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AMERUCANA BREEDERS CLUB NEWSLETTER

FALL - 1990

VOL. XII #3



NOTES FROM NORTHERN MICHIGAN -

Hard to believe summer is nearing an end. The weather has been great for me - mostly 65° to 75° by day and cooling down at night. Aug. 2nd I opted to go to bed early and snuggle under the comforter in my flannel nightgown rather than light a fire. It was quite cool. I decided to save the wood. I'm sure the tourists would prefer warmer weather but this weather is much easier on us and the animals..especially me. When it's not so hot I don't have to haul so much water.

Michigan has an abundant supply of grasshoppers. I've never seen so many. The only ^{real} insect problem in this area this summer. They really love my flowering kale. Friend Pat & I brought the chickens home from Howard's yesterday (8/13) and I'm hoping they will cut into the grasshopper population quite a bit.

Yes, finally did it - went to Howard's in the early afternoon - Pat, her son, Daniel, and I - with a fish net. We knew daylight wouldn't be the greatest time to set about such a project but evenings never worked out and it had to be done. We did pretty good - we got all but 6 or 8 and had 2 escapees. Things went okay until the chickens started getting upset. You know how they carry on, so we patted our dusty, sweaty selves on the back and took what we had & left. The fish net worked okay but the mesh was too large. It was real tricky getting them out - we had to be real careful with feet & heads - not to catch them in the net. That took time and made everybody nervous. Pat caught one and when she took it out of the net it looked dead. That made her nervous. He turned out to be okay - just in shock for a few minutes. To me night moving is best...you just take a flashlight and pluck them off the perch. When we got home with our hard earned flock and released them we also released tons of feathers. Moulting is big time here. Early. Good news is that they just may look great for the Columbus show. Bad news is I best get the two loads of wood already in the yard stacked to make room for more. Back to fires already. Gee!!

I did manage to hatch 12 large fowl for myself -really late. They are still small - real small - and not outside yet. As I write they are just 3 weeks old. Seems to me they should be bigger by now. I've heard from old timers - hatch large fowl early so they grow large. If you want your bantams to stay small hatch them late. I don't know how true that is but these 12 don't seem to be growing very fast - sure hope I don't wind up with "tweeners" not bantams and too small for large fowl. Any of you ever heard that theory? I'd be interested in knowing. I do believe the shape of the egg determines the shape of the chick. Any long skinny eggs I get go into the refrig. I'm most happy when I find nice round ones - that means nice full round bodied chicks - the shape we AM folks are seeking. I think it would be interesting - what have you heard, read or learned from old timers?

I finally received the showmanship bulletin from the 4-H office. It's simply called "Chicken Fitting and Showmanship" 4-H #1288. It is lengthy but shows exactly what the 4-H'er is to do during showmanship, a leader's section and how to score. I know many of you are involved with 4-H. You may or may not have the above information. I'm sure you can request it from your extension office. If all else fails I can get you a copy. I feel that showmanship in 4-H and many poultry shows is great for all juniors (probably be good for us adults as well). It gives the kids something more than just to show up with a trio of meat birds. I, for one, never liked that 4-H project. The poultry show junior has an added incentive to work with his/her birds. Our future lives in the juniors...so let's help them as much as we can...get the bulletin.

To those of you who receive the Poultry Press - several articles of interest in the August issue. I took a few minutes tonight (8/15) and looked thru mine. Actually, I talked to JF today and she asked if I had read Pegi Ficken's article. Pegi is junior member, Susan, mother. I had to admit I hadn't. PP was on my desk among a pile of "must dos". Nice long article on how she, a New Yorker, wound up in WI with four kids and poultry. As long as I was reading I poked around to see what else I missed. Found an article on page 12 from a guy in GA telling of the wonderful new postal decision of shipping poultry. I haven't done that yet - "been a gonna". The fellow was telling how the new rules and method alleviated so many of the problems the old air shipping had. Good article. Since we ABC'ers are so scattered and there is a limited supply of quality stock this live shipment business should really help us a lot. I haven't been much help this past year, as you know, my birds haven't been home. They are now and with luck I'll be able to help at least large fowl folks.

The third article was by Judge Clyde Weaver, whom I know. A very detailed account on washing chickens. I've talked about this before - Clyde really goes into detail and probably

FROM THE OZARKS

Greetings again from sunny, hot southern Missouri. After a brief cooling and an inch and a half of more than welcome rain, we're back into "hot" again. Even tho I didn't get my garden planted until the second week of June, we're enjoying sweet corn, green beans and tomatoes. I froze beans last night, finishing up at 11:00 P.M. Sweet corn needs a bit more time, but the birds are bothering real bad - sparrows and blackbirds.

I hope everyone had a real good spring hatch and you have some real promising youngsters. Mine are still too young to tell much about. But I have my fingers crossed for a couple of pullets that already stand out.

The Central District Meet at Hampton, Iowa is just around the corner. Boy, time flies any more. I'm just hoping I'll have a few to take. My guys are just now starting to molt. Oh, Well, it'll be fun no matter what.

Just think it is just over a year 'til out next national. If next year goes by as fast as this one has, it'll be here before we know it. Let's work on topping the hundred plus we had at Highland!

Thanks to all who placed ads in the 1990 APA Yearbook. Those are a most impressive two pages! Gotta go, egg day today, plus a multitude of things to do. Don't forget to vote in this election.

Start thinking Milwaukee - it's not that far away.

Mary Lou Phelps
Central District Director
8-23-90

AMERAUCAANA BREEDERS CLUB SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING:

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OUT WEST
PREPARING FOR SHOW

Preparation of birds for show may be categorized into three general areas: training, feeding and grooming.

In training show prospects, they should not only be handled frequently, but also made familiar with confinement in show cages, and in some cases, isolated to reduce potential damage to plumage. This is especially true if there are birds inclined to pick at muffs and beards or overzealously amorous cockerels damaging female back feathers.

Conditioning birds to associate confinement in show cages with a reward of a food tidbit is a sound training method if the food item is relished by the bird and if the treat is offered consistently. The reward should be fed sparingly so that the bird remains alert and looking for more when the cage is approached. This technique should be used up to and including the day of the show - ideally just before the class is to be judged - so that the bird anticipates a treat when the judge opens the cage door. Various whole grains, bird seed, meat scraps and even meal worms have been used successfully as food rewards.

If your feeding program is sound, it is best not to substitute with other feedstuffs just prior to a show. The key to adding supplements to your basic program is to proceed gradually and well ahead of the show dates. Most food supplements are used to improve feather quality, especially sheen. This is accomplished by feeding foodstuffs high in oils, as certain whole grains including safflower and sunflower seed. Other choices are foods rich in fish oils such as cat and dog foods. Meat scraps and even hamburger are sometimes used as well as commercial preparations like those used for cage birds. The possibilities are endless and as long as they are used in moderation as supplements may well improve sheen and luster on your birds.

Grooming is the last major item in preparing your show team to be at its best on show day. Much has been written about bathing show prospects and it is almost a must for whites and creamy female wheaten. Using a light oil sparingly on shanks, toes and combs is a common technique to enhance these areas, but first they should be gone over thoroughly with warm, soapy water and an old, soft toothbrush. A toenail clipper can be used to good advantage on overlong nails and just as importantly, on beaks. A common flaw is a slightly overgrown upper mandible and when clipped back to normal position often improves the appearance dramatically. Finally, a bit of talcum powder in the fluff of white or light creamy wheaten females can make them smell as good as they look, especially just before you place them in the cage at the show. This may well be the ultimate sweet smell of success!

Don Cable
1st Vice President
Western District Director
Past Sec/Treas. ABC

ARE YOU A WINNER OR A LOSER?

A winner is always a part of the answer,

A loser is always part of the problem.

A winner always has a program,

A loser always has an excuse.

A winner says "Let me do it for you",

A loser says "That's not my job."

A winner sees an answer for every problem,

A loser sees a problem in every answer.

A winner sees a green near every sand trap,

A loser sees two or three sand traps near every green.

A winner says "It may be difficult but it is possible."

A loser says "It may be possible but it's too difficult."

SO - ARE YOU A WINNER OR A LOSER????

Even tho we do have several articles for this newsletter we thought it was time to start reviewing some of the articles from the ABC HANDBOOK.

AMERAUCANA TYPE

By M.K. GILBERT

Ameraucanas have been developed as a dual purpose breed which is useful for both meat and egg production. Their type, being a study in moderation, is ideally suited for this duality. Bantam standard weights are the same as for Wyandotte bantams, but here all similarity with the Wyandottes ends, as the feathering of Ameraucanas makes them appear a little larger and altogether different in type. Feather quality should be similar to that of Plymouth Rocks, being neither as "hard" as in Games nor as soft as in Cochins.

The natural stance of the females results in a body carriage that is nearly horizontal. The back should be only slightly sloping from front to rear. However, male backs have slightly more slope than those of females. The body is fairly long with a definite but not abrupt "break" between slope of back and rise of tail. The male tail is 45 degrees above the horizontal while that of the female is about 35° to 40°. Breasts should be deep and round, hackles moderately long and flowing, and main tails of but medium length. Tail coverts are comparatively long, which results in not too much of the main tail showing. Overall appearance should not be one of extreme heaviness, but neither should it be racy or gamey.

The Ameraucana head is medium broad and flat, giving a deceptively fierce look to the best specimens. Many strains are quite docile and tame, not flighty as some breeds tend to be. Ear lobes are red, but also very small and pale in the best females. This paleness should not be mistaken for white coloration; it often takes an experienced eye to tell the difference. All Ameraucanas have blue or slate blue shanks. Avoid long legs, poorly formed pea combs and skimpy beards and muffs. Old males tend to experience prolonged moults of the beard and muffs, a real challenge in conditioning for exhibition. Avoid long beaks and narrow crow heads also. Many breeds are bred to extreme limits in one area or another, e.g. short legs in Japanese, fluffiness in Cochins, etc. But the Ameraucana should not be extreme in anything, except perhaps "extremely moderate".

The hens are excellent producers of medium sky-blue eggs. Having made it a practice never to butcher hens in production, the writer has sometimes waited as much as a year to dispose of otherwise "cull" hens. All breeders should be selected for egg production, health and vitality.

Varieties such as black tailed buff, blue wheaten and buff carry the blood of the original wheatens. The Ameraucana standard calls for the wheaten and blue wheaten females to be a uniform light creamy shate which affords great contrast between the sexes. This extreme sexual dimorphism is one of the attributes which makes the adult wheaten or blue-wheaten Ameraucana a unique and very attractive fowl.

Mike Gilbert
2nd Vice President
Past President - ABC

Dear Jeannette, Rec'd the newsletter and letter - I guess I'm just not that good at writing. I'm home on vacation to do some raking and clean up the yard but it is raining cold and may get some snow. Built a pole barn a few years ago - still working on pens. Hope in a year or so I'll have that done.

I started hatching in Jan. with very good luck & sales were good to better than now. I has a 4-H club tour my barns last Sat. Guess the biggest hit was my bantam red Cochin and her ten day old chicks. Winter is not too big a pproblem with me. I had no problem with frozen combs - the water would freeze at times. I work all day so the eggs lay there all day but like I said I have been hatching since Jan.

Just don't get to very many shows except our State Fair and the state show at Hutchinson, MN. My white AM bantam pullet took the AOV ornament class 1989 Champion with over 250 bantams. Also, my large fowl AM blue pullet tood 1989 MN State Poultry Assn. Champ at Hutchinson. I guess I'd have to say it was my best year ever.

Keep up the good work.

Arne Schmidt
4/9/90



Sorry it took so long
to get this letter out, but it
seems to be a very busy
time of year.

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Phone: (315) 697-2738

Michael J. Patane

Candace A. Patane

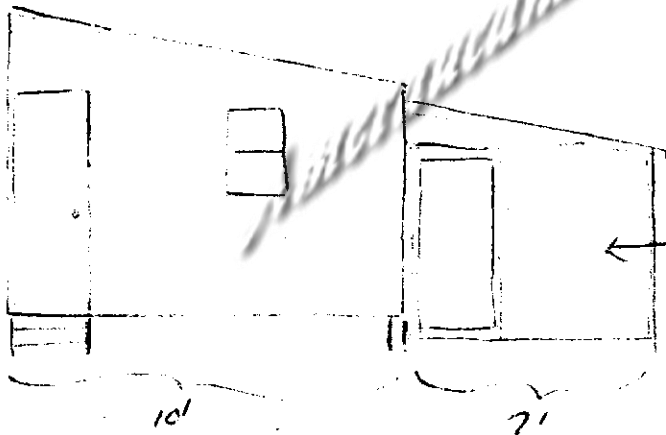
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1 Aug. ~~16~~, 1990

Dear Jeanette,

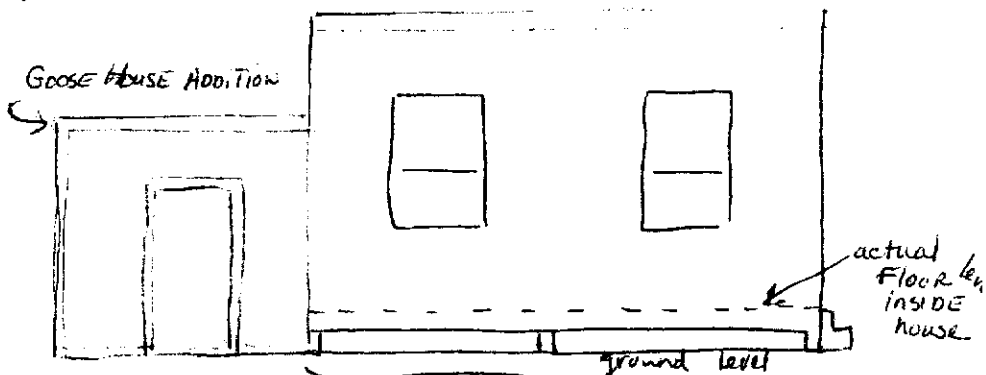
Don't know if my experience of building a chicken house will be of any use to fellow club members, but just in case - here it is. I built it 2 years ago when I had just obtained my first fancy poultry. They were Blue Andalusians, and my main concern about their housing

OVER

EAST END VIEW



SUMMER HOUSE 16'x7'
(walls are 1"x2"
WELDED WIRE)



CHRISTMAS TREES - NURSERY STOCK - PRODUCE - GAME BIRDS - POULTRY
NYSDEC - LICENSED PRESERVE AND GAME BIRD BREEDER
MEMBER OF: RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY, DUCKS UNLIMITED, QUAIL UNLIMITED

16'

was new to keep them warm enough in winter. Those large single combs don't do well at all in cold weather. So after setting in 6"x6" posts and nailing on 2"x8" for the floor base, I glued 1 1/2" thick styrofoam insulation to the bottom + between the floor supports. This left a 6" air space between the insulation and the floor bottom. I also put hardware cloth around the whole house + buried it a foot deep to keep any rodents from chewing up the styrofoam. I used fiberglass rolled insulation in the walls (4") and in the ceiling (6").

The only problem I had the first winter was with the windows (I had used old windows that we had removed from the house), so I replaced them with single pane insulated glass ones. I keep them open at the top a little in winter to let out the humidity. I use a small (6"x6"x6") ceramic heater on winter nights.

The building is only 16' x 10' with a height of 5' at the rear and 7' in front, but it comfortably holds 40-50 standard size birds. I made built-in cages after checking out the prices on wire cages. As I recall, it took about 8 weeks to build the main house but I only used a hand saw (my son was 3 yrs old at the time and I was afraid to have power tools around), a level, a hammer and a step-ladder, and it only worked on it about 3 hrs a day.

The next year I added on the 'summer house' - roofed + enclosed with welded wire, and ÷ into 3 sections for different breeds with separate yard areas made of snow fence.

The design for the main house came from a diagram in a book on poultry at the library, and our local hardware store was very good about advising me on how to put the building together. However, I found that they tended to over-estimate the amount of plywood that I would need.

I still have a couple of things I want to change before this winter - a small roof over the doorway and rip out the corner cages - too hard to clean. Otherwise, I've found the experience quite rewarding + satisfying. The birds are happy too!

Yours Truly,
Candy

TITLE: HARD QUESTIONS FROM A BURNED OUT MEMBER.....

As one who has bred and shown Ameraucana bantams since before their recognition as a distinct breed by the American Bantam Association and then the American Poultry Association, it seems to me there has been a discernable lack of improvement within most of the varieties for the past four or five years. Why this stagnation should occur is difficult to understand, as the Ameraucana Breeders Club seems to have a stable and active membership, a terrific newsletter, capable leadership and good participation by its members. The ABA and APA yearbooks contain Ameraucana advertisement from club members and non-members (I think) alike. Also, a quick review of Poultry Press reveals a general acceptance of the breed by the fancy as a whole. For example, the August, '90 issue contains not only our club ad, but sources of chicks and/or hatching eggs from at least four advertisers and Ameraucana placings at several shows. They even spell "Ameraucana" correctly most of the time now! And of course the standard descriptions and pictures can be found within the ABA and the APA official publications.

So, I would ask the reader some tough questions that are designed for self-examination. Questions to help each of us answer, "Am I a part of the solution or a part of the problem?" and, "What am I willing to do about it?"

In more or less random order, here they are:

1. Are we truly interested in improving the breed to a level of respectability, or are we satisfied to win show awards against a low level of competition? (The "big frog in a small puddle" syndrome.)
2. Am I satisfied to make a single mating of each of my varieties once a year? Do I really expect to make any progress with such a program or am I painting myself into a corner?
3. Am I truly a poultry breeder or just a poultry reproducer? Do I know the difference?
4. If I am limited in my knowledge of what to do, have I sought advice from more experienced persons?
5. Am I more interested in the welfare of the breed or in self-glorification?
6. Why don't we have silver bantam males colored as they should be - black and white feathers only, without autosomal red on the back and shoulders?
7. Why don't we see buffs in teh showroom, either large or bantam? Have we ever? Will we?
8. Where are the bantam blues? In the past we saw blue females, more than once, win Best of Breed and even A.O.C.C.L. in reasonably good competition.
9. Why don't we see black males or blue males without unacceptable quantities of red or silver in the hackles?
10. Where are the bantam brown-reds? One pair with fair color and poor type was exhibited at Highland in 1989. Why is there only one person working on this standard variety?
11. Why, after all these years of breeding, are we still tolerating dark ticking and even dark striping in the hackles of wheaten and blue-wheatens? We see this not only in males, but even females - heaven forbid. Are we reading and understanding the standard?
12. Am I "networking" with others who are working with my variety (ies)?
13. Should we keep the name "Ameraucana Breeders Club" or change it to something like "Ameraucana Exhibitors Club"?
14. Are we just "fooling around" with non-standard varieties when all our regular varieties (except perhaps whites) need so much help? Do we know what it takes to get a new variety recognized and have we measured the cost in terms of time, dollars, and effort?
15. Do I expect to acquire or replace exhibition quality stock for "peanuts" after someone else has sacrificed thousands of dollars and thousands of hours, not to mention the strained family relationships, to produce a limited quantity of what I am willing to start out with?
16. If I already have decent stock am I taking reasonable precautions to preserve and protect it from risk of loss? If my negligence results in avoidable losses is it "my lousy luck" and "my business", or is it a loss to the breed as a whole - since those particular genetics will not be available to share with others?

I am just as guilty as anyone, perhaps moreso. And folks, I don't presume to answer these questions for you. But I do know ew can all improve our preformance. If we pull together and all do our part, we can collectively make our next national mee the top gathering of Ameraucanas and of Ameraucana Breeders the world has ever seen! Let's just do it!

SEE YOU AT MILWAUKEE IN '91?

REFLECTIONS FROM THE BIG SKY COUNTRY

Here I sit - wondering what wise words of wisdom I can send your way - and drawing a complete blank.

We got into summer finally - so many people were complaining because it was so cold for so long - then it got hot and all I heard was complaints about the heat and dryness. Now we have had four days of heavy, heavy rain - with lots of thunder and lightning. Wonder what everyone is hoping for now? Snow???

In July one of my neighbors started finding eggs broken in her chicken house...then one day she was moving some crates around and discovered a big skunk behind one. She killed that one thinking she had solved the problem. Two days later she killed another skunk. All this time I haven't even smelled a skunk and I live 1/2 mile from her. A week later my neighbor came home and found her white Cochin bantam hen decapitated and her soon-to-be hatched eggs destroyed - another skunk! In four weeks time she killed seven skunks. This morning (8/20) I went out to a very, very soggy chicken yard to discover that something had been digging along my chicken fence and building. My poodle, Misty, always anxious to catch a mouse, ran ahead of me to the goose pen. I thought I might as well go ahead and give my rabbit his carrot and fresh food and water (his hutch is in the goose pen). I smelled the skunk before I saw it - standing in the doorway of the goose house. I called Misty and put her in the house and told my husband there was a skunk in the goose pen. Then I went ahead to the chicken house to feed and water. But I didn't let the chickens out like I usually do. I could see where something (the skunk) had dug under my chicken house but since my house has a double wood floor I wasn't worried about the skunk getting in. As I finished with the chickens my geese started toward their pen to be fed. I could see the skunk still busy in the goose house..catching mice. I convinced the geese they could eat off the ground this one time. By the time I got into the house and my husband got his pistol and we got back outside the skunk had left. No sign or scent of it the rest of the day. Tonight as I was giving my nine new babies (yep - hatched out last Wed.) fresh water the chickens outside started fussing so I glanced out the window and saw something. I went to a back window and sure enough - there was Mr. Black & White - digging under the side of my chicken house. Boy can they move!! I'm sure hoping I do not regret not standing guard and destroying the skunk this morning but so far the only thing that has suffered with Mr. B&W being around is the mouse population and I've been trying for a long time to reduce that. My geese don't seem to mind him. My chickens get upset only when he goes scurrying past their pen. So far he hasn't threatened anything so I'm hoping I won't have to destroy him. However, I'm sure that before this newsletter gets mailed out the problem will be eliminated - hopefully without too much of a stink.

Most of you know that I have not had Ameraucanas in my flock for some time. Last year I acquired a trio of Wheaten bantams. This year at the Fair I found a pullet - Wheaten. I have tried twice this year (May & June) to hatch eggs in my incubator...without success. In late July a large fowl Golden Polish hen went broody. I let her practice a few days and then I moved her to an empty rabbit cage and gave her a clutch + of bantam eggs - 1/2 doz. Ameraucana. Now I have three Ameraucana babies. Hope they grow big and strong. Maybe with time and luck...

It is time for our election and so with this newsletter you will receive a ballot (those of you who are paid members). You will notice it is a short one. PLEASE DO NOT LAY IT ASIDE FOR LATER. Mark it now and mail it to Bernard Kellogg. Our deadline is postmarked by October 5, 1990. Anything not marked by this date will not count. It's your club - who do you want running it?? The choice is yours.

I haven't heard from very many of you lately..I do realize how short and busy summers are. I'm trying to work out another puzzle for the ABC'ers. If you have any ideas or suggestions you know where I am - where are you?

Maunette Frank