

Dubbo Poultry Club

Newsletter

October 2006

This newsletter brings to a close the first full year of club newsletters for DPC (the first being November 2005). These newsletters have been well received but there is always room for improvement. Please bring your suggestions about what you would like to see to the monthly club meetings. Next year you may see more four page spreads with additional articles and photos of member's winning birds.

AGM

The 2006 AGM held in September saw some changes to the DPC committee.

Re-elected to their positions were Ryan Harris as president and Bob Stanley as both vice-president and chief steward. Steve Howarth was a new face on the committee being elected as Secretary with Keith Stewart opting not to continue in the position. Keith, however, will remain on the committee as Treasurer with Greg Cusack standing down from the position after 10 years in the role. David Geering continues in the honorary position of publicity officer.

In his address to members, President Ryan Harris thanked all members for their efforts during the past year emphasising that without our hardworking members there wouldn't be a Dubbo Poultry Club.

Our new secretary

As indicated, the new DPC secretary is Steve Howarth. Steve's address is 2 Severn St, Guerie, 2831 and phone number 6887 1529.

New Members

At the September club meeting the following new members are welcomed:

Beryl & Graham Bush, Wellington

Chown family, Wellington

Dan McDonogh, Eumungerie

Dubbo on show in 2007

Next year promises to be a big year for DPC. In May Dubbo will be hosting the Central West Exhibition Game Club show while in July we will be hosting the national Plymouth Rock Club show. There will be more details about these shows next year.

Winners circle

The run of success enjoyed by club members this year has continued.

Ernie and Wendy Coffee took two birds to The Pekin Club of Australia Show at Maitland in late July, coming away with Reserve Champion Novice with a Black cockerel. Ernie and Wendy also had considerable success with the five birds they took to The Silkie Club of Australia show in August. Their black hen took out

Best Black in Show, a partridge cockerel best Partridge and a buff hen Best Bantam Silkie.

At the inaugural Rare Poultry Breeders Association show at Maitland in August David Geering's cockerel took out Best Barnevelder in a strong line-up.

Club members also did well at the Peak Hill Poultry Club show. Alice Smidt-Geering's Black Langshan cockerel was Champion Softfeather Bantam while Greg Cusack's Black Pekin cockerel took out Reserve SF Bantam.

At the Narromine Ag Show Ernie & Wendy Coffee's Black Silkie took out Champion SF Standard while David Geering's Barnevelder cock-bird was Reserve Champion. Alice Smidt-Geering took out both Champion SF Bantam with a Black Langshan cockerel and Reserve Champion SF Bantam with a Black Langshan hen. Alice also took out Champion Junior exhibit with another Black Langshan bantam hen.

The Coffee's continued their success taking out Champion SF Standard at Molong Ag Show with their Black Silkie hen as well as Reserve Champion with a Rhode Island Red cockerel. They also took out Reserve Champion SF Bantam with a Black Pekin hen.

Managing overcrowding in growing chickens

The weathers warming up and, hopefully, everyone will have a yard full of chickens. Whether by design or over-enthusiasm your yard may actually have many more chickens than is perhaps good for you and them.

Overcrowded birds are often time bombs waiting to explode.

Although not always noticeable the birds are likely to be stressed with smaller or more timid birds suffering because they have nowhere to hide from stronger flock mates.

Stronger birds may monopolise feed and water. The resulting check in growth of those missing out may stunt development as well as being evident in plumage quality and colour. In black fowls this

may manifest itself in an undesirable purple lustre.

Overcrowding often results in the build-up of ammonia and moisture in the litter. Damp litter is a perfect breeding ground for all manner of pathogens, the most prevalent often being coccidia. Coccidiosis is difficult to control by medication if stress levels are high or if the birds are being constantly reinfected because of poor litter quality.

Overcrowding may also predispose birds to respiratory disease, particularly when chickens are adjusting from being moved from the brooder to cooler nights in their new quarters. Plentiful green feed will provide vitamin A that helps strengthen their respiratory systems.

Bored chickens, particularly if overcrowded, will often engage in feather-pecking. This can be an annoying habit but becomes even more serious when it develops into severe pecking and even cannibalism! Remove injured birds immediately and reduce numbers in the pen. Giving the birds something to do, providing material such as lettuce leaves, bread or lucerne straw to peck at will often distract birds from feather pecking.

Avoiding overcrowding is not only beneficial to the birds but also can also reduce your stress levels. There are enough things than can, and often will, go wrong without inviting more problems. If your goal is to breed strong, healthy chickens you must aim to reduce these additional pressures.

The Rhode Island

It doesn't matter if red or white, standard or bantam the Rhode Island is our true utility breed and a definite all climate breed. Whether it is Darwin or Sydney or the Snowy Mountains the Rhode Island thrives in all conditions and is one of the hardiest of all our domestic fowl.

The continual out-crossing the breed was subject to during its evolution has given it the constitutional vigour that allows it to respond readily to any conditions. Eggs hatch readily in incubators or under broodies and the chicks are easily reared right from the start. Standard pullets will mature at around 7.5 months and cockerels around 9.5 months, bantams about 2 months less than these.

Rhodes are docile, easily handled and not prone to flying. These facts alone are enough to endear them to the hearts of poultry lovers but when coupled with their very attractive colour and their alert, but quiet nature, makes them the most fascinating of all breeds. All this said, they are not an easy breed to breed to the standard and many have given up on the complexities of the red variety before learning the ins and outs of breeding the colour to the standard. It would take me pages to explain this, so my advice is to ask a recognised breeder if you are interested in having this wonderful breed.

Type in breeding is much more important than colour. Too many of our Rhodes have not enough front or are pinched in the saddle. Others are flat sided and slabby, especially the very big ones. This point, size, is the rock on which fanciers have floundered and in the past have done the breed injury and injustice. They should not be bred to excessive size. If they are, then they lose that refinement that is part and parcel of the breed.

However, their colour pattern of clear bright red, even in all sections, with a

beetle green tail and black wing markings in flights combined with clear red under-colour and clear, red hackles in males and a black ticking in the hackle of females, makes them hard enough to keep right for the most exacting fancier.

When clear red in the hackle of the male is mentioned it should be understood that this colour should be the same as the body colour and not a fiery red or ginger. One sometimes sees ginger hackled females too. These should not be bred from, as it is easy to breed a light hackle in but extremely hard to breed it out again. The live, bright luster shown by the Rhode Island Red is perhaps one of the most attractive points that strikes the eye on looking at a pen of these fowls. This is all the more noticeable if one has recently seen a pen where the feather is stringy and dry. These dry feather specimens, although technically sound in colour are not in accordance with the standard, as they

are dull, whilst the standard calls for as much brilliance as possible.

Rhodes are also good egg producers and while other breeds may lay well in spring and summer the Rhode Island will lay well into the autumn and after the moult will start laying in winter, before many other breeds begin to lay again. This trait has been bred into the Rhode Island over many generations and their body shape exemplifies this. They are long and broad, exactly the right shape for an egg factory. The standard calls for the body to be long, broad, moderately deep, straight, extending well forward, giving an oblong appearance. If bred to this standard we are retaining their egg laying ability without even being conscious of it.

Taking all things into consideration there is no better utility fowl than a standard bred Rhode Island.

Kim George
Secretary
Rhode Island Club of Australia Inc.

