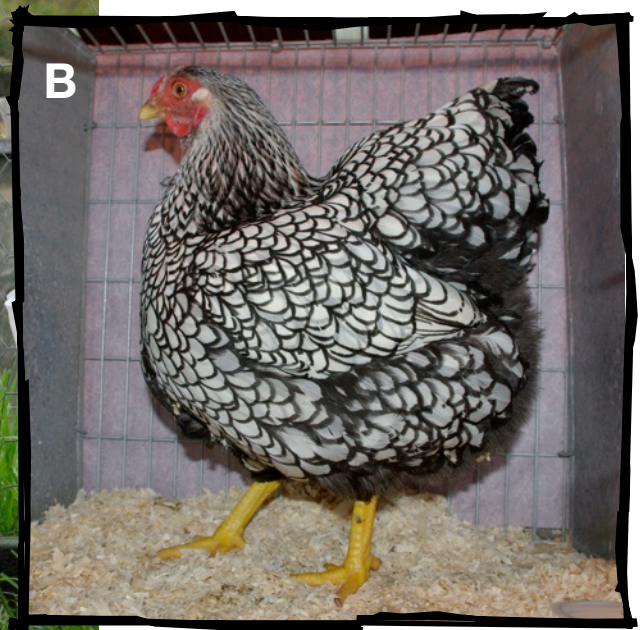
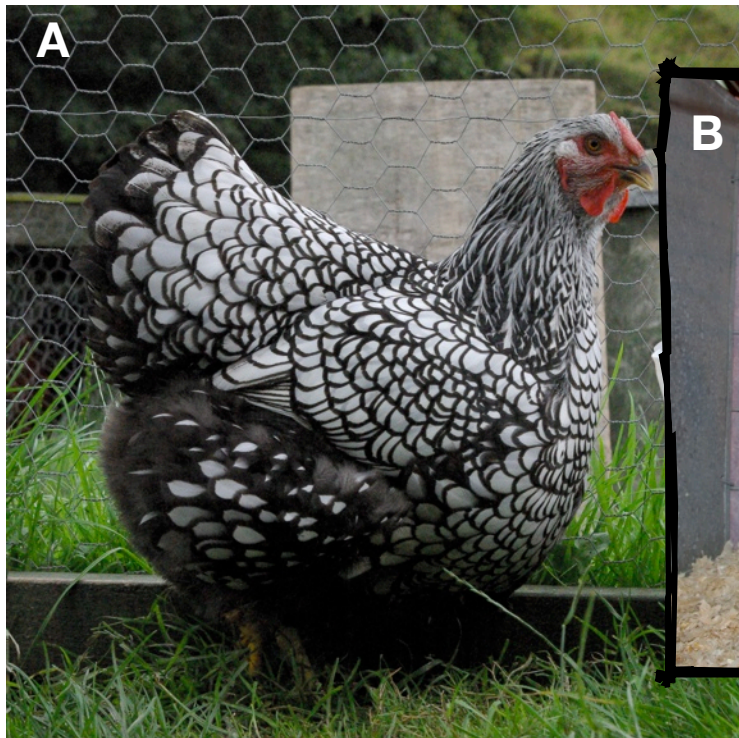


This is the wing of a cockerel showing a bad case of 'split-wing.' The feather between the primaries and secondaries, the 'axial' is missing and causes a weakness in the wing. This bird shouldn't be bred from as the fault will definitely breed on and soft feather judges won't tolerate split winged birds.





Aside from a bad 'teardrop' problem, this bird's hackle is no good for show or breeding. For some reason the plumage is broken and mossy instead of containing a neat triangular lace surrounded by white edging



The above birds show that it is possible to produce a very good laced effect all over the body. The large fowl female (pic A) was a club show winner for Steve Dace at the National, and the bantam to the right is a multi-winning bird for breeder, Martin Nilon



## The Shortlist

Once you have assessed your show potentials, you should, through selection have arrived at a shortlist of birds that are going to make the grade.

Some of these birds will be slightly better than others, and will be what you have in mind for entry at the large winter shows such as the National or Federation.

This is an exciting part of the process, just watching and taking a great deal of satisfaction from your homebred stock.

Of course, the only way you can arrive at this scenario is by diligent selection and a strict policy of eradication of substandard stock.

The shortlist should provide you with some breeding males and females as well as surplus stock for those enquiring.

I like to get my shortlist down to 5 males and 10 females. This way, I can sell 2 trios and keep the remainder for breeding and backup purposes.

Four of the remaining females can be considered for show as can the 3 males. Ideally, all 6 females will be very similar, but in all likelihood 2 will stand out and there will be an order of quality present. The 2 females perhaps not quite good enough for show, may have other attributes and become valuable as 'squad players' to keep your strain alive in the event of any unexpected disasters.

For many fanciers, sorting through the shortlist is a very social side of the hobby. I have been privileged on many occasions to be invited to help friends pick out the best from their season's stock. This is very enjoyable and goes on amongst friends throughout the poultry fancy; a second opinion is always a bonus.

Over the following pages you will see many breeders' shortlists, some of them containing both males and females. I hope you will enjoy the photographs and be inspired...



Large Buff Orpingtons Pullets (as well as others) at David Pownall's setup, all making the shortlist for show and breeding.





Large Grey and Blue-Grey Carlisle males belonging to breeder, Kevin Walker and making the grade.



White Silkie pullets bred by Tinson and Hidden. This pen, consisting mainly of pullets with one male amongst.





Rob Boyd's Chocolate Orpington Bantam pullets. Making the shortlist and ready to sort through for show.



Geoff Parker's Partridge Wyandotte Bantam pullets. These birds all making the shortlist and will be sharper in the markings in their second year





Kevin Walker's assorted Old English Game Bantam cockerels - all making the shortlist and ready for separation.



Jennifer O'Sullivan's Black-Red Modern Game pullets - all of a certain standard and being retained for show / breeding





Steve Dace's Large Blue Laced Wyandotte pullets which made the shortlist.



Nick Smith's Large Light Sussex pullets - all making the shortlist and showing the desirable show features.





Brian Sinker's Gold and Silver Sebright males, shortlisted for show and breeding.



Dave Copas' Large German Langshans making the shortlist





Steve Dace's Large Partridge and Pencilled Wyandotte pullets shortlisted for show and breeding.



Sue Bruton's Large Salmon Faverolles pullets, all of a certain quality and shortlisted for show and breeding.



## The Show in Mind

When entering a show, you want your stock to be an extension of yourself - the best it can possibly be and presented well.

It isn't sufficient for 'showing' to be an afterthought. While it perhaps shouldn't be all-consuming, a degree of 'mental preparation' is necessary as well as what can be impacted physically from the beginning of your breeding programme.

People who show their stock know that from the start of the breeding season, their collective efforts have all been working towards one give goal: exhibition.

They know that in order for their birds to stand out, all the fine details, over many months of rearing, have to be implemented.

A good example would be 'handling.' It would be unwise to show a bird that looks the part but is really wild by nature, simply because you overlooked the importance of handling. The bird in question may excel in every other feature, but if it doesn't have a calm demeanour, and instead throws itself with reckless abandon at the roof of the pen (while those close get a mouthful of shavings), you can probably forget the idea of winning 'Supreme Champion.'

Birds that have been handled all their life may be calm under normal circumstances, but taken out of their comfort zone and placed in a show, often look miserable and fret in their new temporary surroundings.

To this end, it is essential to 'pen train' your birds. Many breeders have purposely kitted out 'penning rooms' containing show pens which they place their birds in for a few hours a week.

This practice should be carried out months in advance of the show, so that your birds get well and truly used to being in a show pen for a few hours at a time. Come show day, they will be quite happy to spend time in the 'solitary' confines of a pen in the show hall.



The penning room of Graham Hodge of S, A & G Hodge - a prolific winning team with their Rosecomb Bantams.





Angela Dupont's penning room - a prolific winner with Pekin Bantams.



A penning room containing large fowl White Wyandottes. This kind of training prepares the birds well for the show.





Jim Marland's penning room, demonstrating their double purpose of pen training and chick rearing.



A Black Rumpless Araucana Bantam pullet, practicing posing. Bred and owned by Ky Thurland.



It is worth keeping in mind that should your bird make championship row at the show, the chances are that it will be required for photographing.

Photography stands in general are very smooth and quite unlike any surface most birds will have previously encountered. As a result, the bird in question often stands timid, cowers or refuses to do anything but sit down.

As you can appreciate, this is a logistical nightmare for the poultry photographer who has a limited time with each bird and a line of people waiting to get their winner photographed.

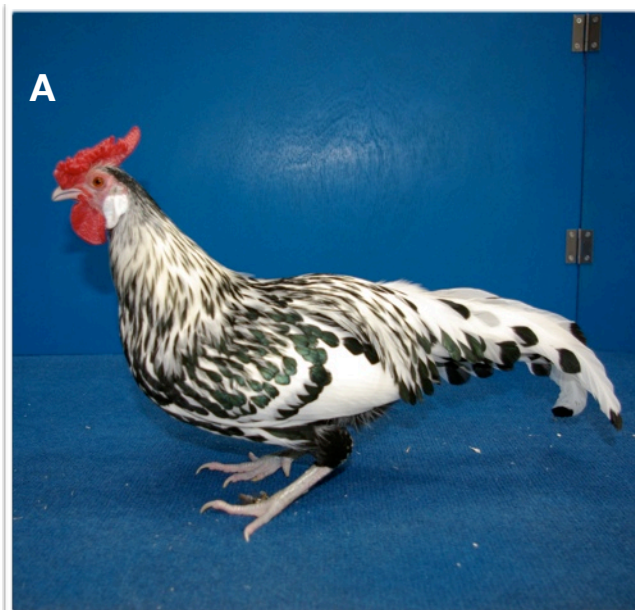
The best you can do to help, is set up a similar style table to a typical photography booth and alter the surfaces routinely.

When the public witness poultry photographers and champion breeders attempting to pose the bird correctly, it can draw some funny looks. It makes us fanciers appear as a bunch of elitists who are overlooking the fact poultry are animals and being unrealistic in our expectations.

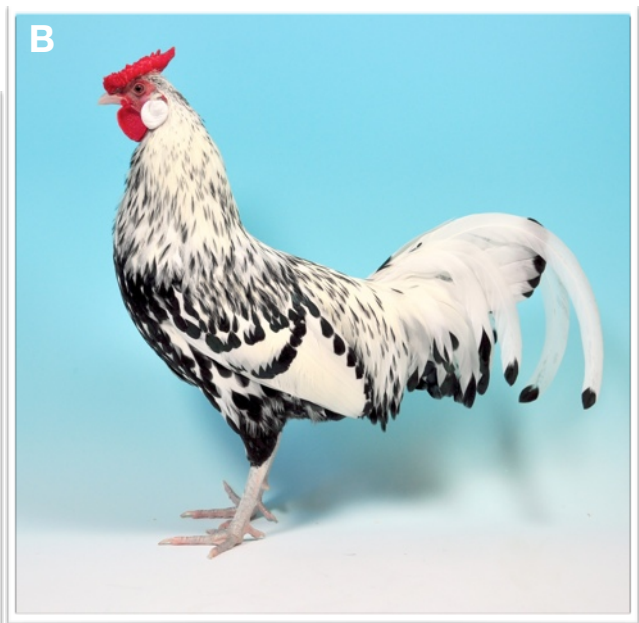
However, nothing could be further from the truth; the only thing a photographer asks of a bird is to stand the way it does normally, so that its type can be captured for all to see.

You couldn't insult a fancier worse by portraying his or her bird in a bad light. An excellent specimen can stand poorly on the photograph stand, or the photo is rushed and the end result is in no way a reflection of the truth.

Have a look at the photos below. You don't have to be an expert to realise which bird is nervous and cowering compared to the one that's proud to be a winner (both were championship row birds at different shows). Clearly both birds are from a similar strain of Silver Spangled Hamburg Bantams, but one breeder has put the work in to instill confidence in his stock, and the other clearly hasn't!



Whether the photographer had insufficient time, or the bird simply wouldn't stand is of little interest to those who view this photo. It doesn't represent the bird well - it appears 'duck-footed' (back toe curling inwards), is squat and timid with an arched back and low tail. This is a spectacular 'fail' at photographing a winning specimen.

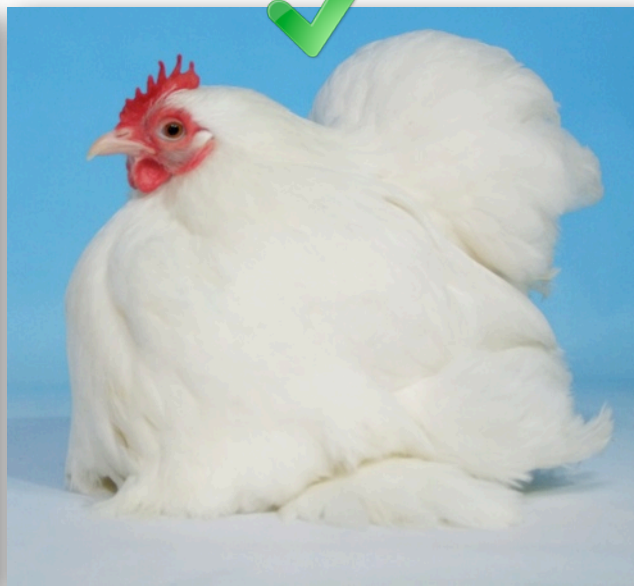


This bird is of similar descent to bird A, but is standing much better. Some may argue that he's not standing perfect - perhaps his head is held a little high but the photo is acceptable for publication, unlike pic A, which just looks dreadful.

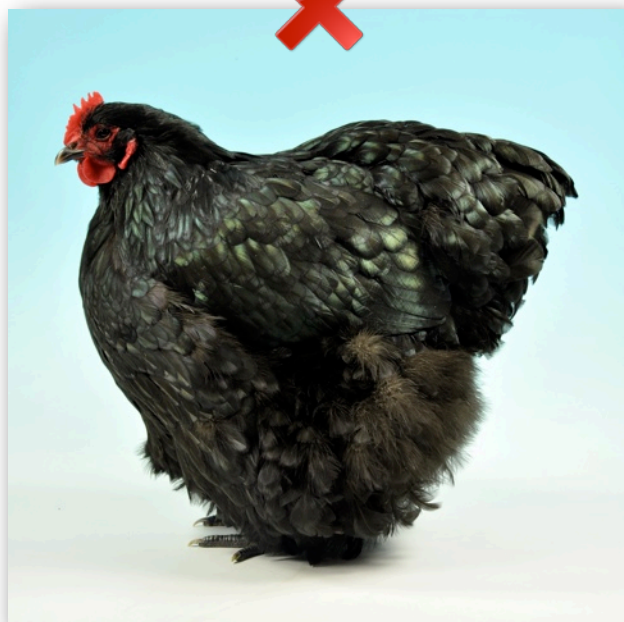




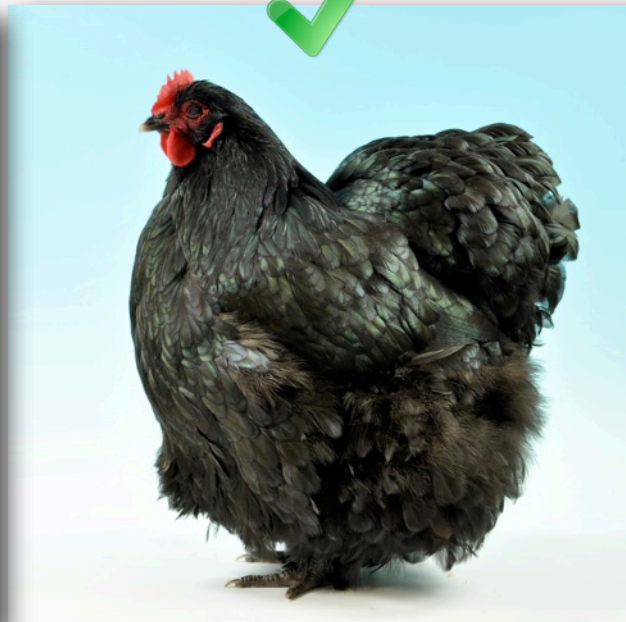
This White Pekin female was a nice bird who had been rightly placed on championship row. Sadly, the photographer couldn't capture her type. In Pekins the head should be lower than the cushioned tail. This photo is a bad representation of a good bird.



This White Pekin female has been captured well, by a photographer who really knew their subject. The photo angle is brilliant - the part-frontal and side angle shows the skirt at the bottom of the breast, the forward tilt with the head lower than the tail, and the profuse cushion. A very good photograph.



This Black Orpington female was a fine specimen of a bird and won major awards at the National and Federation shows. Sadly, the photographer was short on time and the bird was nervous, standing awkwardly and tightened up her feathers. The result is the impression of a triangular shaped fowl, which is all wrong for the Orpington breed.



Believe it or not, this is the same bird only a few photographs later, where she relaxed, stood properly and became the image of the bird the judges had seen and handled in the show pen early on. This photograph is leagues better than the one to the left and is acceptable for publication. The other one, as you may imagine, is definitely not!



## Show Preparation



Make sure the beaks of your intended show birds are trimmed neatly. This process is made much easier when you have a helper at hand.



Be careful when trimming toenails. They can soon bleed if trimmed too far in, and will ruin the bird for show. Furthermore, damaged toenails can pose a risk of infection.



## Show Preparation

When it comes to getting your birds ready for show, it should be an exciting time. Your months of planning and consideration should have paid off and the stock before you should fill you with joy.

However, before you go to the trouble of washing and preparing your birds, you should first of all check that everything is in order. No-one likes having empty pens at shows, but sometimes it is better that, than showing a bird which will only cause you embarrassment.

There shouldn't be any obvious faults such as bent breastbones or 'duck-footed' feet - these problems should have been selected out at an earlier stage. However, it is always worth checking that nothing is wrong. It is amazing how many fanciers miss the beginning of a parasite problem in their stock, and, as a result, their birds get passed over by the judge.

Firstly, ensure the bird doesn't show any signs of illness and is a healthy weight (the same weight as you have come to expect from adult birds). Then, fan the wings and make sure no feathers are missing. Occasionally, birds will break the odd flight feather. Some fanciers still show such birds, but I prefer not to. Judges have differing views on this matter; some find it unacceptable, but others say it proves the feather isn't missing and will still grade the bird in question, but they never get a first so it barely seems worth it.

Make sure there is no sign of split wing and that no feathers are 'foreign' such as a different colour than what they should be. Although, it is worth doing your research on this, as some Breed Standards for example, allow black feathers in the wings of Barred birds.

The next step is to examine the length of the beak and toenails and ensure they aren't overgrown. With the beak, usually the top mandible is the part to overgrow - particularly if the bird in question has been indoors for any length of time.

Fortunately, the overgrown part of the beak is often opaque and the outline of the beak (at its proper length), can be seen beneath. To trim the beak, take a pair of snipping pliers, hold the mandible firmly and trim slowly from each side. It helps enormously to have a helper holding the bird while you do the 'trimming.'

It is a similar procedure with the toenails. However, as with the beak, try to only trim the clearer, overgrown part. It is easy to cut too much off the nail and it will soon begin to bleed.

Before you think about bathing any birds, it is important to determine whether they need full or only partial washes. This decision will influence the depth of container used in the process.



## Show Preparation



If giving a full bath, make sure your bird's feet can touch the bottom of the basin after gently lowering it in.



Breeds like Pekin Bantams often need extra attention when cleaning their feathered feet. For this reason, it is always best to have a helper on board if possible.



If only a partial wash is required, be sure to remove all the dirt from the feathers below the vent. With breeds like Orpingtons (or any profusely-feathered variety), these feathers will often be dirty and will require you to gently crumble away the dirt beneath the water (without pulling any feathers out).



Once the bird in question has been washed, the next stage is to rinse it thoroughly in a separate bowl of equally warm water.



## Show Preparation

When washing birds for show, you will need the following:

- Two bowls or a sink (double is ideal)
- A small towel (preferably 2)
- Dog shampoo or washing up liquid
- A hairdryer
- A scrubbing brush
- A small container
- Method of heating the water

It is important to get the water temperature right. It shouldn't be too hot; a good yardstick is to begin with water about as warm as you would wash your face with. It should be possible to keep your hand in without fear of scalding. Add a little dog shampoo or washing up liquid so that the water forms a foamy top (as you would a bath).

Gently lower your bird into the container / sink and let its feet touch the bottom of the basin. This will help reassure it. You will be pleasantly surprised by how much your bird will enjoy the experience. However, be prepared for the odd bit of 'wing-flapping' as it is uncertain, initially of what's happening. Once it feels the warm temperature of the water, it will positively enjoy it, and most birds find it quite relaxing. But, try to hold it so its wings aren't able to flap. Otherwise, you might end up with a mouthful of soapy water. (We've all been there - this why it's invaluable to have a helper when washing birds).

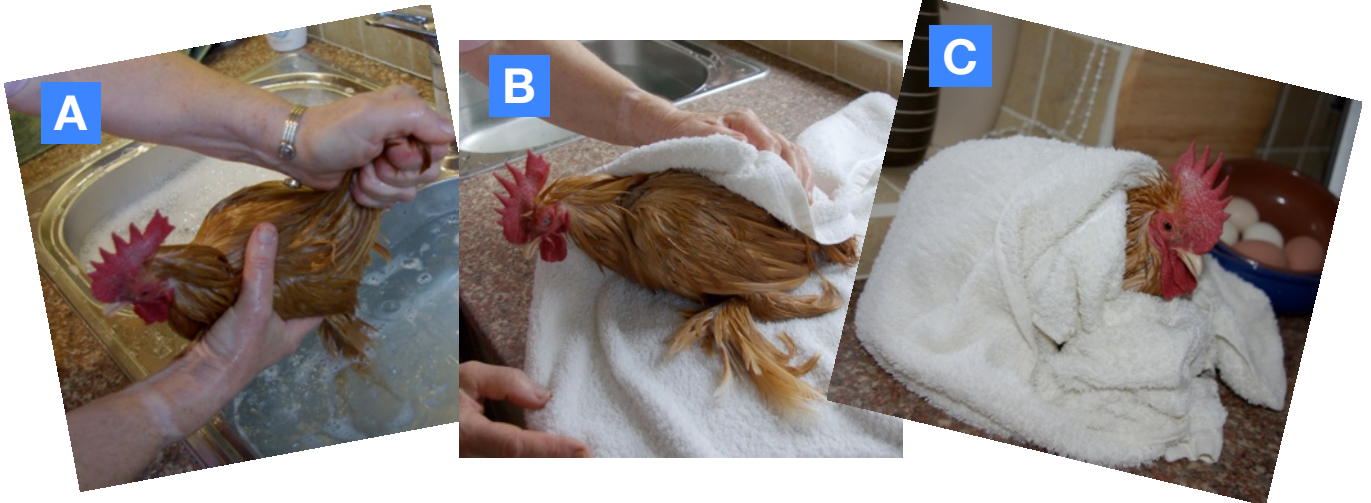
Your helper will also be able to help scrub any dirt off the legs / feet while you hold your birds still (not many people are as adept as Richard Davies - in the pic below). If the scales on the feet have dirt beneath, you can use a toothpick to delicately remove it from each scale. This is a time-consuming process, so be sure it is actually dirt and not just black pigment.



Unless you are really confident, it is best to enlist a helper to clean and scrub any dirt off the legs / feet of your bird(s).



## Show Preparation



Once your bird's feet and feathers are clean, it is time to give it a good rinse. First, gently lift it into the alternative sink or other basin which will be full of clean warm water. Then, give it a good rinse (using the container to help).

Once the shampoo / soap is removed, lift the bird out of the water and gently squeeze any excess water out of the feathers (pic A). Next, place the bird on a clean towel and wrap around it to further dry it and to avoid chilling (pic B).

The next step (after allowing your bird 10 minutes in the wrapped towel), is to get your hairdryer out and set it on a medium speed and medium heat. Before attempting to blow dry your birds, first test the distance on your hand until it feels comfortable.

Blow-drying a bird can take up to an hour, depending on breed (and helpers), so you will need to be patient (feathers seem to take ages to dry at first). It is important to consider the breed's type when blow-drying. For example, if the tail should be rather full and supported, it can help to blow-dry the feathers upwards instead of down.

Fortunately, as with the warm water, birds positively enjoy the warmth of the hairdryer, helping to relax them, and this avoids panicking.



Successful Pekin breeder, Angela Dupont demonstrates how to blow-dry your birds after a wash.



## Show Preparation



Adding some Baby Oil to a cotton-wool cloth and applying to the comb and wattles area, will make the head look fresh and vibrant



It is best to use a cotton-bud when applying oil to the sensitive areas of the face, particularly around the eyes.

## Success!...



The two birds washed went on to be very successful. The Black Orpington Bantam was Club Show Champion at the National 2010 for Rob Boyd, and the Buff Pekin male won many awards for its owner, Angela Dupont.



## 12 o'clock

The longer you have been involved with show poultry, the more likely you will have heard the term '12 o'clock.' But, what does it mean? When breeders describe a bird as such, it means it is in perfect fettle for show.

You may not realise, but for many breeds - especially when their owners are perfectionists, there is a very small window for them to be shown in.

The '12 o'clock' stage doesn't last long - particularly for females. There is usually only a few weeks where a female can be regarded as '12 o'clock.' Ideally, they won't have laid their first egg but will have 'reddened up' in the face and will look fit and healthy.

Their feathers will be in full bloom and their legs (if kept properly), should be clean with no signs of dirt or uplifted scales.

As young pullets begin to lay, their comb often keeps growing and can soon become larger than desirable for the show bench. Yes they look healthy, and a full comb suggests a bird is laying and thriving. However, the purists would rather show their birds with modest combs in certain breeds - the Orpington would be a good example. Breeders of Leghorns or Minorcas obviously need the combs of females to grow and fold to one side (provided they don't obscure vision).

It is not uncommon to hear things like: 'She's gone over,' at a show. This description refers to a female that's been laying for a while, and looks in reasonable condition, but a little tired as the protein levels required for eggs are slowly used up by the body.

With this in mind, it is paramount to feed your stock only the best feed (see the section 'Feed & Nutrition') in this book.



A Grey Oxford Old English Game male belonging to D Jones. This bird won the award for Best Overall 'Hard Feather' at the Federation Show 2012



A Chamois Poland female at '12 o'clock'



A large Cuckoo Scots Dumpy female. A Best of Breed winner at the National Show for Colin Wood





A White Leghorn Bantam male. The Reserve Show Champion at the Federation 2012 for Graham Thornton



## Fit in the Face



A winning Rosecomb Bantam female just beginning to show signs of going pale in the face.



A winning Rosecomb Bantam male. Males, in general, are easier to keep fit on show day.



A show winner (Dutch Bantam female) that got paler in the face as the day went on. This appears difficult to avoid in this breed.



A show-winning Yellow Dutch male who remained 'fit' for the whole weekend.

Birds that appear 'fit in the face' can lose their fitness in a matter of hours. It is not uncommon to see a Dutch bantam female, for example, as 'Best in Show' but with a really pale face.

When the judges are questioned about this, they often respond by pointing how fit and red in the face the bird looked earlier in the day. Had I not witnessed such a transformation in show birds (in a single day), I would find it difficult to believe!

Just why does this happen? Some people believe it's to do with movement (or lack of it), whereas others believe it is caused by heat or mild stress on show day. It's difficult to know for sure, but quite frustrating nonetheless for the exhibitor.

This only reinforces the point that your birds should be at '12 o'clock' and not pale in the face before show day. This would be regarded as naive and poor preparation. Birds intended for show should be fit and red in the face; what happens on show day is beyond anyone's control.



## Entering a Poultry Show

There's a lot to take in at a poultry show for the first time attendee: the bustling aisles, the inferno of noise and the vast amount of different shapes, colours and sizes of poultry on display in the show pens make for a very enthralling experience.

The Championship Row is normally in prominent place and can easily be spotted. Generally it contains 10-15 pens of birds and is adorned with rosettes. The cage with the most rosettes is usually housing the overall show winner, but this is not always the case.

Newcomers to poultry exhibition, often in canvass marquees at summer agricultural shows, will find themselves asking many questions. I frequently hear the following: 'Just why has that one won the show?' and 'What on earth is that breed?' to name but two examples.

The terminology can appear confusing - even when describing a single bird and its accolade(s). When listing a winner in the show results, the breed, sex, colour pattern and in most cases the size all have to be included. Example: 'Silver-Pencilled Wyandotte Bantam Female.' This gets complicated further when the breed's classification, with the words 'Soft-Feather' and 'Heavy' are added, and written out looks like this: **Best Soft Feather Heavy Breed Bantam: Silver-Pencilled Wyandotte female.**

In the Poultry Club of Great Britain standards book, each breed has its own designated weight and feather type. An Old English Game bantam is classed as a Hard Feather breed. A Leghorn is classed as a Soft Feather 'Light Breed' and a Wyandotte is classed as a Soft Feather 'Heavy Breed.'



Judge Joe Singer prepares to assess the Junior Section at Cheshire Show

Most small shows have a variety of classes and the judges will have to decide which breeds are worthy of winning 'Best Soft Feather Heavy Breed Bantam' for example, with the winners being worthy of contention for further honours. Up for this accolade can be a number of breeds: Wyandottes, Plymouth Rocks, Australorps, and Rhode Island Reds to name but four examples.

The average small show will have at least the following accolades on Championship Row:

**Best Soft Feather Heavy Breed**

**Best Soft Feather Light Breed**

**Best True Bantam**

**Best Waterfowl**

**Best Junior**

**Best Hard Feather Breed**

**Best Rare Breed**

**Best Plate of Eggs**

Depending on the size of the show, some classes may be split. For example, the Best Hard Feather Breed class will have an award for both large fowl and bantam, and means both winners respectively can contend for higher honours. The Rare Breed class is comprised of fowl that don't have their own Breed Club, but rather are catered for by the Rare Poultry Society.

Once the Championship Row birds are in place, the overall winner 'Show Champion' and second place 'Reserve Champion' are chosen from the line up. Sometimes by an independent 'Championship Judge' or sometimes by the section judges, depending on budget.

The show winner is always the recipient of at least one other accolade but can sometimes have several others. This is where it can be confusing. For example, a Wyandotte can win the class for 'Best Soft Feather Heavy Breed. It can also win 'Best Overall Bantam and 'Best Ladies Exhibit.'



Best Rare Breed at Denbigh and Flint Show - Lakenvelder male



Best Hard Feather at Denbigh and Flint Show - Black-Red Old English Game male





The impressive Championship Row at Cheshire County Show, excellently run by John Tickle

If you fancy trying your hand at the wonderful world of exhibition poultry (and don't yet fancy the big shows), then you can always start at your local agricultural show. The show will have a secretary who will have schedules, and be more than happy to send you one out.

The schedule itself will have a list of classes for many of the different breeds. Sometimes your breed may not be listed, in which case, you need to determine which is the appropriate class for your entry. If, for example, you keep Large Barred Plymouth Rocks but cannot see a class number for them in the schedule, they would be entered in the **AOV** (Any Other Variety) Heavy Breed class. If, on the other hand, you keep Leghorns, they would be entered in the **AOV** Light Breed class. If you are unsure of whether your breed is light or heavy, it is best to either contact the relevant breed club secretary or consult the British Poultry Standards book.

Different shows have different sets of rules for entry. There is normally a charge to enter at a show, and prices can often start from as low as 50p per entry. Clubs such as Glossop & District offer a day membership option for £1 and this allows entrants to compete for the many cups on offer. Some clubs reward exhibitors that have a certain number of entries with a free ticket to the show. This is a good deal considering the price many agricultural events now charge. Some clubs have raffles and other giveaways, but each club is different. All poultry shows take a great deal of effort to organise, with little remuneration. People in the UK are very generous and give of their time freely to organise these events. They usually try to make it special for all involved.



Another Best in Show winner for Tinson & Hidden - a large White Silkie female at Bakewell

When you have decided upon your entries, the next step is to fill out the entry form and send it off with an enclosed cheque for the correct amount of money, to the secretary. The deadline for entry is usually printed on the front of the schedule, and with summer shows, is normally not too long before the date of the show (10 days - 2/3 weeks).

The summer shows are much fun and often they have prizes for the winning birds and free goodies for those who make it to Championship Row. It is important to note that results in smaller shows are not necessarily indicative of quality. You may have reasonable quality stock that does well in smaller shows, but won't get a look in at the larger shows such as the National at Stoneleigh, and the Federation at Stafford.

To get a realistic idea of how good your stock is when it comes to competing for top honours, it is best to attend one of the two aforementioned winter classics, where you will be able to gauge the quality of the opposition and see what kind of specimens win the top rosettes.

Entering the winter shows, held in late November and mid December takes some considerable planning. With the National show, the deadline for entries is 6 October - almost 7 weeks before the event. With prices to enter your stock at the National ranging from £4.50 - £6.50 per pen (depending on whether you are a member of the Poultry Club), it is often difficult for breeders and fanciers to know what to enter. Many birds can look promising at this point, but can go down hill, or ones that look like no hopers can turn the corner and really look something special in a few weeks. There is definitely an element of risk involved and the weeks leading up to the show can be an exciting if not nervous time for the exhibitor.





Show organiser John Tickle with his Best in Show large Croad Langshan female



### Even 'Celebs' like Poultry!

Coronation Street's resident builder Owen - played by Ian Puleston-Davies, was spotted at a local agricultural show with his daughter.

Naturally, those present with cameras ceased on the opportunity to grab the odd photo.

Ian used to keep poultry and grew up amongst the young farming community.

He hopes to one day get some birds back (when he gets a minute to himself that is).

## Showing Trios



Simon McKean's trio of Pile Modern Game Bantams. The 2012 National Show Champions - a finely matched threesome

The trio section of any show is a 'must see' for me. A well-presented, quality threesome, consisting of a male and 2 females is not only a good advert for the breed, but very attractive to visitors and newcomers alike.

The skill of showing a trio is often underestimated; I am always grateful for the exhibitors who go to the lengths of finding two females to compliment a show male and present them as a unit. For me, the trio section enriches any show. However, it certainly isn't easy: getting one bird fit is one thing, but to put together 3 quality examples of a breed and to show them successfully, takes some doing.

### Difficult Decisions...

Breeders face a huge decision when contemplating showing a trio - that is, which 3 birds they choose that would not otherwise have a high chance of doing well in the open 'single' classes. Once you enter birds in the trio section, they are 'out of the game' for the open classes - no matter how good they are as individuals, they cannot be judged singly once entered as part of a 'trio.'



## Showing Trios



A winning trio of Light Sussex Bantams at Southport & Ormskirk for J Johnston



The 2009 National Show 'overall' winning trio: Partridge Wyandotte Bantams for Grant Brereton

## Showing Trios

We would like to think that our stock is consistent and uniform enough to have plenty of options for the trio classes, after the main 'single' class birds have been chosen - and I'm sure there are plenty of breeders who do have such options available. However, it is my belief that once birds are entered in a trio, there will always be that nagging feeling inside and the resounding 'what if' they were entered in the single classes - particularly if you don't do as well as hoped in those sections.

### Faults & Virtues...

There is more to showing a trio than many people realise. All birds, so far as possible, need to be uniform. If, for example, you have a trio of Whites and one female is bright white, she will no doubt highlight the shortcomings of the other female's colour if it isn't exactly the same. This also applies to size, eye colour, markings, leg colour, type, comb, and condition, among other factors.

Part of the skill in 'trio' exhibition is knowing at which point you should introduce the male to the females. I was interested to hear many varying opinions on this subject and I'm sure it is relative to each respective breed and size. In any trio, the females will have obviously been together for a while before the show - reared together is ideal, because they will invariably fight if introduced to each other on show day; there won't be any exceptions to that rule!



A winning trio of Furness Old English Game (OEG) Bantams for Teak Wakeham



## Showing Trios

So, when is best time to introduce the male? Some people feel that the male should be with the females at least a week prior to the show, so that he won't constantly try to tread them on show day. However, this is not possible with all breeds - especially the soft-feathered large for example: if you get an over amorous male, the backs of the females can be destroyed in no time. Others feel that introducing the male to the females is best done on show day; the logic being that he will be sufficiently disorientated and overwhelmed by the occasion to be too worried about procreation.

Ideally, in breeds that require double mating, an 'exhibition trio' should mean just that. Not two pullets and a 'pullet-breeder male.' This isn't always possible, as with large Partridge Wyandottes - the true exhibition males died out a long time ago - but it is still possible with the bantams.

Many people don't have the space or inclination to keep separate exhibition male and female strains of a particular breed. They have made their choice and are happy breeding and showing what they show.

My advice if you want to show trios, is not choose a breed that is double mated - that is, unless you are prepared to keep 2 separate strains (male line and female line) and do them justice. Occasionally, there are classes for 'breeding trios' put on at shows, and in which case, it is fine to show, for example: a pullet-breeder male with 2 pullets.



A winning trio of large White Silkie at Ribble Valley Autumn show for D Brewer

## Showing Trios



A winning trio of Rhode Island Red Bantams at Southport & Orrmskirk for J Heeley



Kirsty Aston's trio of decorated eggs - the ones that inspired me to show Partridge Wyandotte Bantams



## Showing Trios



Alan Kemp's 'Best Trio' and 'Best in Show' exhibit of large Light Brahmas at the 2012 Moorgreen Show

To the right is the prestigious 'Quill' trophy for 'overall best trio' at the National Poultry Show. Over the years, many big name fanciers have been added to the roll of honour which surrounds its base. I was fortunate in 2009 to add my name to that list.

When showing a trio, you need to adopt the mindset of 'selling the breed' as if you're trying to persuade newcomers to take them up.

'Wow, look at those!' is the reaction you want to get, or, 'Look how the male compliments the females with his contrasting colours,' or 'Wouldn't they look really attractive in the garden' etc.

Your birds should be fit, and the females as uniform as possible. They should be pen-trained so they are calm and relaxed in each other's company.

Just when you introduce the male (as referred to) will depend on your particular breed, but no doubt lessons will be learned quickly as to the best strategy.

I heartily recommend having a go and supporting the trio classes at shows!





## Showing Trios



Ian Holmes' best trio at the Carlisle Old English Game Show 2012 - a rare, large trio of Whites



Kevin Walker's best trio of Old English Game bantams at the 2013 Carlisle OEG show - Blue-Furness



## The Judges' Decisions



Game judges Mark Perkins, David Copas, Joe Monk and George 'Geordie' Watson at Carlisle Old English Game show

When you enter your birds in a show, you entrust them to a judge who you hope knows them inside out, and who should be well-versed in the breed standard, as set out in the Poultry Club of Great Britain standards book.

With there being a points allocation system for breed attributes, (i.e. 20 points for head etc) up to 100, one would assume that sorting out a class of birds would be a relatively straightforward task for a judge.

However, speaking from personal experience, although the standard is there to prioritise features by the number of points allocated, the birds in question have to excel in all of them to stand a chance of receiving the winning rosette. There is nothing worse for a judge than assessing a class of rather poor birds. In the past, some judges have refused to allocate a winner in such cases and have awarded the 'best of a bad bunch' the second and third place rosettes, accordingly. However, I would doubt this practice is acceptable under the rules and regulations, although ethically it would seem the correct thing to do.

As a judge of a club show or soft feather classes for example, I am looking for the best bird to be one that can contend for higher honours when it goes onto Championship Row. It should be an exemplary specimen of its breed / colour, and cannot be seen to be carrying any obvious faults (which you can be certain the general public will relish pointing out).

Although it shouldn't be the case, the practice of judging will always be 'subjective' and this is what all fanciers learn through experience of showing. A winning bird at one show, despite being up against exactly the same competition, may not win or even get placed at another show; it all comes down to the judge in question, his or her personal preferences and interpretation of the breed standard.

## The Judges' Decisions



Judges Chris Parker, Colin Clark and Trevor Thompson with Nobby Ward at his family run Billington show

Newcomers and some fanciers, tend to regard the judges' decisions as gospel and of course, in an ideal world, they would be. However, this mentality can be dangerous in that such people then breed specifically towards the winning bird(s) rather than the standard, and later become despondent on realising it wasn't necessarily the right thing to do (either that or they heavily criticise the judge in question).

The best birds should always win the classes, but they don't always do so. However, there is a saying in the fancy that goes: *'As long as I'm taking home what I think is the best bird, that's all that matters.'* That may sound conceited, but speaking from personal experience, sometimes I have been glad to be taking the second or third place bird home and wouldn't want what the judge considered the winning specimen on my property. I am sure there aren't many exhibitors out there who haven't felt the same at one point or other. The moral is to have confidence in your own stock and not to take the opinions of one person, on one day, too seriously.

Sometimes you have to admit to being 'well-beat' and on such occasions, the winning birds should inspire you to go back to the drawing board and breed better quality specimens. There have been times at past shows where the class winners were simply better than my bird(s), but this only made me determined to do better. I always congratulate the winners of the classes I enter (fortunately this doesn't happen too often). However, sadly, others cannot bring themselves to do so; even if the winner is leagues above theirs, they cannot help but try to 'nitpick' and pull the bird to pieces.



## The Judges' Decisions



Colin Clark as Championship Judge at the National Show



Stan Simister and steward assessing a bantam cockerel



Les Blanchon judging Soft-Feather breeds at a local show



'Watky' Hard Feather Supremo Pete Watkinson judging Old English Game at Carlisle

To be fair to judges, sorting through classes isn't always easy. On occasions you can be deciding between 3 birds for the winning positions which all have desirable attributes. This makes determining the order of first, second and third quite tricky. Other times, you can be looking at poorer specimens in a line up and trying to pick the one with the least 'undesirable' features for the winning spot.

They say you should: *'Win like a loser, and lose like a Winner'* and this kind of approach is the only way when it comes to showing poultry. You may not necessarily agree with the judges' decisions, but you should always carry yourself with a sense of calm and dignity. It is perfectly acceptable to ask the judge why your particular bird received a certain placing; most judges welcome the opportunity to educate newcomers and will take the time to explain their decisions. This kind of help is invaluable when learning about the finer points of your hobby.

One bit of advice I would like to offer you is to keep your birds fit. For a judge, it is very frustrating and puts you in an awkward position if an otherwise-good-bird is pale in the face and miserable-looking.

## European Shows

European shows are a real treat for the overseas visitor. They are put on with such professionalism that it's both inspiring and breathtaking!

The pens are often single-tiered and adorned with plants and leaves. They have displays of breeding quartets of many different breed varieties, and these are often housed in purpose-built wooden enclosures - sometimes with murals on the inside.

To see a sight of a male running with his respective females of the particular breed and variety in question, is a real eye-opener. With white varieties, it shouldn't be too surprising to learn that the females are exactly the same as their male counterparts in terms of plumage; the same goes for black, blue and buff versions.

However, there are many cases where the male and female are completely different - such as anything Partridge-based - one example being the Silver Pencilled Wyandotte where the females have concentric black pencilling on their silver feathers, whereas the males are a distinct combination of black and white feathering.

Another example of a plumage type that contrasts well is Wheaten. The males are 'traditionally coloured,' but the females have a white underbelly and thigh, with a light brown overmantel on their back, running up to their hackle. To see both sexes together is a sight to behold and really sells the breed; a good example would be the Sulmtaler bantam.

European shows also have the novelty factor, and have many trade stands selling a whole variety of products and supplements that we don't have in the UK. The cafes and bars are also a very sociable aspect, and clearly a big part of the hobby for our Continental friends.



Just 2 of the many displays at the Leipzig European Show



## European Shows

The Hannover 'Junggeflügelshau' is held every year and translates as 'young-stock poultry show'. This was my first experience of a German show (in 2005), and I was blown away by the quantity and quality of birds entered.

Whilst the type and plumage requirements of many breeds may differ between nations, the quality of breeding cannot be ignored on the Continent - particularly Holland and Germany where they are very strict on 'type.' The rows of colour varieties are a sight to behold. For example, you will see 20 or so of one colour and sex (say Columbian Wyandotte female), and there will be a similar amount across all the available colours.

I once recall describing it as 'production line' showing, where it appears the different breeds have been manufactured to a specific mould, then painted separate colours when coming off the production line.

This is testament to many of the Continental breeders, who seem able to practice the discipline of only breeding a single type of poultry, and one colour and size within it. We find that difficult in the UK. Perhaps it is to do with the fact we feel obliged to support varieties that are in few hands?

The recent Leipzig show in Germany was out of this world. There were rows and rows of birds that were a particular sex and colour, and I for one would not like the task of judging them. I counted 33 males in the large Black Wyandotte class alone, and that would be unheard of in the UK, where we'd be lucky to get 3 entries nowadays.

Having said that, the Leipzig show wasn't any ordinary event and is not typical of the usual entries received at an average Continental show. The 2012 event was a bit of a special occasion and I was very glad to be there...



The 'production line' Columbian Wyandottes at the Leipzig European show

## European Shows

### Leipzig 2012

This was the 27th European show for Poultry, Pigeons, Rabbits, Cavies, Waterfowl and other birds staged at Leipzig's impressive 'Messe' Exhibition Centre.

The show is only held every few years (rotated between countries) and is regarded as the largest of its kind in the world. With an entry of over 96,000 animals, it's not difficult to see why. Breeders came from all over Europe to visit and show birds at this prestigious event.

The hall was so big that buses were in operation over the 3 days to transport visitors to and from the car parks. Just looking at the number plates, people had come from all over - Italy, France, Poland, Denmark, Spain and Holland are just a few I recall.

The Germans don't half put on a spread: the whole show was of unimaginable proportions and so vast that it was overwhelming to say the least. Most of the entries, particularly poultry, were staged in single-tiered pens and were positioned at a good height. The pens that were doubled up tended to be the bantams and small poultry.

Unlike the UK, where exhibitors have the option to officially leg ring their stock, the Germans and many European countries insist that all 'shown' birds are leg rung. In many cases, they have to be the current year's crop, again unlike the UK where breeders can roll out old birds year after year. Birds tend to only be shown in one show season over there, which is more of a challenge and all credit to them.



More displays at Leipzig - these pens showcasing different coloured large Brahmas



## European Shows

As a visitor to the show, you don't really know where to look first. Catalogues were priced at 13 Euros each and were A4 in size. With 616 pages, finding your way around wasn't going to be a quick process.

There were many trade stands and displays as well as cafes and restaurants to visit, so having a few euros spending money was essential. I ended up buying souvenir mugs and German poultry magazines, even though I don't understand a word - lovely photos all the same.

It was clear by the poultry feed stalls, that the Germans put a lot of consideration into their feed. We are only just beginning to cotton on to specifically engineered feed in the UK (see Feed and Nutrition). A decade or so back, very few firms offered products that contained much more than the legal requirements. Now, fortunately, we have access to really high-quality feed inspired by the Continental firms; it doesn't half make a difference to the condition of your birds.

There isn't a specific sale section at Leipzig, rather the catalogue has a column next to the pen number and breeder's name. If this column has a number in it, it means the bird is for sale at that price. The queue to pay was colossal and I believe one British visitor queued for 7 hours only to be told the birds he wanted had been sold.

Getting the photos to do the show justice is difficult. The human eye will always be better than any camera lens can capture. However, I hope what I have provided will give you some kind of idea of what it was like. One thing is for certain, the Germans set the standard, but we in the UK are catching up gradually; very inspirational stuff!



Some of the many 'peas in a pod' rows of entries - here Vorwerk males



## European Shows



A breeding quintet of Buff Leghorn bantams on display



A breeding quintet of Silver Pencilled Wyandotte Bantams on display



## European Shows



Large White Frizzle males at Leipzig



Some of the many large Buff Orpington males entered at Leipzig



## European Shows



Barnevelder female



Transylvanian Naked Neck female



Sablepoot Bantam male



Friesian Fowl female



Partridge Twente Fowl female



Buff Columbian Wyandotte female



Vorwerk male



Blue-Mottled Leghorn female



Isabel Barnevelder male



Silver Spangled Hamburg male



Gold Pencilled Hamburg female



Large Pile Leghorn male



## European Shows

In the UK and other parts of the world, we like our system of 'first, second, third and sometimes fourth place' (also known as 'reserve') when it comes to judging. Part of the thrill of showing is competing for that red prize card and rosette; everyone wants to win that one!

On parts of the Continent, it is different. In Holland and Germany, scorecards are mounted on a wire above each pen, with the judges' comments written out systematically pertaining to different attributes of the bird - such as type, condition, plumage pattern and so forth.

There isn't necessarily an overall class winner - not a first place entry that will be decorated with a rosette or two; it simply doesn't work that way in Holland and Germany. Instead, they have a points system in place and breeders are encouraged to show as often as possible throughout the year to build up their overall tally.

90 - 93 points is rather poor and a specimen that leaves a lot to be desired. 94 points is good and 95 and 96 points are very good (ZG). The ultimate result is a 97 ZG, which is rare and means the bird in question is of the highest quality.

A bird that reaches the dizzy heights of 97 points can be considered for (upgraded to) a 'U' which stands for 'uitmuntend' meaning exemplary. Not all birds that get 97 points go on to get a U - sometimes you will only see a handful of 'U's at a whole poultry show.

The awarding of a U cannot be decided by a single judge, but instead by the head judges at each respective show. Recipients of this award get a gold plaque with attached ribbon.

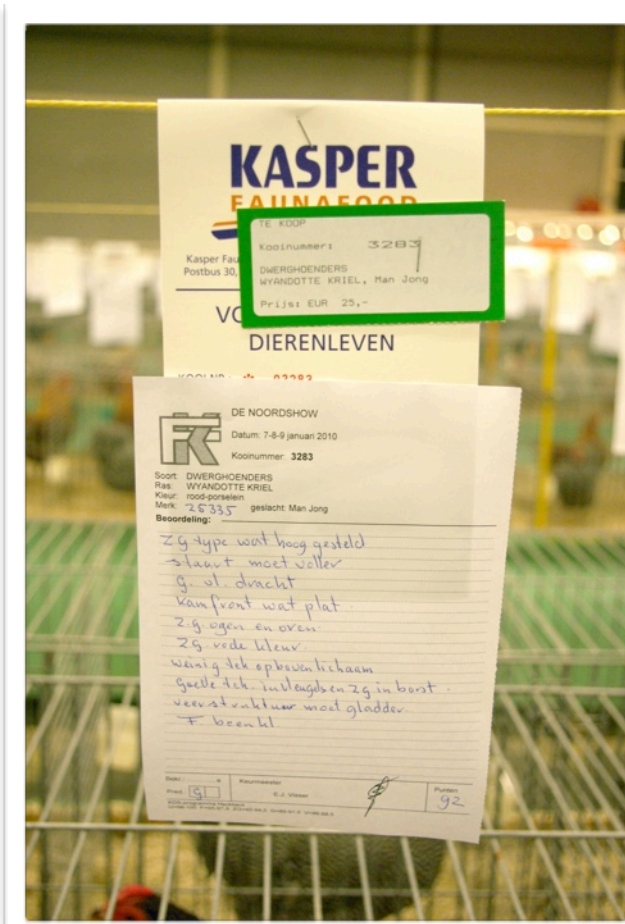
In Holland, the process of becoming a Panel A judge takes over 20 years; a lot of study, experience, research, and the ability to be able to keep many different breeds on your property - to understand what you will be called upon to judge on gaining your respective qualifications.



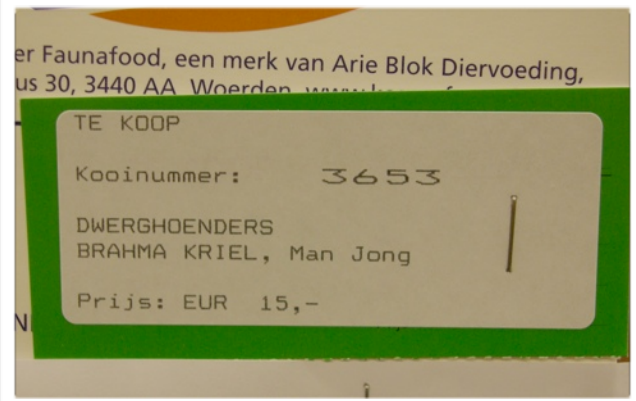
New Hampshire Red Bantam males at the Noordshow (North Show) in Holland, with their respective results above



## European Shows



A typical scorecard at a Dutch show (The green ticket means the bird is for sale)



A for sale ticket stapled to the results card (left). This one in particular was for a Brahma Bantam male and was available for 15 Euros



Too late! If you see a red ticket on the card above the bird you fancy, then someone has beat you to it!



'Panel A' Dutch Poultry Judge Mario Meerloo Griekspoor, judging a Blue-Buff Columbian Bantam female



## More on Breed Clubs



The celebratory cakes (and commemorative book) to mark each respective club's milestone

Being part of a breed club is a 'must' in my opinion. It makes you feel part of a select group of people with exactly the same interest as you, and it fast-tracks you into a world of contacts that would otherwise be very difficult to make.

The breed club does it all for you. While some people may argue that not all breeders of pure-breed poultry are members of the relevant breed club, it does mean that some elite ones will be, and to be able to call on them for advice or to buy stock is absolutely invaluable.

Members of breed clubs often become friends and sell and swap stock over the years; they organise club open days and the whole scene becomes very sociable.

In recent times, some Clubs have had momentous celebratory anniversaries, most notably the Sebright Club which recently celebrated 200 years. To commemorate this wonderful occasion, Club President Chris Parker put together a special anniversary yearbook (see above).

Being part of a breed club also demonstrates your enthusiasm and commitment to the breed in question. You may choose to one day have a more active role within it. That's how many secretaries, treasurers and eventually presidents begin.

## More on Breed Clubs



A fine Gold Sebright male bred and photographed by Chris Parker



A fine Silver Sebright pullet bred by Bob Clarke and photographed by Chris Parker



## More on Breed Clubs



Indian Game birds (blue female on left) from the Indian Game Club



A trio of Jubilee Indian Game Bantams belonging to Mark Perkins



## More on Breed Clubs



The Breed Club Yearbooks sent to Fancy Fowl magazine for their annual competition



## More on Breed Clubs



The Rosecomb Bantam Club Stand at the Federation 2012



The Australorp Breed Club Stand at the Federation 2012





It is never a good idea to put a male who's been at a show back with his brothers - the pecking order will have re-established itself in his absence and there will be inevitable conflict.

**Your first show experience can be up or down emotionally, depending on the quality of your stock and the results awarded by the judge.**

As mentioned, my very first show was an eye opener and I knew I had to either buy in better stock, hatch earlier, or spend years trying to breed more size into my large Partridge and Silver Pencilled Wyandottes.

The experience humbled me and lit the fire of determination within. I had begun badly with those birds so the only way was up from there. It was a case of 'back to the drawing board' and using everything I had, I managed to breed much better stock in a short time. I recall beating my competitors (those who had originally beaten me) in huge classes in the years that followed and I felt like I had arrived.

Conversely, my friends began by showing a breed I was going out of - the Barred Wyandotte. They got very good results the first time out. Since I sold them the stock they went on to win with, (at the half grown stage), they both were grateful and acknowledged that they hadn't really done anything to be credited for at that stage - they had only kept the birds healthy for a few months (not that I was after credit).

I recall Victoria Roberts being very impressed by the winning birds, but what she said next was very true: "There's only one way to go from there." She was right; starting at the top on your showing debut is wonderful, but maintaining the quality is the difficult part. My friends did scoop a win or two of note the following year, but received few winning cards thereafter, unfortunately.

If you are successful on your showing debut, it is a credit to you - it means you are able to rear and prepare birds of good quality for show. The way to maintain the standards is to be selective in the coming breeding season and only choose the best possible stock to keep.



## On reflection



Many fanciers have quarantine areas where their show birds are placed for a few days after the show. This ensures they have no sign mites / infections which may affect the other birds

When you arrive home from the show there are a few important points to remember: if your male(s) had been in with other males, then you cannot expect them to go back in and all be well. The dynamic will have changed in a weekend, the pecking order will have re-established itself and in all probability you will have a fight on your hands. The same applies to a large degree with females, although they do settle in better and fights are less serious than those of males. However, you should bear in mind that any damage can be enough to ruin a bird's show career.

Many fanciers pamper their birds on arrival home. They realise that it can be quite an unsettling experience for them and so add vitamin supplements to their water for a week and give them special treats with their food.

Try not to over-show your birds - some renowned fanciers show the same stock in shows that are in short succession. They often look great at the first one, but are paler and worn out by the second and third successive shows.

Showing is like most things in life, where experience becomes the key to success and confidence. My advice is to just start and see how you get on. You never know, you might enjoy it. None of us begin as experts!



A winning Transylvannian Naked Neck Bantam male shown beautifully by owner Simon Capstick



A rare Old English Pheasant Fowl female in fit and thriving condition





Steve Dace's Penning Room / Quarantine area, and some of the temporary inhabitants pictured below



Top: Large Silver Pencilled Wyandotte pullet  
Above: Large Self Blue Wyandotte male

Top: Large Buff Laced Wyandotte male  
Above: Large Partridge Wyandotte female





A winning Vorwerk (Best Rare Breed) male at the Scottish National for P Wilde. Shown to perfection



A fine large Blue-Partridge Brahma male, shown to perfection by Richard Bett



## Some Prominent Fanciers



David with one of his large Carlisle Old English Game females - Silver Duckwing

### David Copas

David's career in Poultry spans 68 years, and he has kept many breeds and won many accolades in that time, including Supreme Champion at the National 2007 with a Barred Wyandotte Bantam male. He was the first person in the UK to keep large German Langshans and also has a passion for the Bantams. Over the years, he has kept a multitude of breeds and is a Panel A judge. He had the following advice...

*"I have always been a firm believer in the notion: 'Type makes the breed, colour makes the variety.'"*

*"I like to breed many birds and cull hard, selecting only the few outstanding specimens to breed and show from."*

*"I don't believe in just 'settling' for a bird that is a reasonable example of its breed. There's normally always a fault if you look hard enough, and it is this kind of 'attention to detail' which makes all the difference when it comes to scooping those all-important awards."*





Part of the impressive set up at David's house



The large German Langshans in David's back garden





John with one of his superb large Minorca males

## John Harrop

John has been keeping and breeding Poultry for over 70 years. He's one of the few to still transport his birds to show in the old wicker rail baskets (when Poultry were allowed to travel to show by rail). He breeds large Black Minorcas and bantam White Leghorns. His birds are very hardy and his penning room is full of rosettes gathered during his long show career. John had the following advice...

*"You have to breed 'em! It takes many years to establish a strain of hardy, productive and show-worthy birds.*

*"I have tried to stay disciplined in my focus of only keeping two different breeds, and two colours.*

*"Personally, I prefer the self colours, because it allows me to concentrate on breed 'Type' rather than any given plumage pattern, which I believe can be really challenging (there's enough challenges with single colours). I get an enormous amount of pleasure out of my Leghorns and Minorcas."*



John's penning room full of rosettes gathered over his long show career - some of them date back to the 1940s



One of John's fine Black Minorca females - a recent winner at Oswestry show





A particularly successful year for David

## David Pownall

David is best-known for his beloved Orpingtons, but in recent times has also diversified into White Wyandottes. After years of diligent breeding, he created a strain that would go on to win 'Supreme Champion' at the National of 2010. Although overjoyed with the win, he really wanted to achieve the same success with his signature breed, the Orpington and this happened in 2012. David had the following advice...

*"You have to know what you are breeding towards - 'Orpington Type' is very specific and not just a 'ball of fluff.'"*

*"Breeding is about persistence - taking the rough years with the smooth. There can be many challenges along the way (especially with Orpingtons)."*

*"If you stay focused, invest the necessary amount of time and effort while retaining enthusiasm, success should one day follow. But, it doesn't happen overnight."*



White Wyandotte Champions! The female won 'Best Large Soft-Feather Heavy' at the Federation 2011, and the male won 'Supreme Champion' at the National 2010



One of David's award-winning Buff Orpington pullets



One of David's Black Orpington bantam pullets - Club Champion at the 2012 Federation show





Tinson & Hidden with one of their prize White Sikies

## Tinson & Hidden

Geoff Tinson and Louise Hidden are a couple and show partnership who are at the top of their game. They keep Silkies and Rare Breeds, including Sumatra Game and Red Saddled Yokohamas. They have won countless 'Best in Show' awards, as well as Breed Club Champions and 'Soft-Feather Light Breed' accolades at shows throughout the country. They had the following advice...

*"Although we can recognise our birds individually, we believe it is vital to keep records and we use the official PCGB leg rings."*

*"Silkies are a great challenge - you have to keep an eye on the facial colour of the males, particularly the Blacks. White males that have a bit of smut in their tails aren't good for showing, but will produce satisfactory daughters."*

*"We find that it pays to focus your efforts by not trying to do everything."*



A Black Sumatra Bantam male who won many 'Champion Rare Breed' awards



A Red Saddle Yokohama Bantam male who won many 'Champion Rare Breed' awards





Robin with one of his prize Buff Rock Bantam females

## Robin Ramus

Robin is a master breeder and showman. He is famed for many breeds but in recent years has focused his efforts on his beloved Buff Rock Bantams. He has won many awards at the prestigious shows, including the trio sections and won 'Supreme Champion' at the Federation 2011 with an even-coloured Buff (Plymouth) Rock Bantam pullet. He had the following advice...

*"Showing Poultry is not just something you decide to do a month or two before the show - it takes much more planning than that."*

*"To be successful, you have to put your energies into one breed and colour. You also have to develop a sharp eye for 'selection' and the skill of patience."*

*"Your approach has to be professional - from husbandry, to keeping records, to show preparation. For me, it has to be premier league."*



Robin's 2011 Supreme Champion at the Federation show - Buff Rock Bantam pullet



Robin's 2013 winner of 'Best Soft-Feather Heavy Bantam' and Reserve Champion at Kent show



One of Robin's many 'Best Overall Trio' wins - this one at the Scottish National 2011





Graham, of SA & G Hodge with one of their fine Rosecomb pullets

## Graham Hodge

Graham has been breeding and showing Poultry for many years. Formerly of the partnership 'Taylor & Hodge' who won 'Supreme Champion' at the National show of 2004, Graham now shows with his brother and nephew under the name 'SA & G Hodge.' In 2012, they won 'Supreme Champion' at the Federation show with one of their fine Black Rosecomb Bantam cockerels. He had the following advice...

*"With Rosecombs, you need to get the head right and then work on Type. This is the opposite of most other breeds, as many breeders prioritise Type. However, a good 'Type' Rosecomb won't (or shouldn't) usually win with a bad comb or lobes."*

*"You can't sell off stock too early as they only look right when they have a full tail; unless you can see already that they have bad combs."*

*"Young males need separating early to avoid any damage to earlobes - this won't be repairable."*





Some of Graham's White Orpington Bantams



The 2012 'Supreme Champion' at the Federation show for SA & G Hodge





Andrew Waterworth and Ken Woods holding Bantam and Large Fowl White Leghorns

## Waterworth & Woods

Andrew Waterworth and Ken Woods are 'Old School' breeders based in the heart of Lancashire. Their showing career spans decades and they have gained many awards along the way. Perhaps the most notable being the 2007 'Supreme Champion' at the Federation show with a White Leghorn Bantam pullet. They keep Silkies, Pekins, Modern Game and Leghorns in both Large and Bantam. They had the following advice...

*"Breeding is not an 'exact science' - there's a bit of trial and error and a lot of patience involved."*

*"Good strains don't last forever, and sometimes you have to breed in fresh blood and then breed out any faults which come to the surface."*

*"Pretty much all of our stock is hatched out under broody hens."*

*"Large Leghorns need hatching out in January or February to achieve the correct body size. It doesn't matter too much with the bantams."*





Waterworth & Woods' pen of White Leghorn Bantam females - note the 'Cock-breeding' female with the upright comb in the middle



Waterworth & Woods' breeding pen of White Silkie Bantams





Dr Jim Marland with his wife Pat - each holding one of their Dark Dorking males

## Jim Marland

Dr Jim Marland has kept Dorkings for over 60 years and Brahmas over 40 years. A modest man, he has achieved many Breed Club Champions in that time and has a real passion for his stock. Jim doesn't regard himself as a 'show man' but rather, a breeder and has given many people a 'start' in Poultry - particularly with Dorkings, of which he keeps the Dark and Silver-Grey varieties. He had the following advice...

*"The main challenge with Dorkings and Brahmas is breeding big enough, 'true-to-Type' birds in sufficient quantities.*

*"Poultry breeding is all about the future - you are constantly looking forward and planning the next breeding season; how are you going to maintain or improve your strain(s)?"*

*"I believe the best method of breeding Large Fowl is using young cockerels on 2-year-old hens. An older hen means a larger egg and a better chance of a strong, healthy and larger chick."*





One of Jim's fine Silver-Grey Dorking males



Jim's breeding trio of Large Light Brahmas



## Newly Standardised Varieties



Chocolate Wyandotte Bantams are now standardised and can compete for top honours at shows. This pair were photographed at the 2009 National, and were bred, owned and created by Richard Davies (his father John now also shows them and they have some good successes recently, including 1 'best in show' award.

Getting a new variety of a breed officially accepted by the relevant club, then past by the PCGB, is no mean feat.

It takes years of leg-rung stock, proof that it breeds true, a list of keepers and many other requirements (including much showing) before anyone will take you seriously.

Congratulations must go to Richard Davies, who spent 8 years developing Chocolate Wyandottes and got the Bantams standardised in 2012.

Allan Brooker has worked for a similar amount of time on the Lavender Wyandottes and they will likely also be standardised.



A Lavender Wyandotte trio on display at the Federation 2012. Bred, owned and created by Allan Brooker

## **Some Breeds Ascending: Sulmtaler**

The Sulmtaler is a soft-feathered heavy breed and originates from the Austrian federal state of Styria - in particular near the provincial capital, Graz. It takes its name from the valley of the river 'Sulm' and translates as 'that which derives from the Sulm valley.'

In terms of colour, only 1 variety is standardised in the UK - the signature 'Wheaten' plumage, where males look like a traditionally coloured cockerel, complimented perfectly by females that have a distinct pinkish-red hackle, which fades to a lighter shade on the back and is almost white in the lower breast and thigh areas.

The breed has a white earlobe, which is located just below its crest - a feature that is more prominent on female specimens than males, and, as a result, pushes the comb into an 'S' shape - which is a requirement of the breed standard.

The Sulmtaler is a hardy fowl and quite resistant against the rigours of nature. It is unperturbed by most weather conditions and, being a great forager, its only demands are a run with enough room to free-range.

As an egg layer, the breed is up there with some of the best pure breeds. The large fowl lay between 140-180 eggs per year and the bantams, up to 200.

Sourcing UK bantam stock should not cause too many problems, although potential new keepers are likely to have to wait until the end of the year when youngstock is available, or settle for hatching eggs. Large fowl will prove more difficult, although the situation has improved in the last year.



A breeding pen of Sulmtaler bantams belonging to James & Katherine Cox





A large fowl Sulmtaler male - a champion belonging to James & Katherine Cox



A Sulmtaler bantam pullet - a champion belonging to James & Katherine Cox

## Some Breeds Ascending: Serama

The Serama Club of Great Britain was formed in April 2006 by a small group of fanciers to this new breed who met on a forum created by Carrie Wright called the British Serama Bantam Community Forum. Having fixed a date, they arranged a meeting in Pailton, Warwickshire where the club was founded. The meeting was open to all interested in the breed. From the very beginning, the club has been run with an open and democratic voting system on issues of interest to those breeding Seramas. The Club's main directive has been to promote and preserve this new breed and ensure that quality Serama are bred true to their Malaysian heritage.

Serama were first introduced to the UK by Mr K Bacon and a Miss S Fletcher who by chance were looking into importing Serama from Malaysia and the United States at the same time so joined together to import a small number of birds into the UK in 2004. By the end of 2005 there were a small number of individuals beginning to breed Seramas from pairs bought as a result of Mr Bacon's and Miss Fletcher's breeding efforts.

Size and type are the two main features of this breed. They are classed as the world's smallest breed of poultry but their type is demanding and comes before size in desirable characteristics. Colour has never been a feature of the breed and has made them very popular. The Malaysian creators have never colour-bred Serama as they view type and size to be fundamental to the breed similar to some game breeds: "It's not possible to have a good Serama in a bad colour." Serama Bantams now outnumber cats and dogs as domestic pets in their native country. Being a miniature breed they can be housed in small pens and take up little room, and can be seen on balconies and in small town gardens. This has also made them very popular here in the UK, with the males' crow being only a third of that of other breeds. Keeping and breeding poultry in urban homes has become a possible venture for many who would love to breed poultry but found noise would have been an issue with the neighbours.



A winning Serama female belonging to J Harris



A winning Serama male belonging to M Chennery





A winning Serama male belonging to R & E Boothman



**Some Breeds Ascending:  
Appenzeller**

The Appenzeller Spitzhauben arrived in England in the early 1970s and it was Mrs Pamela Jackson (one of the Mitford sisters – the youngest of whom is the current Dowager Duchess of Devonshire), who first imported them in any great number when she sourced hatching eggs in 1972, during one of her many trips to Switzerland and returning with the eggs secreted in a biscuit tin.

The breed's light build, together with forward pointing crest make it rather quirky, as do its spots in the Silver, Gold and Chamois varieties. However, many people don't know that it also comes in Black and Blue versions.

Appenzellers, until recently, have been kept going by rare breed centres and enthusiastic backyard poultry keepers. They never really 'took off' in world of exhibition fancy, and were catered for by the 'Rare Poultry Society.' However, recently, through the efforts of Benjamin Milby and his team, the breed has been granted permission to form its own independent club.

The club now has around 60 members from across the UK and even a few from the US. Upon joining, members receive 2 newsletters per year, a yearbook, standards sheet and breeder's directory, as well as being able to compete for club rosettes and trophies.

Since the formation of the Appenzeller Spitzhauben Society, the breed has really come into the limelight, and rightly so. They are a hardy and productive breed worthy of more attention. Now is their time to shine.



A breeding pen of Silver Appenzellers belonging to Benjamin Milby





A wining Silver Appenzeller female belonging to Benjamin Milby



Gold and a Chamois Appenzeller females belonging to Benjamin Milby