

A Weekly Page of Poultry Hints to You

Here is a Department Full of Bright Ideas For Readers of the Home and Farm Magazine Section.

W. H. Haven, of Seattle, writes of the Barred Plymouth Rock of today, and what they are and how to mate them.

TO CLAIM that double mating is necessary to produce exhibition stock is to cast a doubt on the term thoroughbred poultry. Any breed that cannot be mated so that a single pair will produce first class males and females alike ought not to be considered as worthy of a place in the standard. I am glad to see so many of the old Barred Rock breeders coming around to what I have advocated all my life. I have been a middle mater, so to speak. This has been termed single mating, and have for many years practiced both double and single mating, and have produced a much greater per cent of very high class exhibition birds, both male and female, from a single mating. The trouble has been brought about by some judges favoring the black and excessively narrow barring in males. And this has been a great damage to the grand old breed of America's favorite.

Question of Color.

The first class pullet and the first class cockerel should be of one shade. In a general way the male may look lighter though he is of the same shade or color as the female, for the reason that while he has as many bars to the feather, his feathers are much longer than the lighter color shows wider between the dark bars. When judges punish dark blue barred in black and protect the specimen that is grayish white, barred in a darker blue that shows no black or metallic black in the dark bars, then will it be possible for man to raise a majority of his birds, both male and female, that will score 91 to 95.

The standard makers had no moral right to describe as perfect a male and female that will not when mated produce chicks like themselves. It is no uncommon thing to see a Barred Rock that by the literal description of the standard score 93 or 94, standing outside of the several awards, while the specimen winning had black bars and black, or nearly black sickles, and off color in beak and legs, and if honestly judged could not have been worthy of fourth place, and this is why so many breeders are disgusted with some of the judges. It is too much "hobby judging." The judges give too much preference to single feathers. A bird may be absolutely standard in the two colors, but because there are not more than five bars in the back plumage it is forced to take a back seat in favor of the one that is absolutely false in standard color, but that is stronger in under color and barred to the skin on the back.

Unfair Judging.

If there is a defect it should be punished, but only a fair per cent, and the judge ought not to let his decision for or against the bird rest on any one section, but right here is where many judges fall down. That is not fair or first class judging. Let the Barred Plymouth Rock to their original color—light bluish gray barred with a dark blue that stops short of black. Then we can mate males and females of self-same color. Then, and not until then, can we have the progeny like sire and dam and more than 85 per cent of them will score 90 to 93. Then will the Barred Plymouth Rock take its rightful position as the prime favorite of the fancier and farmer. The writer has bred Barred Plymouth Rocks for 35 years and produced birds both male and female, by the single mating, that have won the blue in the best shows in the United States. Forcing breeders to use two matings to be able to win in both classes is robbing both the breed and the breeder of Rocks.

Proper Mating.

I claim that by proper mating of the bred stock one can have all specimens barred to the skin, and have five bars in the short plumage. Any excess is unnatural, and nature should be our law, not man's ideal. Our standard should be such that it can be endorsed by nature. The first description of each breed when we took it in hand and honestly described it should still

be the ideal. All tinkering since has been unjust and detrimental to them.

My many years of experience has proven that the mating of all breeds should be governed by one of the same rules, to-wit: Standard males should be mated to standard females. Then, if properly line-bred, 80 to 85 per cent at six months old should score 91 or more, and no specimen should be mated that falls below an honest 90 points. Males should be as near standard shape as possible, in color, a distinct bluish gray in fluff and ground color, this gray color being a combination of blue and white, the web of the feather should be barred with five distinct lines of dark blue stone color free from positive black.

This should be the color of the female also, but if seen in the yard the male will appear to be a lighter shade, to have more of a silver gray general plumage. While we demand this bluish gray in underfluff, we do not admit white or a "cotton black," but distinct bars. The bars in the web should result in giving us parallel lines upon the breast and thighs. Absolute white or positive black is a defect wherever found in a Barred Plymouth Rock.

All judges should be held up to the law. The day of black-barred winners has gone if the grand old breed is to be kept in the front rank.

Perfect Single Mating.

I have endeavored to describe a perfect single mating. We must mate three-fourths of our stock, and if it is properly done the progeny from all of them when penned together will look even colored and alike. At six months old take out all that score 91, and better sort them into four lots, the lightest in the first lot, the second lightest in the second lot, the practically perfect in the third lot, and in lot four put the darkest birds. Mate a perfect colored male bird with lot 2, and a trifle lighter male with pen 3, and a dark male with pen 4, and there will be no perceptible difference in the best of the progeny of each pen. All black barred specimens, if any, should be sent to the market or kept for table use.

If all breeders would follow this plan the Barred Plymouth flocks throughout the country would look very much alike. When a few generations of such matings have been used we must see uniform flocks the rule. Most of our breeders have been obliged to use the few best birds for show purposes and then fall back on their second best and resort to extreme matings. Many have become disgusted and discarded the Barred Rocks. ("Breeders, let us put the Barred Plymouth Rock where it belongs") by demanding such a standard for male and female that we can show birds from a single mating and protest when judges ignore the standard, as many of them do today, and demand that his standard of color shall be bluish gray barred in five or more of dark blue.

CLEAN EGGS.

When eggs are being produced for market purposes, it is well to make a point of keeping the nests clean. Dirty eggs are in a class by themselves, and do not command as large a price as the clean ones. Where straw is used for nesting material, see that it is clean and bright. The nests should be cleaned out now and then and sprayed with some disinfectant. The nests should be so covered that the hens cannot stand on the sides and dirty the straw in the nests.

If a slanting cover is placed over the nests it will do away with all roosting on the edges of the nest boxes. The eggs should also be graded according to size. The pullet eggs which will be forthcoming at this time of year should not be placed in with the regulars. Put them in a class by themselves and sell, as pullet eggs. You will probably have to take a little less for the first crate or so, but after a time they will be large enough to go in with the regular eggs.

When sending to private customers, have the egg boxes clean, and the eggs packed so as that they will present a good appearance when the box is opened. There are many little quirks to the selling of fresh eggs that will either mean more or less money according to the way they are handled.

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