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Poultrynz

Ian Selby Ph: 06 754 6262 www.poultrynz.com Email: poultrynz@xtra.co.nz

Poultrynz Editorial

Poultrynz is always looking for NEW PRODUCTS, especially organic ones, to help Poultry Keepers and Fanciers to keep their Poultry in tiptop condition. Our latest product is "APPLE CIDER VINEGAR with added GARLIC." This product is known to help with "gut" problems. A very worthwhile addition to your bird's diet. I recommend you use this product regularly for your Poultry Health programme.

If you are looking for replacements for your Poultry Flock especially the Heritage Breeds, now is the time to visit the Poultry Shows which normally have a Sales Section. Google your area to see if there is a Show near you.

Until next issue.

Regards,

Ian Selby.

If you have friends or colleagues who might appreciate the Poultrynz newsletter please pass it on. Your friends can be added to the distribution list. Send their email and the word "subscribe" to

poultrynz@xtra.co.nz

POULTRYNZ

Apple Cider Vinegar with Garlic

Organic, unpasteurised supplement for Poultry.
Balances crop pH.
Fights pathogens.

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DIATOMACEOUS EARTH

Food Grade • 100% Natural product • Residual red mite control • Suitable for all animals

Residual Red Mite Control
Sprinkle *Poultrynz D.E.* around the internal edges of the housing and around the perch areas, also sprinkle the *Poultrynz D.E.* into the nest boxes and around the outside edges were the nest boxes sit, making sure you cover as much of these places as possible. If your chickens have a dust bath sprinkle a layer of *Poultrynz D.E.* over the area.

General supplement
Add daily to feed 1-2 teaspoons of *Poultrynz D.E.* per chicken.

300g Puffer - $18.00
1kg - $22.00
2kg - $38.00
4kg Bucket - $75.00
8kg - $130.00

Courier not included
Available from poultrynz.co.nz

Avoid inhalation of dust. Wear a suitable dust mask when using or operating in confined spaces.

MINESTRONE

INGREDIENTS

Serves 4-6

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion, finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

100g streaky bacon, chopped

2 teaspoons each: finely chopped sage, basil

1 each: carrot, potato, stalk celery, courgette, cut into 1 cm dices

400g tin Italian-style tomatoes

1 litre beef or chicken stock

400g tin Borlotti beans

½ cup small macaroni

1 cup finely shredded cabbage or silverbeet leaves

salt and freshly ground black pepper

METHOD

• Heat the oil in a large saucepan or stockpot and add the onion, garlic, bacon and herbs. Cook over a medium heat for about 10 minutes until the onion is soft.

• Add the chopped vegetables, stir to coat in the onions and oil, then add the tinned tomatoes and stock Bring to the boil then reduce to a simmer and cook for about 25 minutes until the vegetables are tender.

• Rinse and drain the beans, add to the soup with the macaroni and cook for another 10 minutes.

• Stir in the cabbage and cook for a further 3-4 minutes. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

• Serve with Italian-style bread and freshly grated parmesan if desired.

Poultry Leg Spray

- Cleans the areas where Scaly Leg Mites live and breed.
- Saturate the affected areas on the birds legs.
- Repeat in 2-3 days.

500ml - $22
125ml - $10

Courier not included

BUFF PLUMAGE COLOUR

A collection of papers on Buff Plumage colour edited by Danne Honour, USA. 1982

Buff Orpington Pair

BUFF COLOUR by J.H.Robinson

Buff and red result from the elimination of black as a separate colour, with the distribution of red to the parts that were formerly black; and from such a blending of black and red in uniform distribution throughout the plumage that they appear as one colour. The black remains to a slight extent in most red fowls and usually appears to some extent as gray in buff fowls. Yellow, red and brown fowls with more or less black and white in the plumage, give the foundation for buff and red. In buff the shade intermediate between lemon and orange-buff was accepted as the most desirable colour described as "Golden Buff".

The lightest buff colour has a tendency to become ashy or whitish. Mating birds of this shade in breeding develops the weakness of colour, making an unsound buff. To maintain colour birds of a darker than preferred shade of buff colour must be used. In general, strong undercolour goes with the strength of black in the black sections. (In **RHODE ISLAND REDS** the desired undercolour is red or salmon, but dark birds have a strong tendency towards slate undercolour.) Slate undercolour may take the form of a bar across the feather shading lighter at each side. Unless stock having slate is bred with great care to avoid its appearance in the surface colour, it will crop out in black flecks and spots in the web of the surface colour.

There is no colour in fowls so hard to produce and hold as an absolutely sound buff all over bird and the same shade in every section. There is no other colour in which the common faults of colour as they develop with lack of care in breeding, and to some extent even after long careful breeding, are so conspicuous and objectionable. The ill-bred buff or red, is a motley of shades of its varied ancestors. It is only by the most rigid selection and careful line-breeding that soundness and uniformity of colour can be obtained.

The best results are obtained by mating a bird of **STANDARD** shade to one that is just enough darker so that the difference is perceptible, both birds being sound in undercolour. If the surface is weak or uneven and the undercolour strong and sound, a bird will generally breed according to its undercolour when mated with one of good even surface colour. Birds that are lighter or darker than **STANDARD**, should be mated to offset their tendencies, but within **"TOLERABLY NARROW LIMITS".** Anything in the nature of an extreme mating is to be avoided. Extreme matings usually give birds with different shade of colour in different sections and feathers

of different shades in the same section. Slate in the undercolour in slight amounts is not objectionable in breeders, but care should be taken to keep it well under control. In general, the mating of birds with the same fault in the same section in undercolour, whether white or slate, should be avoided.

Shafting, the shaft of the feather is lighter colour than the web. Shafting is more conspicuous in buff colour than any other, and the breeder of buff should work to eliminate it. All faults have to be worked out slowly. When it comes to holding what has been obtained and putting the finish on colour, a breeder must have great patience. It is better to tolerate faults like shafting and mealiness, where colour is otherwise good, until faults can be reduced by slow selection

If the general tone of buff is too light or too dark, breeders should mate nearest to standard, culling his very lightest or his darkest birds, as the case may be. Old birds that hold their colour well, neither fading badly with exposure or each succeeding moult, are the most desirable as breeders.

Red on the backs and shoulders of the male is a colour fault. To get the red out of the backs of males, the lightest females with good bright even surface colour of the same shade of back and breast, should be mated to males free from red as they can be had with uniform shade in all sections. In the breeding pen good undercolour will get you more good even colour than breeders with good surface colour but not so good in undercolour.

Buff and red varieties are derived from the black-red type, by blending and reduction of the black and red. With both black and red present in certain amounts, there is a tendency for these pigments to separate and arrange themselves as in the black-red type. The black tends to go with the wing and tail feathers, the red tends to go to the feathers of the hackle and back.

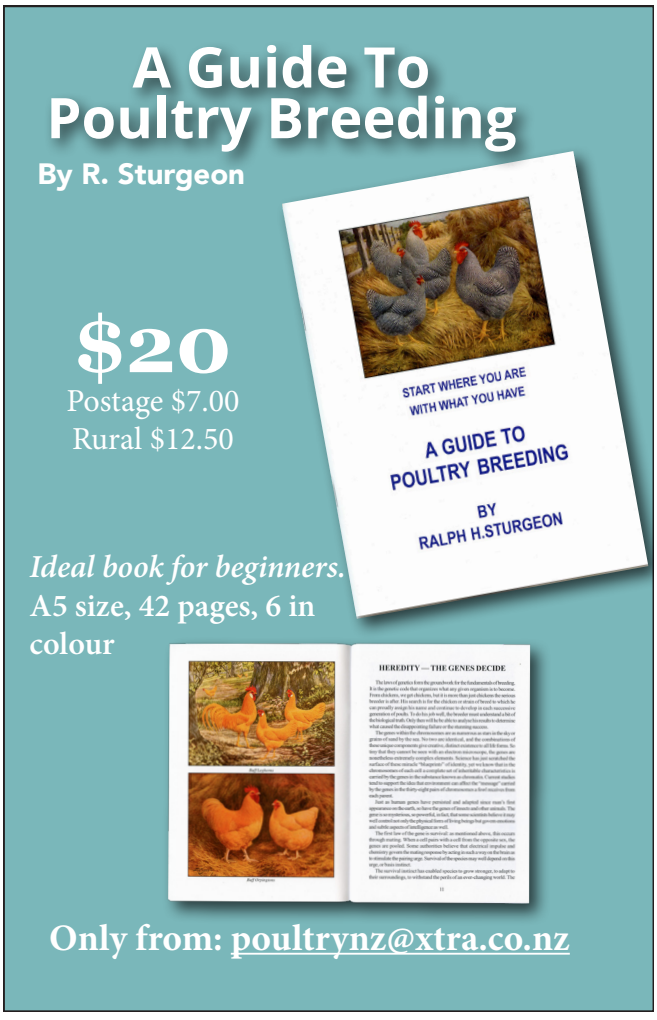
Uniform colour and shade of colour are of equal importance towards satisfactory results in breeding. Systematic breeding from nearest the desired shade and the compensation principle used section by section, will keep colour very close to STANDARD colour. Early in breeding Buff Leghorns the colour was so reduced in buff pigment that the colour began to break up into traces of white throughout the plumage. When this stage was reached it was necessary to "feed" the stock some dark colour by using dark birds in some matings. This feeding process often caused such lack of uniformity that the breeders stock was not found in the show rooms again for one or two seasons. Extremes in mating works against blending and towards mottling of shades, but slight shades do work towards toning up or down the progeny colour.

Black or white, if strongly marked, greatly mar the appearance of a buff bird, even in the eyes of a novice. Many people are severe on birds which are dark in the hackle and which differ pronouncedly in shade from the back. Often a judge compares the shade of buff in males, by bending the head back to the saddle and compares the degree of perfect blending in these (sex feather) sections. Buff shows better in the showroom than in strong, clear outside light. Undercolour is often lighter than the surface, but there are exceptions. Strength in undercolour may offset the weakness of surface colour.

White undercolour is often found in very light buff specimens. Slate in the undercolour is a fault usually found in a breeds early stage and less of it in long established breeds. In Buff Leghorns, it was about 1900 before a uniform shade of buff was produced. (White and black were prevalent in wings and tail and males had reddish hackles, back and saddles.)

BUFF COLOUR AND BUFF LEGHORNS by Mr. and Mrs. Lister Kay

Black and White are synonymous and also red and yellow. Given a black fowl, match it with white, and you get black, whites or grays. A red matched with white will often eliminate the red and leave a yellow,



Buff Leghorn Cockerel

but as it is natural (for the cocks especially) to have black tails, when white acts on this part it does not produce yellow or red, but it's function being either that of white or black, it will often vary to the former being the weaker colour and sometimes a bluish-gray. The use of yellow or red tails was needed to remedy the white tail problem, even if it came in another breed. A breed long bred for the proper color would be more prepotent for sound tail colour.

BUFF COLOUR BREEDING by H.M.Lamon

The male's undercolour should be as sound as possible and particular attention should be paid to soundness of undercolour in the hackle and at the base of the tail, and to the wing quills, to see they are sound buff, not white.

A male with good surface colour, but with weakness or even white in undercolour, may produce nice coloured pullets, but rarely a cockerel sound in his wings. A male with a little smoke in the short wing coverts or secondaries is not a fatal weakness in a breeding male, but one without this is preferred. Extreme colour matings produce many mottled and mealy chicks. Females without mealiness on the wingbows are important. The use of mealy females will produce colour problems, such as white in the secondaries of males. It is a common error to leave out of all matings any bird with real strength of colour pigment. This leads to a loss of colour. Few sound coloured cockerels will be produced from a mating, and while the females will be better in colour, most will moult too light as hens. Birds of a stronger colour must be bred carefully and perhaps only occasionally, but they must not be discarded entirely or the flock will lose in colour. In **RHODE ISLAND REDS** smut is apt to occur in undercolour of both sexes. Never use a smutty bird if it can be avoided, a male with smut that is mated with a heavy coloured female is apt to produce offspring with black in the surface of pullets and black laced hackles in cockerels.

Sometimes double mating is used in buff colour. The cockerel mating, the male should be standard and absolutely sound in colour, free from black or white in wings and tail; also free from reddish cast. The cockerel mating, female's general surface colour should be slightly darker than that of the male's breast. (Darker shade than ordinarily sought for females.) Important point is that these females have

as rich and deep an undercolour as possible extended close to the skin. In many instances such females will have almost as good an undercolour as the male. This mating will produce exhibition males, while most of the females will be too dark in surface colour.

Pullet mating: (A male with deep colour on wingbows and shoulders will offset mealiness in females, so a pullet line male may not be as even coloured as the cockerel-line male.) The male's breast should be the same shade as the exhibition female's surface colour. His breast must be free from shafting or else the pullets will show shafting throughout. The male will be lighter in surface colour and lighter in undercolour than standard. Females must be free from mealiness, shafting and patchiness. The undercolour should be lighter than cockerel-line females.

Buff Pekin Cockerell

MORE ON BUFF PLUMAGE by Frank Platt

Buff is a modified red. It is a red toned with white. Birds of the Lemon-Buff colour, the colour runs out in the first generation of the customer's breeding. The general popularity of buff diminishes when the Lemon-Buff colour is bred and sold. All permanently successful breeders of buff-colour have bred a rich golden buff. Those breeders who fancy the Lemon-Buff colour, produce a few good birds than they themselves require, and instead of their breeding carrying a strength of colour that enables it to reinforce the flocks of customers and prove beneficial and popular in the hands of buyers, they themselves must secure reinforcement from breeders of rich golden buff birds.

A few constructive breeders laid emphasis on a sound buff colour that would feed and reinforce the true buff surface colour, and, in picking males that would produce good females, they examined the breast feathers very carefully and rejected any male that did not have an even sheet of buff colour the entire length of his breast, free from white shafts in the feathers and free from whitish lacing around the breast feathers. The all buff females have resulted from the continued use of such males.

In undercolour our male will show his strength to transmit his colour to his offspring. The richer the better. Weak spots in undercolour tend to be under the hackle, at the base of the neck, base of the tail, and base of the breast. White anywhere is weakness

Buff Wyandotte Pullet

in colour pigment and mealiness

IS THE BEGINNING of a tendency towards white. Shafting is a weakness of pigment in the quill which shows as a lighter shade in the web on the surface. Black is a sign of strength of colour. It is not good to have it in the wings, but a little in the tail is safe as a reservoir of strength. Breeding buff year after year without black to hold it will finally cause the colour to fade out and white in the wing and tail will finally show.

The male's breast should be free from shafting, for it is the part of his plumage that corresponds to the female colouring. Mealiness is a defect, as it needs a strength of rich colour in the male to override it and many years. Lacing on females, (brilliant edging on each feather), often produces birds free from shafting and not darker but more brighter in surface colour. Some breeders wanted to get away from this lacing, others didn't think it was much of a defect. Tones of colour indicate comparatively slight difference. LIGHT and RICH, to breeders accustomed to lots of quality do not mean lemon and red. When extremes are mated together, the offspring show patchiness and unevenness.

BUFF COLOUR by J.D. Nevius

Never tolerate in any of your breeding stock, the red wing bow on either your male or female. Undercolour is of the greatest importance. A male should nearly always have good rich undercolour and it is better to have good undercolour on both sides of the mating. A strain that has been bred with care in selection of surface and undercolour is more apt to produce and maintain a good, sound, even shade. (White in the wings or undercolour has a tendency to produce lighter surface colour in offspring, while black in the tail or wings has an influence in the opposite direction, and is apt to produce dark body colours.) Shafting is hard to eradicate, but persist in using birds with good undercolour; quills of the feathers buff both on surface and undercolour underneath. Breed from birds with a rich buff (not red) quill, and you will be highly satisfied with the results. I don't object to a little pepper in the tail of the female breeders as this is needed to retain rich surface colour. If your birds are too dark, a small amount of white in the male will tone this dark colour down. White is a serious defect, but it will tone down dark buff in a season or two if used carefully.

BLACK PEKINS:
THE BREED FOR THE BUSY MAN

by R.M.Moran. Australia

Not being a man of leisure, I require a breed that needs a minimum of attention, both as regards preparation for the show bench and as regards rearing, and one that is at the same time interesting both to breed and to keep. Quite surprisingly, I have found Black Pekins fill the bill exactly.

Black Pekin Cockerel

Easy to Bench

I was always given to understand that Pekins were a difficult breed to keep in show trim on account of the fragility of the foot feathering. This idea, like much other fanciers' heresay, originates in wrong methods. Actually there are points in show condition particular to each breed that require definite care, either to preserve or attain.

Gold Sebrights and White Wyandottes for instance must be sheltered from the sun on account of its bleaching and tanning effects, and the keeping of Game in hard and corky condition is a work of art that has been known to elude the old hands, entailing as it does the sparing use of soft food and the provision of good scratching earth.

Rosecomb enthusiasts know the constant care required with this breed, from the earliest stages, to ensure quality in lobes–or do they? So when I decided to take up Pekins I was prepared to spend a little thought towards their particular requirement – the protection of the footings.

First of all I decided to put iron floors in the pens and cover them with rice hulls, chaff, or fine sand. Secondly, I realised that all rough surfaces, protruding wire netting, or corners on which the footings were likely, to be injured must be eliminated, and in most pens the roosts were removed. Finally, I took special care that exhibition birds were not overcrowded. Under these conditions I found that all that was required before benching Pekins was to wash their heads and feet. Actually they give less trouble than O.E. Game, the cleaning of whose white-scaled legs can be very tedious.

Easy to Rear

Perhaps it was the sturdiness of the chicks that first drew my attention to the practicability of Pekins for the man with little time for wet-nursing chicks. Being used to Rosecombs, possibly the most generally troublesome chicks to rear, I was quick to appreciate the Pekin vigour. Providing the parents are sound, a person can rely on his Pekins rearing themselves.

It is this extra vitality, I dare say, that enables one to hatch Pekins, the latest of all Bantams, and still have them feather out for the shows. Birds hatched at Christmas will be in show feather in June, and even January-hatched birds will usually be ready. Cold snaps never seem to check their moult, and one need never fear wintry weather at shows – in fact, it may be hoped for – because the only effect it has on a sound Pekin is to induce it to fluff out its feathers and look nearer perfection.

Interesting to Breed

Black Pekins are extremely interesting to breed, and the percentage of culls is extra low. They are deep, blocky-shaped birds, very low-set and very wide, with abundant thigh and breast feathering which should actually sweep the ground, with no daylight showing between the legs at all.

This appearance of depth and lowness is greatly enhanced by the characteristic carriage of the breed. Width and shortness of back is another specially desirable feature, the cushion should rise wide, full and convex and bury the tail which ought to be as

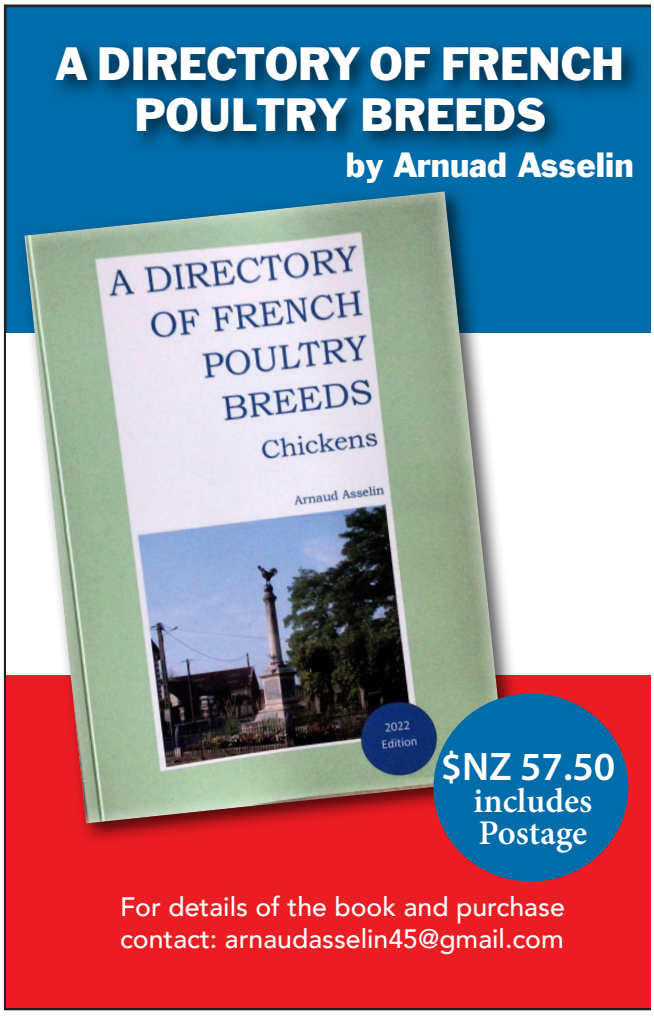
Black Pekin Pullet

short and as soft in quill as possible. Fullness of cushion and abundance of thigh feathering and fluff are the fine points that separate even the best birds. Pekins are a loose-feathered breed and, tight-feather, long-backed, narrow-bodied or high legged birds are an abomination. The foot feather should be as long as possible, and extend down the centre toe; many otherwise excellent birds have this toe bare.

Though dark legs are quite in order, yellow legs and bright yellow feet are very attractive in Black Pekins, but they follow other yellow-legged black breeds in that the brightest legs usually mean white under colour in males. They are a particularly rich-coloured breed and red in hackle is very common. In a recent English article reproduced in the "American Poultry World" I noticed, to my amusement, that red-hackled males were ruled right out of the breeding pen. Some years ago I saw a bird in a breeding pen whose hackle rivalled that of a Partridge Wyandotte. Later on I was interested to see that none of his progeny showed red in the hackle at all, but all were of an exceptionally rich beetle green sheen – which shows what judicious mating can do.

Interesting to Keep

Pekins are quite the quaintest Bantams to keep. They are very playful and of a very matronly appearance. The hens are so low and wide that they find it difficult to see all round themselves at a glance, consequently if one bumps into another they both get excited and very indignant, indeed, so much so that not a little consternation arises. Like little old men and women they are always busy, though their foot feathering prevents them scratching deeply, and as for flying over a fence, I should say they have never been known to do such a thing.



CARING FOR YOUR BIRDS

CATCHING & CARRYING

Not all chickens are tame or easily tamed, and therefore may need catching in order to physically inspect them or treat them for parasites. The simplest time to do this is after roost. The bird will have taken its place on the perch and can be easily lifted off and handled. However, if there is need to catch the bird during the day then try to corral the bird into a corner.

Once in the hand, trap the wings of the chicken against the sides of its body. Do this by holding the bird with one of the wings to your chest and one hand over the other wing (this will stop the flapping). The other hand should then be used to hold the both legs firmly, (but not squeezing them tightly), together.

This will stop the bird from scratching you or getting caught in your clothing. If the bird continues to struggle then placing a cloth over its eyes can help it settle.

CROP READING

The crop is the first section of a chicken's digestive system, after food has entered the mouth and travelled down the oesophagus. It sits beneath the neck of the chicken and toward the front of the breast and can be easily felt by the keeper when the bird is in the hand.

Being able to 'read' the crop by gently feeling its condition means you can perform a basic health check on the bird, and it should be done each time the bird is handled. Normally a crop will contain food (unless the bird has yet to eat that day) and will feel like a slightly soft ball when squeezed gently. If the bird has not eaten or is off its food the crop should feel empty and almost absent. If the crop feels solid and hard the bird could have an impacted crop, whereas if it feels watery and squidgy (and the bird's breath smells strong) then the bird could have sour crop.

HAY & STRAW

Avoid using either as both hay and straw can look clean and dry but closer inspection can show that not to be the case. Neither is particularly absorbent and both struggle to effectively manage the droppings produced by the birds. Also straw is a hollow tube which provides a perfect location for mites and lice to hide unseen, whilst hay has a habit of 'sweating' when soiled with droppings or muddy feet. This 'sweating' can quickly give rise to fungus growth and the resulting spores can lead to respiratory illnesses in the chickens.

Rhode Island Red Fowls

LAYER BREED CARE

The laying group of breeds tend to be lighter in the body, more agile, and, in most cases, quite capable of short flight. They are predominantly clean-legged, so cope well on wetter ground or more muddy conditions than those with foot feathering. The breeds are designed to lay a lot of eggs so it is good management practice to weed out the poor performing individuals within a flock if there is an intention to breed replacements. Birds that have good feathering towards the end of the season or ones still laying eggs with heavy pigmentation are infrequent layers and should not be bred from.

TABLE BREED CARE

The majority of these breeds are known for their docility and due to their size and nature they can have quite an appetite.

It's important to ensure they are adequately fed but not over fed, or given anything too rich in calories, as this can lead to the birds becoming fat and, in turn, result in leg problems if left unchecked. By the same measure they do need exercise to avoid running to fat. Within a small enclosure this can be achieved by hanging greens just out of reach so the bird has to stretch and jump slightly to access the fodder.

Pop holes need to be large enough for them to easily enter and exit the house, and the nest boxes need to be large enough for the hens to sit comfortably without causing damage to their plumage. Perches should not be situated too far off the floor level to reduce the risk of leg injuries when they alight.

DUAL PURPOSE BREED CARE

Dual purpose breeds tread the line between the laying breeds and the table breeds, and, as such, their care and management takes elements from both of those types. If the intention is use the chickens as a true dual purpose breed then space for growing stock needs to be taken into consideration. The birds intended for the table should be managed in a similar manner to the meat breeds, as too much space to range will result in the bird not putting on sufficient weight. Those birds that are to be used for the laying flock, however, should be given the chance to range and forage for food.

GAME BREED CARE

Game breeds need particularly careful consideration if they are to be kept Housing must be distinct and well separated from other poultry as their history and breeding means they can, and will, seek to aggressive towards another bird that isn't part of the flock. This is also true if birds are removed or added to the flock, so maintaining a stable group of individuals is essential if fights are to be avoided. It is also important to note that some of the game breeds are monogamous so accommodation for pairs will be required.

Both the males and females are strong, powerful birds and adequate space is required for exercise. Also, because of their upright carriage, they benefit from

Black Old English Game Fowls

having feeders suspended well above the ground and greens hanging just out of reach, which encourage the bird to stretch and jump for them.

ORNAMENTAL BREED CARE

As the individual breed characteristics within this breed type vary so dramatically, so do the husbandry regimes that are needed. These types of chicken often need tailored care in order to ensure the best health and welfare for them, for example crested breeds will need chest level drinkers to avoid the risk of head feathers getting wet and dirty. Long-tailed breeds will require housing that has sufficient space to either accommodate the profuse plumes such as those in the Sumatra, or length of trail such as in the Yokohama. The unusual feather types like those found in the Silkie will soon look shabby in poor weather conditions. With the right management though ornamental breeds can and do turn the heads of any onlookers.

BANTAM CARE

Due to their size bantam fowl can be kept in a much smaller space than large fowl. The hen house size can be smaller, and feeding stations and drinkers can also be smaller. Attention, though, should be paid to the perches and nest boxes within the house as these do need to be reduced in size if the birds are to be comfortable in their home. Due to their shorter stature the ground conditions ideally should be kept as dry as possible to avoid grubby under-carriages.

TRIMMING A BIRDS WING

One of the most gratifying times of year is when chickens moult and put on a new overcoat of feathers. Gone are the washed out colours and brassy whites and, instead, your birds become resplendent in their colourful cloak of feathers. Sounds lovely doesn't it!

Still, like everything else, there is a downside, and no sooner has old Gertie got her new feathers, than she is up and away over the fence - time to clip her wings again!

In our domesticated chickens, there is no real flight to speak of, more of a hop, skip and jump with a little propulsion from the wings added in for good measure, the primary flight feathers providing the extra lift. The aim of clipping is to remove part of the feathers responsible for that lift and so unbalancing the bird; and, to that effect, you clip just one wing.

Many new chicken owners will recoil in horror at this thought "doesn't it hurt?" and "isn't it cruel?" Well actually no and no.

Unlike ducks, where the tip of the wing bone is cut (termed pinioning), wing clipping with chickens is like a haircut; you just need to make sure you have a firm grip on your bird and a sharp pair of scissors. If you can convince a friend to help, then the job will be much easier and quicker.

How to do it

Having caught and got a firm grip on your bird; take one wing and carefully extend it. If your bird is particularly prone to flapping, wrap a towel

around her and remember to point her bum away from you! You will notice that the wing naturally divides into two sections the section from body to elbow has shorter blunt feathers at the edge, while the section from elbow to tip has longer, more pointed feathers and these are the ones that you'll cut.

With one hand, take the first ten feathers (The long primaries), and cut each one about half way down, one by one (or all together if you have the strength) to give a nice straight line. You can use the shorter covert feathers to act as a guide.

Basically when the clipped wing is folded you will not be able to see the cut line. Do not repeat with the other wing and do not cut the feathers from body to elbow. You can also trim half the tail making sure that the side you trim is the same side as you trimmed the wing. This process will now imbalance your hen and stop her flying.

THE BENEFITS OF APPLE CIDER VINEGAR AND GARLIC

by Jude Woodside

Apple cider vinegar is one of the most beneficial supplements you can give your chickens. It is recommended for all stock. When I first acquired my chickens I also inherited a small flock of goats that came with the property I purchased. Both the goats and the chickens had been dosed with ACV regularly and I kept up the practice.

When I moved to a new place with my chickens I brought the remains of the 20L container of ACV I had and continued to dose the water for the chooks. However, after a time it ran out. I considered replacing it but instead I put in a permanent water supply for the chickens and forgot about the ACV.

Then my chickens began to get ill. One by one they succumbed to a wasting disease, probably coccidiosis, and I seemed to be able to do nothing for it. I did eventually track down some Coxprol with which I treated the remainder, but by then I had lost four chickens and a rooster. I had had no issues previously, I had lost one to old age once but not to disease. I realised the only thing that had changed was the ACV so I found some intended for stock and diluted it sufficient that I could apply it to the chicken's water supply. I discovered that not only did it improve their health they actually loved it. They would consistently prefer the treated water to the untreated.

The benefits of vinegar, and it doesn't strictly have to be Cider vinegar, although this is the most user friendly for stock, concerns the crop of the chicken. Pathogens, such as microbes etc thrive in an alkaline environment anything from a pH of 7.5 to 9 with water being 7 and strong alkaline 14. Vinegar is acidic in the pH range of 2-3. Most pathogens cannot survive in an acid environment.

Within a chickens crop the pH is usually maintained at a pH around 5-6 which suits the beneficial bacteria that produce lactic acid in the crop. It also helps to regulate the ingestion of pathogens, they have to pass through this slightly acid region.

Stress often makes chickens drink less which can upset the population of beneficial microbes, those producing lactic acid in the crop. That of course leads to an over abundance of pathogenic microbes.

Vinegar, in dilute form helps to restore the pH balance in the crop. It's also attractive to chickens, they like the smell and taste of it. Even chickens that are ill will tend to drink vinegared water over ordinary water.

It doesn't take much, around 30-40ml per 10 litre, (roughly two tablespoons). Double the dose if your water is hard. Adding vinegar to the drinking water will also help to deter the growth of pathogens in the water supply. Ideally a pH level of 4 is sufficient to restore and maintain the health of the crop. A healthy crop means a healthy chicken.

Once past the crop, pathogens will encounter the stomach, where acid levels can rise between 1 and 3, (Hydrochloric acid). However a chicken that is stressed or ill often won't eat and then the stomach produces no acid, the alkalinity of the stomach increases encouraging the growth of pathogens which can then invade the digestive tract. Loose droppings are often an indicator that digestion is suffering.

Why Apple Cider?

Apple cider vinegar is a fermented product produced by a "mother" or a scoby (Symbiotic Culture Of Bacteria and Yeast) there are traces of the scoby in the unpasteurised cider vinegar. Opinions vary on the significance of this. The scoby bacteria and yeast require oxygen to flourish, there is no oxygen in the crop so it likely that they do not survive the crop. However their presence in the raw material keeps it vital.

Where ACV does excel is in treating birds with respiratory disease. Here there can be an overproduction of mucus which can hinder breathing. The tannin in the ACV, from apple skins, help to clear the mucus and directly aid recovery.

Garlic

Garlic is another ingredient in a birds diet that brings enormous benefits. As a rule chickens shouldn't be fed onions especially green onions, but garlic is the exception. Recommended for both pre and pro biotic properties it is natural anthelmintic (wormer), broad spectrum antibiotic, antifungal and effective against protozoa.

Garlic's active ingredient, allicin, is responsible for the distinct flavour and odour. The smell is due the sulphur contained in the compound and the fact it is unstable. The unstable allicin breaks down and reacts with other compounds in garlic, to form a variety of sulphur compounds, such as ajoene, which have the antimicrobial and anti-fungal properties.

Unlike commercial sulfa drugs the active ingredients in garlic can, at low concentrations, inhibit the growth of up to two dozen pathogens. At higher concentrations they can destroy them completely. Unlike pharmaceuticals they do not promote resistance. The compounds work by blocking the enzymes the pathogens need to thrive.

Apple cider vinegar and garlic, both natural ingredients are thus the best all round tonic you can feed you birds. I can attest that my chickens have never looked better or seemed happier than they have since I started using this product. There are no loose droppings, no dirty vents and the birds appear to be thriving.

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