

Dubbo Poultry Club

Newsletter

June 2006

For those who breed their fowl specifically to exhibit, the most exciting period of the year is upon us. The Agricultural shows, including the Sydney Royal, have been and gone as have the first of the Poultry Club shows.

At just about any show the judges summary of the birds they adjudicated almost invariably includes comments relating to the lack of preparation of many of the fowls. Take a quick stroll through the cattle pavilion of any Ag show and you will quickly see that prize

cattle are not simply dragged out of a paddock - they are shampooed and clipped, tails are trimmed, horns buffed and hooves polished! In the same light you can't expect a fowl taken straight from it's yard and put in a show pen to compete against those properly prepared on the day.

I hope the following article will encourage those who don't normally show to not only give it a go but prepare their fowls in a manner that will do them proud. Start getting you birds ready for our club show on 7 July now!

Congratulations must go to Ryan Harris who has been appointed to judge at the 2006 Plymouth Rock National Show in Benalla, Victoria. Ryan must be one of the youngest judges to achieve such an appointment.

Members of the DPC continued to do well at the local Agricultural Shows. David Geering ventured to the Sydney Royal in April taking out Best Female Barnevelder with a pullet as well as Best Male and Champion Barnevelder with a cockerel.

Preparing Fowl for Showing

Your fowl's chances of success in the show pen is dependant upon a number of factors, some in your control and others outside it. As there is no point in worrying about factors outside your control you are best concentrating on those that you can influence.

Assuming that your birds are of sufficient quality to hold their own at a show you can enhance their chances by properly training and preparing them for the day.

Judges vary in their tolerance to wild fowls in the show pen. It is difficult for judges to assess your bird if it is cowering in a corner or furiously attempting to escape every time they approach it's pen. Otherwise good birds have been passed over simply because the judge was unable to see just how good the fowl was.

The degree, and type, of training varies between breeds. Long-legged breeds such as Modern Game are trained to stand upright, demonstrating their "reach". Old English Game are required to be sprightly and active on their feet (this doesn't mean flying around the pen in a panic!) while Pekins should be sedate with their heads held relatively low.

It can be surprising just how little time and handling in a training pen will turn a previously "wild" fowl into one that is

relaxed or even poses when it's pen is approached or judging stick applied.

Even then, the best trained bird may fail to impress if it hasn't been prepared adequately. Preparation varies according to breed and colour.

White fowl will almost invariably need a full bath at least three days before a show while many dark-coloured birds will only require a simple head and feet wash. Once bathed, and the birds kept clean, it may not be necessary to wash them again for several more shows.

A full bath involves immersing the whole bird, except for the head, in warm (not hot!) water and then gently working a shampoo or soap (preferably unscented) from head to tail to remove dirt and grime. The soap is washed from the bird before transferring it to another bath that has had a whitening product such as "Bluo" added. This second bath serves to rinse any remaining soap scum from the feathers while adding a dazzling white to the feathers.

The bird can be dried by gently wrapping it in a towel, being careful not to damage the plumage, and working excess water out passing the towel from head to tail. Birds with profuse feathering, such as Silkies, can be further dried using a hair dryer while tighter plumaged birds are best dried naturally. This is best done in a sheltered spot in the sun or, if conditions

aren't favourable, indoors near a heater.

The feet will also need cleaning. A quick wash to remove any caked on dirt will reveal lines of dirt under many of the scales. Scrubbing the legs with an old toothbrush or nail brush and soap will remove some of this dirt. It will then be necessary to work the remaining dirt out from under scales using something like a plastic cocktail pick or even the eye end of a needle. Scrubbing the legs again with the brush often drags out any dislodged dirt that remains.

The day before the show you may want to apply a little baby powder to white ear lobes and wash the birds comb and face. The evening before the show, or even as you pen the birds on the day, apply baby oil or olive oil to the combs, wattle and face as well as the shanks and feet to highlight these and add a "healthy" glow to your bird.

On penning, ensure that all the feathers, especially wing and tail feathers, are in place. Wiping dark birds over with a piece of silk will enhance the natural lustre of the bird while removing any dust picked up during transportation.

Here is then nothing that can be done but sit back and wait for the judging to conclude. Win or lose, you will know that you gave your fowl the best possible chance of success.

Breeding and Showing Indian Game

The Indian Game, despite its name, was developed in Cornwall, England and, in the early days, were mainly used as table birds. While they are still used to produce meat birds, being crossed with Sussex or Rhode Island Reds today they are bred primarily for showing.

When breeding for show birds select the very best typed female available with the best lacing and a good strong head. Females must have good strong bone. Indian Game have lost a fair amount of size over the past few years so select the larger females for the breeding pen.

When selecting males look for good type, good sound colour, short tight feathering with beetle green sheen as well as a good strong head. As fertility is sometimes a problem with Indian Game use a male, preferably a cockerel, with reasonable leg length.

If possible, make sure the breeders have a good roomy pen with a grass run. Indian Game always do better if they can get out into the sunlight. They are not the best layers so they must have good quality feed. I find that hatching sometimes can be disappointing, as quite a lot of fertile eggs never hatch. I don't know the answer to this problem.

The Indian Game Club of Australia follows the British Poultry

Standards which recognises three colours: Dark, Jubilee and Blue-laced. Double lacing is one of the main features of Indian Game females, after type, so we must work towards keeping good lacing on our birds.

Indian Game stand out in the show pen if they are well presented. The first thing is to pen the birds in show size cages and get them quiet. No judge likes to handle wild, untamed birds. If possible, a good wash about a week before the show will bring the shine out on the feathers. Always clean the legs by removing the dirt from under the scales and brushing them with a toothbrush, or similar, and soapy water. On show day, a little olive oil rubbed into the legs, comb and wattles will improve the birds appearance.

A few tips on judging, or assessing your own birds for showing. Firstly, study the standard. On show day you only have a certain amount of time to spend with each bird in the class so walk along and have a look at each bird, move them around the pen if necessary and check that they are sound on their feet and are well balanced.



Don't expect Indian Game to move around like Old English Game. In doing this you will get a idea of type and head points and which ones to spend more time on when you take them out of the pens. Look for wing faults and crooked breasts. You can also get a better idea of the shape of the body while handling the bird. Check the undercolour of the feathers, that the males are the correct colour and that the lacing on the females is correct. Always make sure that you follow the standard.

Brian Weis
President
Indian Game Club of Australia

Dubbo Ag Show

The Dubbo Ag Show was well patronized, for an agricultural show, with 310 entries. Exhibitors come from as far afield as Tamworth, Sydney and Coonamble.

Champions on the day were: SFL: Donna O'Malley - White Crested Black Polish Pullet; Res SFL Alan Hutchison - Black Australian Langshan Pullet; HFL: Brett Sherwood - Black Red OEG Cockerel; Res HFL: Sandra Ferguson - Jubilee Indian Game Cock; SFB: Fiona Hadlington - Mottle Pekin Hen; Res SFB: Kaye Primmer - Gold Sebright

Pullet; HFB: Ian Young - Silver Duckwing OEG Hen; Res HFB: Phillip Newton - Duckwing Modern Game Cockerel; Waterfowl: Sandra Ferguson - White Muscovy Duck; Res WF: Sean Ryan - White Indian Runner Duck; Champion Junior: Courtney Ryan - White Silkie Hen; Res Junior: Ethan Attenborough - Black Red Modern Game Hen.

Demand for sale birds on offer was high. Many people were looking for purebred birds as backyard layers with Barnevelders and Sussex being snapped

up. Modern Game bantams, Frizzles and Silkie chickens were also in demand.

Another pleasing aspect of the show was the interest in fowls shown by the many children that came through the pavilion. An effort was made to engage people, allowing them to pat a Silkie, marvel at the style of the Modern Game cockerel and hand feed a large Barnevelder cock bird. These opportunities to interact with the birds proved to be a great hit with children and adults alike.