

Ameraucana Breeders Club



Handbook - 2005

Ameraucana Breeders Club

Handbook

Third Edition - July 2005



www.ameraucana.org

ABC Logo by Rusty Hart of Michigan

Ameraucana Breeders Club

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Ameraucana Bantam Handbook - 1982

Ameraucana Breeders Handbook - 1998

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Foreword

The initial 500 copies of the "Ameraucana Bantam Handbook," compiled and edited by Don Cable in 1982, lasted until 1998, a period of some 16 years. It was followed up by the blue cover "Ameraucana Breeders Club Handbook" assembled by John Blehm, and 500 copies were depleted by sometime in 2005, a time span of only about seven years. This serves as one of the yardsticks by which we can measure the growth in popularity of the breed and of the Ameraucana Breeders Club. Now our dedicated secretary John Blehm has produced the third edition in this series. John and member Michael Muenks of Missouri have done the lion's share of writing and editing this booklet, and we are indebted to them for their dedication and tireless efforts.

The year 2005 marked the Silver Anniversary of official American Bantam Association recognition of the Ameraucana bantam. Only two varieties were admitted to Bantam Standard in 1980, wheaten and white. Since 1983 we have had recognition of six more varieties by the A.B.A. and since 1984 all eight varieties of their large fowl counterparts by the American Poultry Association as well.

As we move forward toward recognition of the Black-gold variety in both large and bantam sizes, and perhaps other varieties as well, we are once again reminded of the late Ralph Sturgeon's advice in his book, "Start Where You Are With What You Have - A Guide To Poultry Breeding." He penned the following thoughts. "The animal breeder is just as much an engineer or scientist as is any builder of large structures, machines, rockets, or bridges. They work with inanimate objects; a breeder works with living creatures. It is my belief that these are God's creatures, placed here on earth for the benefit of man. Breeders add to this benefit by improving animals, developing offspring that are better than their parents or grandparents were. As a breeder, I am grateful for the opportunity -- and even feel a responsibility -- to work with the Creator in this way." He also said, "There are a good many exhibitors and showmen, but very few real breeders in the poultry field. Breeding is an art and like all successful artists, breeders must be dedicated."

The secretary-treasurer position is the glue that binds the club together, and the persons who fill that position donate thousands of hours to keeping track of club records and finances, editing and mailing newsletters, responding to all kinds of inquiries and correspondence, keeping track of show meets and show results, and the list goes on and on. We salute those who have agreed to serve in this capacity for the betterment of the A.B.C. and of the Ameraucana breed. People like Don Cable, Jeanne Trent, David Horman, Jeannette Frank, Barbara Campbell, and now John Blehm who is serving a second time all deserve our gratitude. It is to the current and past secretaries of the A.B.C. that we dedicate this edition of the Ameraucana Breeders Handbook.

We also thank our present and past members, officers, and directors - without whose aid and support this handbook would not have been possible. And, like Ralph Sturgeon we offer our highest appreciation to the Creator-God who made it all possible and who continues to bless his children in so many ways.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." Psalm 127:1

Mike Gilbert, president, April, 2005

AMERAUCANA BREEDERS CLUB
CONSTITUTION

Article I - Name

This organization shall be known as the Ameraucana Breeders Club.

Article II - Purpose

The purpose of this club is to encourage the continued improvement of Ameraucana bantams and large fowl through breeding, exhibition, and dissemination of relevant information.

Article III - Membership

Any person or organization with a sincere interest in the purpose of the Ameraucana Breeders Club may become a member upon payment of the annual dues. However, a member may be expelled by a majority vote of the Board of Directors for acts deemed harmful to the Ameraucana breed and/or this organization.

Article IV - Dues

Annual dues shall be set by the Board of Directors and shall be payable on January 1st for each calendar year.

Article V - Organization

Section 1. The officers comprising the Board of Directors shall consist of the following:

President
Vice President(s)
Secretary - Treasurer
District Directors

Section 2. Officers shall be elected by a majority vote of the membership to a term of two years beginning on the first day of January following election. Any officer may be a candidate for reelection.

Section 3. Open positions on the Board of Directors shall be filled by a person selected by the president and approved by majority vote of the Board of Directors.

Article VI - Districts

Section 1. The United States shall be divided into districts each having a director, elected by majority vote of the membership within such district, who shall serve as an officer on the Board of Directors.

Section 2. The Board of Directors by majority vote may increase, decrease, or rearrange the number of districts as they deem necessary.

Section 3. Members residing in, or citizens of, countries other than the United States of America shall be deemed members of their district of closest geographical proximity.

BYLAWS OF THE AMERAUCANA BREEDERS CLUB

Article I - President

The president shall assume the duties of Chairman of the Board of Directors. He shall be responsible for the execution of the Constitution and Bylaws and shall receive and process all proposals for their amendment. The president shall preside at all club meetings, call special meetings if requested by a majority of the Board, and appoint an Election Commissioner for the biennial election. He shall endeavor to see that all officers properly discharge their duties, take an active part in publicity, public relations, and other activities deemed necessary for the betterment of the club.

Article I(a) - Vice President(s)

At the discretion of the Board of Directors, no more than two persons may hold the office of honorary lifetime vice president at any one time. Persons so nominated by the Board of Directors must be elected by majority vote of the membership at large. A vice president shall assist the president with his or her duties and conduct club meetings in the president's absence.

Article II - Secretary-Treasurer

The secretary-treasurer shall conduct club correspondence, collect and receive all monies due the club, pay all bills undertaken by it, and keep a record of these transactions. The secretary-treasurer shall make an annual financial report to the membership via the club bulletin and interim financial reports at meetings at which a quorum of club officers are present. For this purpose a majority of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum. The secretary-treasurer shall be custodian of all club records and be responsible for issuing a quarterly bulletin to all club members detailing current and forthcoming club activities. All club meets shall be processed by the secretary-treasurer to ensure the proper paper work, reports, and awards. The secretary-treasurer shall surrender all files, monies, and other club property to the new secretary-treasurer at the expiration of his or her term of office in a timely fashion.

Article III - District Directors

The district directors shall be responsible for actively promoting the club and its' activities, including the placing of annual district, state, and special meets within their individual districts. They shall also represent the club and assist in planning and carrying out details for the national meet when held within their district. Each district director shall serve as an officer on the Board of Directors, have a vote in determining club policy, assist with coordinating club meets within their district, and take an active part in the recruitment of new members.

Article IV - Board of Directors

The Board of Directors shall control the affairs of the club at all times and remove from office any officer, upon majority vote of the Board, for misconduct or failure to adequately perform the duties of his or her office.

Article V - Election Commissioner

An election commissioner shall be appointed by the president. The commissioner shall receive all ballots directly from the membership, tally them, and promptly forward the results and the ballots to the secretary-treasurer.

Article VI - Club Meetings

An annual meeting shall take place each year in conjunction with the national meet whenever feasible.

Article VII - Election of Officers

Any paid member in good standing may send in a nomination for candidates for the various offices. All nominees must be members of the Ameraucana Breeders Club at the time of nomination. Officers shall be elected every two years by means of a mail ballot sent to each member. Such ballots shall be mailed by the secretary-treasurer via the club bulletin in the fall of the election year. All ballots must be marked and returned within ten days after receipt of same directly to the election commissioner. The election shall be completed and the new officers declared by mid-December and the new officers shall assume office on January 1st.

Article VIII - Club Meets

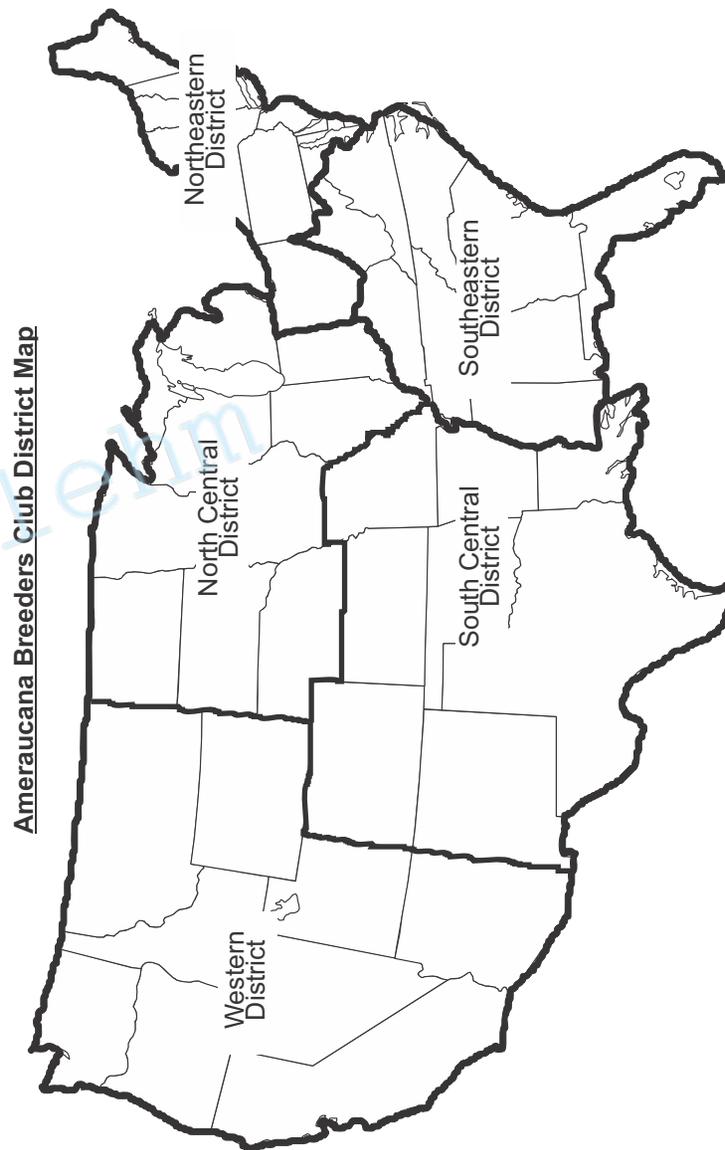
The Ameraucana Breeders Club shall hold an annual National Meet to be rotated each year among the club districts. Site of the national meet shall be determined by majority vote of the Board of Directors. Should a district be unable to host the national meet in its allotted turn the meet shall pass on to the next district in rotation. The placing of the annual District Meet shall be the prerogative of the district director, who shall assume responsibility for its planning and execution and who shall coordinate these activities with the secretary-treasurer. The district director shall be responsible for a detailed report of results and awards to be sent to the secretary-treasurer promptly at the termination of the meet. Annual state meets and special meets shall be placed by the district director at the request of any member and coordinated with the secretary-treasurer. Members requesting such meets shall assume the responsibilities as outlined for district directors if the director is not in attendance.

Article IX - Interpretation

In all cases of dispute arising from interpretation of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Ameraucana Breeders Club, and on all other matters not covered herein, a majority vote of the Board of Directors shall decide the issue. Such decisions shall be declared final.

Article X - Amendments

Any proposal to amend or alter the Constitution and/or Bylaws of the Ameraucana Breeders Club shall be submitted to the president in writing. He or she will in turn submit the proposal to the Board of Directors who will decide by majority vote whether to place the proposal before the membership for a vote. Proposals passed favorably by the Board of Directors shall be included on the ballot with the biennial election of officers to be voted upon by the membership at large. If adopted by a majority of voting members the amendment shall be made effective on January 1st following the election. The new amendment shall be mailed to each member as a supplement to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Club.



Ameraucana Breeders Club Membership

* Charter Members, (F) Family membership, (J) Junior Membership

Jim Adkins	Summersville, WV
Jim Allan	Catoosa, OK
Gary L. Anderson	Missoula, MT
Richard Atwood	Mesa, AZ
Kent Barnes	West Haven, UT
John & Lois Bashaw (F)	La Crescent, MN
Kent Baumgardner	N Fort Meyers, FL
Anne Blehm (J)	Bentley, MI
John W. Blehm	Birch Run, MI
Michael & Debra Bolyard (F)	Greenville, TN
Ken Boyt	Kathleen, GA
David Brank	Weaverville, NC
Teresa Brittnacher Family (F)	Greenleaf, WI
Lulu H. Burrow	Kingstree, SC
Jack Bush	North Yerington, NV
Randal S. Buske	Humbird, WI
Don Cable *	Orangevale, CA
Barbara Campbell	Lake City, TN
Thomas Canda Family (F)	Howard City, MI
Shawn Carter	Lafayette, TN
Ann Charles	Mena, AR
Larry Clionsky (F)	Grantville, PA
Steve Shafer & Beth Collier (F)	Charlotte, TN
Wanda Costello	Emory, TX
Lisa & Gary Cree (F)	Seabeck, WA
Louise Crofts	Cypress Mill, TX
Sol & Karen Cummings (F)	Joplin, MO
Merle Daniels	Morrison, IL
Lisa Dawkins	Highland Home, AL
Paul De Kanek	Mohawk, NY
Jerry DeSmidt	Pulaski, WI
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C. Ron Dillon	Clemson, SC
Susan Dutcher	Apex, NC
Rainer Klock & Zuzan Ehrhardt (F)	Warren, NJ
Frank Elduen	Auburn WA
Mike Ewanciw	Seattle, WA
Stephanie Fedor (J)	Purcellville, VA
Jim Fegan	Champion, MI

John & Anne Foley (F)	Bloomington, IN
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William Gladhill	Frederick, MD
Kathy Gratsch	Cincinnati, OH
Wayne Gritter	New Palestine, IN
Mechelle M. Guidry	Morse, LA
Ronald Hahm	Ixonia, WI
Dee Hadden	Toledo, OR
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Les & Barb Hoover Family (F)	Garaham, WA
Levi Huffman	Kansas City, KS
Jennifer Isbell-Schrader	DeSoto, TX
Shelley & Rob Jackson Family(F)	Dunchurch, ON
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Henry T. Kampbell	Hemingford, NE
Mary Jo Keith	Pleasant Hill, TN
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Ronald Kelly	Ona, VW
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Jane E. Knapp	Charlotte, MI
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Mark & Carolyn Kristof (F)	Kingsley, MI
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Rita Martin	Salinas, CA
Rita & Sean McKee's Fowl Farm (F)	Cincinnati, NY
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Michael Muenks	California, MO
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Dawn Olson Family (F)	Horace, ND

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Johnny Parks
Chari & Brandon Patterson (F)
Gillian Patton
Rebecca Perez (F)
Lyne Peterson
Mary Lou Phelps
Laura Phillips
Caleb Pickard (J)
William R. Plamondon
JM Resberg
Ronald & Maureen Riner (F)
Louis F. Sandersfeld (J)
Robert Sando
Tammy See-Turner
Jerry Segler *
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Gordon W. Sherwood
David C. Six
Bob Smith Family (F)
Greg Slayton
Cara Smith
Paul & Angela Smith Family (F)
Angela Stanley
Amber Stapp (J)
Jeoff Stevens
Carla C. Suiter Family (F)
Christopher Terrian (J)
Vicky Thompson
Cristi Tombari
Neil & Donna Townsend (F)
Jeanne Trent
Darryl Martin & Barbara Trupp (F)
James Tuckwood
Duane Urch
Philip Urrutia
Robert Walchak Family (F)
Mike & Joyce Walker Family (F)
Susie Winder
Stan & Patty Wolf Family (F)
Fred L. Zirstein Jr

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Mt Vernon, OH
Gainesville, GA
Anderson, IN
Fallbrook, CA
Hemet, CA
Elverta, CA
Springfield, MO
Hyrum, UT
Orrville, OH
Dartmouth, MA
Duluth, MN
Horse Cave, KY
Williamsburg, IA
New Madison, OH
Conway, MO
Sparland, IL
Fairfield, OH
Fort Madison, IA
Lewisburg, PA
Lincoln, NE
Jonesboro, AR
Hillrose, CO
Gainesville, TX
Conway, MO
Fordland, MO
Clinton, WI
Scranton, AR
Saginaw, MI
Cedar Springs, MI
Las Vegas, NV
Cochranon, PA
Central Lake, MI
Lakeview , OH
Boscobel, WI
Owatonna, MN
Jerome, ID
Holmen, WI
Shelton, WA
Homedale, ID
Roanoke, TX
Raymondville, MO

Ameraucana Breeders Club Officers

President

Michael K. Gilbert

Secretary/Treasurer

John W. Blehm

Director, North Central District

Teresa Brittnacher

Director, Northeastern District

Larry Elionsky

Director, South Central District

Paul Smith

Director, Southeastern District

Beth Collier

Director Western District

Koralyn Kibbee

Honorary-Lifetime Vice-Presidents

Don Cable & Michael K. Gilbert

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Michael K. Gilbert

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e-mail: ameraucana@aol.com

*"so God created...every winged bird according to its kind,
and God saw that it was good."*

Genesis 1:21



Jeanne Trent (2004)
former Secretary/Treasurer



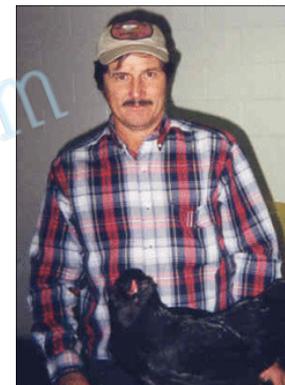
Dave Horman (1987)
former Secretary/Treasurer



Jeanette Frank (2005)
former Secretary/Treasurer
and President



Barbara Campbell (2002)
former Secretary/Treasurer



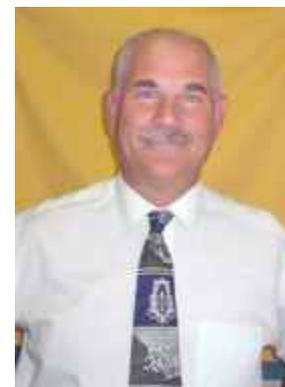
Paul Smith (2002)
South Central Director



Koraly Kibbee (2005)
Western Director



Beth Collier (2001)
Southeastern Director



Larry Clionsky (2005)
Northeastern Director



Teresa Brittnacher (2005)
North Central Director

WHAT IS A POULTRY BREEDER?

By M.K. Gilbert (Revised Sept. 1998)

As applied in the world of exhibition poultry, usage of the term "breeder" seems to have been expanded in recent years to include everyone that raises our feathered friends. Such should not be the case, as it tends to diminish the efforts of those who have exerted themselves to become poultry breeders in the true sense of the word. This is not to discredit the role that fanciers, showmen, and hatcherymen play in our chosen avocation, but, simply stated, the admiration of, propagation, and exhibition of quality poultry do not qualify one to lay a legitimate claim to the title of "breeder." The following are some attributes that, in our opinion, a genuine poultry breeder might possess.

- Possesses a working knowledge of Mendelian genetics - the basic laws of heredity - as applied to the particular species or subspecies he or she is working with.
- Knows the possible genetic makeup(s) of his or her current flock through awareness of the physical and genetic attributes of their forebears. This usually requires good recordkeeping, a system of identifying individual birds, and cognizance of previous mating results.
- Knows and appreciates the difference between genotype & phenotype.
- Has maintained a particular family or line for enough generations to be able to predict, with reasonable accuracy, the end results of given matings - hence, is seldom surprised when recessive traits resurface.
- Has persevered over time to overcome obstacles that could have prevented flock improvements or caused deterioration of its' gene pool.
- Measures progress in terms of achieving goals related to fixation of desirable traits and elimination of undesirable traits - not necessarily related to showroom successes or numbers of awards received.
- Is not overly concerned with various "master breeder" or "master exhibitor" designations conferred by various organizations, realizing these are contingent primarily upon competitive exhibition results . . . knows that successfully hatching, rearing, conditioning, and showing a family of birds does not make one a top breeder, but a top fancier, and that it is possible to be one without being the other.

There were at least a handful of fanciers in recent history who are deserving of "top breeder" status. Certainly people like Graham Oakford (Pastel & other varieties of call ducks), Bill Wulff (Red Pyle Old English), Al Westling (Polish bantams), Jerry Raven (O.E. Game bantams), and others would be included in this group. But there are others, possibly scores of them, who will never achieve much recognition simply because they chose to not show competitively. In their minds, perhaps, the risk of exposing their flocks to life-threatening poultry diseases was deemed to outweigh any possible benefits. Or, they may have other reasons to eschew the show circuit. In our opinion, it requires many years of dedication and experience to become a top poultry breeder; there are no shortcuts. The outward rewards may not be plentiful, so apparently it requires a true love of the hobby to persevere. However, it helps greatly to know and associate with others with which to exchange ideas and information. That is why a breeders' club or association is so very important to many of its' members. A single log doesn't burn very brightly all by itself.

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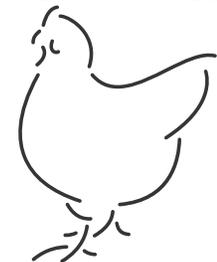
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**Large Fowl
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THE ORIGINS OF THE STANDARD AMERAUCANA VARIETIES

Compiled by Michael J. Muenks in 2005 from ABC Bulletins and ABC Handbooks

The original Ameraucana varieties arose out of what was essentially a compromise to resolve a standard setting conflict among breeders of Araucana in the mid-1970's. The breeders of Araucana that were tailed, muffed and bearded wished to avoid the reproductive problems and lethal genes associated with the rumpless Araucana varieties, and set about organizing the Ameraucana Bantam Club. The founding members developed the birds and the standard for the fowl that is thirty years later known as the Ameraucana. The initial varieties of Ameraucana to have a standard were the bantam white and wheaten varieties. In 1983 the ABA recognized the varieties of buff, brown red, blue wheaten, silver, black and blue. In 1984 the APA recognized the standard for the large fowl and bantam Ameraucana in the eight varieties. The following compilation of information concerning the origins of the Ameraucana is in no way complete, and focuses mainly on the development of the standard bantam varieties. No slight is intended to breeders who are not mentioned or who bred only large fowl, the point of the following is to give a sense of efforts surrounding the standardization of the Ameraucana which began originally with the bantam Ameraucana.

Founding club member Jerry Segler bought a mix of 14 started chicks from Mr. Ralph Brazelton of Axtel, Kansas, in the early 1970's hoping for some brown birds. Mr. Brazelton did much work on what would become the white Ameraucana bantam. The 14 started chicks Mr. Segler bought became the foundation of his flock, and were reported to be very uniform. Over the years Mr. Segler line bred both white, silver, and apparently brown red bantams from this start adding only two white cocks to improve shank color. Mr. Segler destroyed the majority of his silvers when the American Araucana Breeders Association did not include silver in their standard. The next year it was added to their standard and he started again to breed silver with the one hen he had kept. White became the foundation of the other colors Mr. Segler produced because his white line of Ameraucana bantams was genetically recessive white. Mr. Segler produced black by mating a white Ameraucana cock to a black Old English hen. His blue Ameraucana were the by product of mating a white Ameraucana cock to a black Ameraucana hen in an effort to improve the comb and beard of the black Ameraucana he had produced. Rande Buske is also credited with much work on white Ameraucana bantams.

Over time the silver bantam Ameraucana was lost, but in the last few years efforts have begun to produce silver bantams and improve the silver large fowl Ameraucana. John Blehm and Mike Gilbert have largely led the way in the last few years to produce silver bantams, along with Barbara Campbell and a growing number of large fowl supporters who are dedicated to the difficult color of silver. Hopefully the number of good quality silver Ameraucana in both bantam and large fowl rise in the next few years. The side benefit of increased interest in the silver Ameraucana is the use of blue Ameraucana in their production, resulting in the possibility of a new standard

color, the blue silver Ameraucana.

Don Cable reports in a club bulletin from 1980 that the high state of development of the wheaten Ameraucana can be attributed primarily to the work of then and current club president, Mike Gilbert. The bantam buff and blue wheaten varieties carry blood of the original wheaten Ameraucana bantams developed by Mike Gilbert from chicks he received from Marti Hatchery in Missouri and wheaten Old English hens. He created blue wheaten bantams by crossing blue with wheaten, then back to wheaten.

John Fugate and Mike Gilbert started work with the buff Ameraucana bantam by crossing a wheaten Ameraucana bantam cock with bantam buff Orphington pullets in the early 1980's. Around the same time John Blehm started work on buff Ameraucana by crossing a buff Orphington cock on a white Ameraucana hen from Jerry Segler. Self colored plumage is thought by some to be easy to produce, but these dedicated breeders disproved that belief. Black in the tail was an ongoing problem for the buff Ameraucana. The breeders culled heavily over the years. John Blehm also reported using a white Ameraucana cock and large fowl buff Orphington and buff laced Polish to produce buff large fowl Ameraucana. The buff Orphington blood may explain the gentle temperament of the buff Ameraucana.

Wayne Meredith is credited with much of the work surrounding the development of the large fowl Ameraucana. For example he created large fowl wheatens and blue wheatens by crossing wheaten bantams with large Easter Egg fowl.

Early in the history of the club it is mentioned that member Jerry Segler was breeding brown red Ameraucana bantams and he was offering brown reds for sale in the bulletins. In the 1998 version of the ABC Club Handbook, Mike Gilbert reports on his efforts to create brown red Ameraucana large fowl from some birchen type hens that had been produced from an experimental cross between silver and white Ameraucana large fowl. These birchen hens were crossed to an off-colored cock that was obviously pure for gold (s). Among the offspring produced were poorly marked brown red hens. They were mated to a birchen cock to improve breast lacing. A resulting cockerel was mated back to old brown red hens and some recognizable brown red pullets and cockerels were produced.

Mike Gilbert wrote in an article on the progress of the brown red Ameraucana in the 1998 version of the ABC Club Handbook, "The foregoing provides just one example involving a rather simple color pattern. Years ago when other breeds were being utilized to obtain basic color patterns the complexity of the projects were multiplied exponentially. Ameraucana breeding has required a lot of time, effort, and resources; hopefully future generations of fanciers will come to appreciate what is gradually becoming a splendid breed of fowl." One cannot state the sentiment any better. Hopefully current and future breeders of the Ameraucana will recognize the need to be stewards of the work by dedicated breeders that have gone before us, and the future need to recruit, educate, and retain dedicated breeders to secure the future of the Ameraucana.

PRODUCING THE BLACK GOLD VARIETY

By M. K. Gilbert, May 2005

The black gold color variety was originally given the name "golden quail." When a non-member entered bantams under the golden quail name at our recent national meet held at Lucasville, Ohio, with a totally different genotype and phenotype than what some of us had been breeding, it became apparent we needed to re-think the name. We wanted to avoid confusing "golden quail" with the quail variety found in Belgian D'Anvers bantams, so after some discussion we came up with the new monicker. Another change is possible, up until Standard recognition.

The initial cross to produce black gold bantams was a brown-red bantam ameraucana cock over two buff ameraucana females. A single hatch of chicks was produced, and each sex was uniform in color within their respective genders. In any outcross between two different color varieties the dominant genes of each variety will be expressed in the F-1 (first filial) generation. I gave the entire batch, eight chicks in all, to a former member who then renewed his membership in the Ameraucana Breeders Club. He loved the color, personality, and other traits of these little crossbred chickens, so he made two brother/sister matings the following year. We were both amazed (but should not have been) at the wide variation in color patterns that emerged in the F-2 generation. It was everything from black tailed buff to nearly solid black with no real sense of which males matched up with which females from a genetic standpoint. Several more years of this "hit or miss" method of breeding passed by with little progress being made toward sorting out a pattern that would be true breeding.

Then about five years ago I was given a setting of eggs which were hatched using artificial incubation. Among the hatchlings was one pullet that was strikingly attractive (and I do realize that beauty is in the eye of the beholder). She was basically black with dark gold lacing and shafting throughout the breast and body - even extending somewhat into the tail area. So a cockerel from the same hatch with the least amount of ameraucana faults was selected for a single pair mating the following year. Their offspring did vary somewhat in color but probably not as much as in the past. The following year the best cockerel was kept to mate back to his mother. From that mating even more uniformity was achieved. In retrospect, knowing what is known now, I should have mated that first black gold female with a brown red male, as the progress would have been much more rapid.

By the time I got that first setting of eggs, dark brown eyes were predominant (ameraucana eye color should be reddish bay), hooked upper mandibles were prevalent, and white usually occurred in the earlobes. These faults are being bred out, and some good progress in all

these areas have been made.

Genetically, the black gold is an over colored and modified brown-red. Think of the brown-red color pattern. Then soften the orange color of the ameraucana brown red to a bright straw or orange-gold. Extend the lacing which is only found on the upper half of the breast in brown-reds over the entire front of both sexes as well as the body, back, wings, and cushion of the females. Add to the lacing a shaft of gold color down the center of each feather. Now extend the lacing and shafting to the tail - as much of it as possible. The area between the base of the male hackle and its back can be spectacular with black feathers heavily laced and shafted. Imagine also a thin lacing and shafting in the male tail coverts and sickle feathers - not just the two mail sickles, but all of them. Bred to its ultimate goal the black gold is a beautiful variety, and no other breed has anything like it.

The fuzzy down of a black gold chick is dull black, with more or less gold about the eyes and front part of the head. It's not too unlike the chick down of buff columbian, only darker and resulting from very different genetics. Chicks tend to be small but strong and compete well with chicks that are larger in size.

As of May, 2005, I was aware of only a handful of ABC members working with the black gold variety. It will take at least five breeders who can certify they have raised them for at least five years, and who are willing to participate in qualifying meets, before we can request they be admitted to the official standards of the American Bantam Association and the American Poultry Association. Why not consider raising a few to become a much-needed part of the qualifying process?

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EXPLANATION OF ABC MEET POLICY

Current policy as set by the Board of Directors allows for ABC meet awards at two tiers or levels. At least three exhibitors must show in competition to qualify for rosettes or other club-sponsored awards. At the first level an award is earned for best Ameraucana and an award is earned for reserve Ameraucana. Large fowl and bantams may compete in order to qualify. If there are only three or four exhibitors of Ameraucanas at a club meet, BB and RB Large Fowl and BB and RB Bantams will be judged against each other to determine Champion and Reserve Champion Ameraucanas for ABC award purposes.

At the second level, if five or more exhibitors show in competition, awards may be earned for Best of Breed & Reserve of Breed large fowl and also for Best of Breed & Reserve of Breed bantam, for a total of four awards. However, in order for any member to receive a club award, he or she must compete against at least two other exhibitors. Nonmembers are not eligible for club awards. If members holding a "family" membership enter a meet as individuals, they may compete against each other for purposes of club awards.

The site of the annual National Meet is selected by the ABC Board of Directors. Any member may solicit a bid from any show secretary and forward it to an ABC officer for consideration, preferably to his or her district director. All other meets (district, state, and special) are placed by the appropriate district director at shows within his or her district. The secretary will be promptly notified by the director of all meets scheduled. Meets will only be placed by a district director if a member in his or her district requests a meet for a specific show in time for the distribution of information via the ABC quarterly Bulletin prior to the entry deadline for that show. For planning purposes, members need to know well in advance when and where meets are placed. Directors, as a general rule of thumb, should only place meets where it is reasonably expected that three or more members will show.

In the unlikely event a member is refused placement of a meet by his or her District Director, the director shall provide a satisfactory explanation to the member. If the member is not satisfied, he or she then may appeal the decision in writing to the ABC Secretary, who shall poll the Board of Directors. The director will have an opportunity to defend his or her decision to the entire Board; a simple majority vote of the Board of Directors shall be final in any such dispute.

AMERAUCANA BREEDERS CLUB AWARDS

WITH 3 OR 4 EXHIBITORS...

CHAMPION AMERAUCANAROSETTE
RESERVE CHAMPION AMERAUCANA.....ROSETTE

WITH 5 OR MORE EXHIBITORS...

BEST OF BREED BANTAMROSETTE
RESERVE OF BREED BANTAM.....ROSETTE
BEST OF BREED LARGE FOWL.....ROSETTE
RESERVE OF BREED LARGE FOWL.....ROSETTE

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

By Don Cable, June 2005

These past few years I have moved into poultry preservation. This activity has provided another perspective when considering the Ameraucana breed, its current status, and its long term potential for the future. I will not bore you with the breed's troubled past as this has been well documented. It is enough to say that the breed is secure, even thriving at present, and its future unlimited.

I am proud of the modest contribution that I have made in developing the Ameraucana bantam, but must confess virtually no participation in bringing the large fowl Ameraucana to its present high quality and widespread distribution. While I served as a board member of the ABC I was so involved with the bantam that the rapid development and growth of the large fowl took place right under my nose, and its present day popularity came as something of a revelation to me even now.

When the APA finally accepted the Ameraucana breed it was the bantam that we had hoped to have recognized, and it came as something of a pleasant surprise when all eight varieties of the large fowl were granted recognition at the same time. We had earlier received acceptance of the Ameraucana bantam by the ABA, so that we reversed the usual process wherein the large fowl be developed first to be followed, sometimes as much as years later, by a bantam fowl of the breed. I suspect that this reversal may be unique among poultry breeds.

Every couple of years the SPPA (Society for the Preservation of Poultry Antiquities) issues a Breeders Directory which is a comprehensive list of its membership, breeds kept and/or available, and the current number of fanciers working with the breeds listed. While limited to only current members, some 550 plus in number, it provides a perspective on the overall scope of breeds and their current status, including distribution. This is critical in an attempt to pinpoint breeds in trouble numerically and to form a plan to rescue them from extinction. If you think this is not happening, try to find the Lamona. This breed has disappeared within the lifetime of every adult reading this. Keeping in mind the limitation of the list compiled by the SPPA with its relationship to the fancy at large, the Ameraucana is doing very well among preservation-minded keepers of poultry within the membership of the SPPA.

In terms of breed popularity the Ameraucana places fourth, tied with Javas and Leghorns. This takes on more meaning when one finds the Ameraucana, at least among SPPA members, is more popular than Reds, tied with Hamburgs at seventh. They are followed by Giants, Rocks, and a variety of both popular and rare breeds as expected. A population census from Winter, 2004, indicated that the number of Ameraucanas tallied

placed the breed in numbers kept at seventh, again ahead of such breeds as Reds, Wyandottes, and Brahmas, as well as a number of other breeds. Again, these numbers must be taken as a one time glimpse of what breeds are kept by what is admittedly a narrow cross section of the poultry fancy at large, but generally speaks well for the status of the Ameraucana breed across the nation at the present. Perhaps the most telling information in the numbers above are the status in popularity and numbers kept by preservation-minded fanciers, not necessarily ABC members.

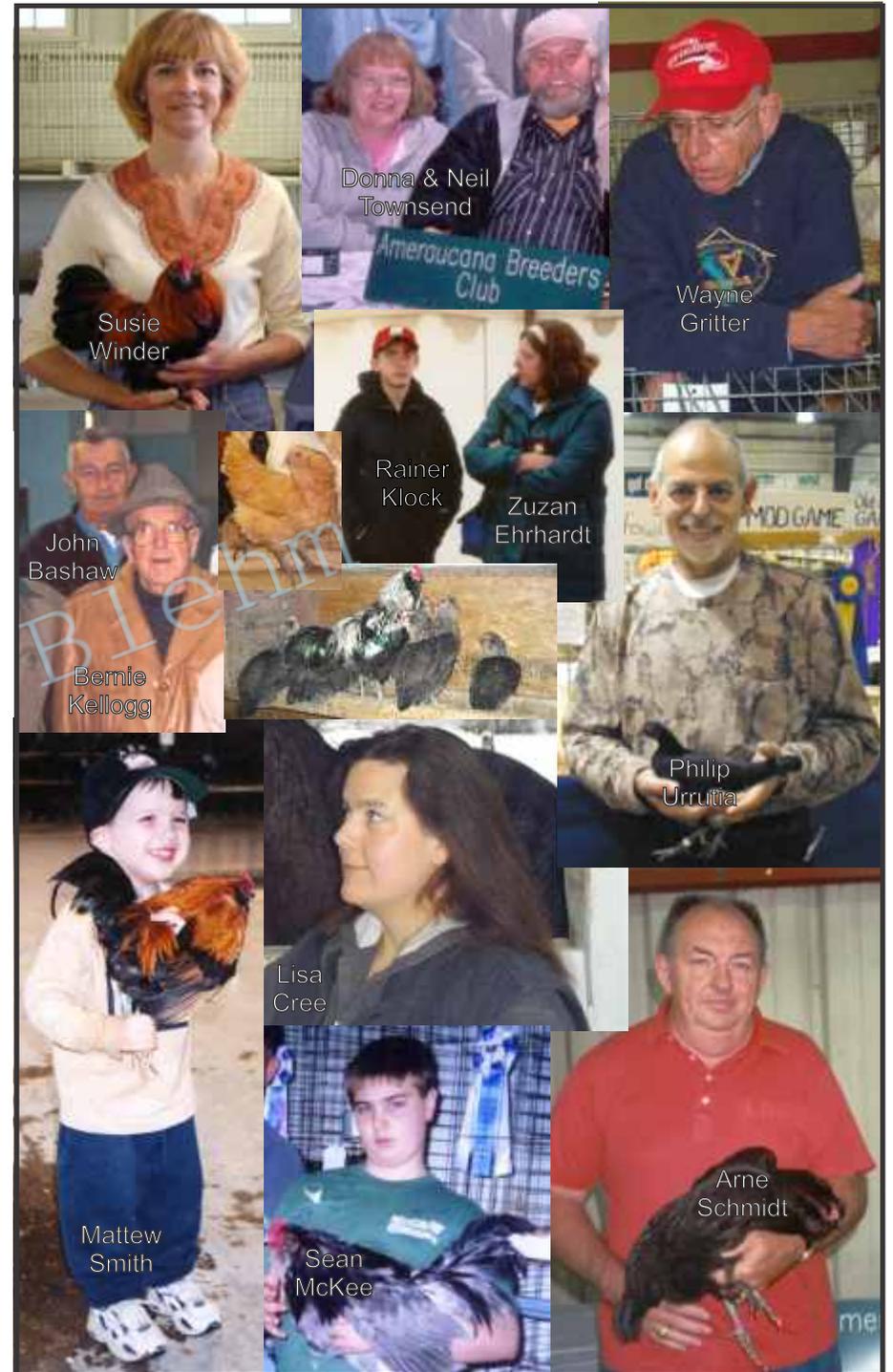
Many breeds have had their place in the sun. Some remain popular over the long run while others rise and fall due to a number of different and changing circumstances. Those of you that exhibit your birds, especially over a long period of time, will have experienced this phenomenon. Most often popularity goes to a breed with staying qualities such as natural charm and is frequently led by a half dozen or more outstanding breeders. These folks are consistently on or near the top for breed champion and garner the awards, the prestige, and the ink. Don't think for a minute that the breed these people are winning with goes unnoticed, as the breeder and the breed go hand in hand. If an outstanding breeder dies or gives up his stock, the birds are frequently distributed among lesser breeders whose lack of skill is telling so that the light dims on the breed, and unless the torch is picked up the limelight passes to another skillful breeder in another breed.

What is essential for staying power is a breed with charm; one that is immediately appealing, followed by a strong breed club to sustain interest. The Ameraucana, like any other breed, will rise or fall on it's own merits. One of the important factors in Ameraucana appeal is the blue egg. The recent effort to improve and reward improved egg color does the breed an important service. It should be the concern of breeders at all skill levels and an important class in ABC Meets at all levels. Making the most of what unique traits a breed possesses is not only common sense, it may well be an essential factor in helping maintain the breed in generations to come.

RECOGNIZED STANDARD VARIETIES OF AMERAUCAANA BANTAMS & LARGE FOWL

- ◆ Black
- ◆ Blue
- ◆ Blue Wheaten
- ◆ Brown Red
- ◆ Buff
- ◆ Silver
- ◆ Wheaten
- ◆ White

The official breed and variety descriptions are found in the American Bantam Association's BANTAM STANDARD & the American Poultry Association's AMERICAN STANDARD OF PERFECTION.



THE STATUS OF THE AMERAUCANA BREED:
A MISSOURIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Michael J. Muenks, 2005

The status of the Ameraucana breed varies by variety. In general for both the large fowl and the bantam Ameraucana the strongest varieties are black, blue, white, wheaten, and blue wheaten and the varieties in greatest need of a larger number of breeders to work with them are buff, brown red, and silver.

The black and blue varieties of Ameraucana are generally of good type and color for both the large fowl and bantam. For the large fowl, work in general focuses on egg shell color, tightening the comb to a good pea comb, and maintaining and improving type in general. The large fowl black and blue Ameraucana show the long-term dedication of many breeders. Breeders must watch that the comb of the male does not become overly large, and that the comb is a true pea comb. Breeders need to remember that a pea comb is divided into three distinct rows of small points. Some Ameraucana retain remnants of outcrosses to other breeds by having combs that are not truly a pea comb. Combs can be quickly improved by breeding a weak combed bird to a bird with a well formed comb.

The theory of balancing strengths works well in improving combs and type. This is called Compensation Mating. A breeder must work to retain a dual purpose type in the large fowl and bantam Ameraucana; birds that are neither light nor heavy in type.

The black and blue bantam Ameraucana are strong as varieties. The dedication of many breeders shows with outstanding black and blue bantams being bred and shown. The general area of improvement needed for black and blue bantams are in egg shell color and in lobe color which should be clearly red according to the standard. The genetics of the black and blue colors allows for the simultaneous improvement of type for both a black and a blue line of birds. Breeders need to remember that the continual use of a black x blue mating may result in the degradation of the lacing of the blue variety and the deterioration of the color intensity of the black variety. Breeders should not be discouraged from using a black x blue mating, only be aware of the potential problems which may occur over time. To improve the lacing on the blue variety one needs to select and breed for it among the blue. It needs to be noted that it is possible for the black variety to carry the lacing factor and actually improve the lacing in the blue variety if the black has been crossed to a line of blue with an established lacing factor. When purchasing stock it may be worth asking the breeder if the birds come from a flock with a history of lacing and the quality of the lacing among the birds.

The white Ameraucana large fowl and bantam are strong as a variety and the work needed with the white is very similar to the black and blue varieties. White large fowl are somewhat rare, but generally of good quality. High quality white Ameraucana bantams are quite easy to locate due to the outstanding work of several Ameraucana breeders. Successful crosses with black or blue may be used to improve type, egg shell color, and lobe coloring if quality white stock is not readily available. One needs to watch carefully that white bantams do not become too large. Some crosses of white to blue or black will introduce an autosomal red factor to the blue and black offspring of the cross; however the white offspring of crosses to black or blue generally do not show any red and will be very nice whites. It may be unwise to use the black or blue offspring from such a cross for birds that are intended to be a blue or black line, because the autosomal red factor will need to be eliminated from the line if it is present, causing much frustration to the efforts of the breeder. The reason some white Ameraucana carry the red genetic factor, while others do not, is the different origins of the particular lines of white Ameraucana large fowl and bantams. To improve lobe color a breeder must select breeders that have the least amount of white in the lobe. For pullets and hens the lobe color may be light pink or skin color if the bird has extremely small or no wattles and ear lobes as seen in some specimens. A slight blue tint to the female lobes generally indicates a bird carrying a factor for exceptional egg shell color and is not a disqualification when showing. Breeders need to watch that blue tinting to the lobes is kept to a minimal amount. The lobe color for cockerels and cocks is to be red.

As with the black and blue varieties of Ameraucana, the wheaten and blue wheaten varieties of Ameraucana benefit from the genetics of the black and blue colors and the improvements that may be made by crossing a wheaten with a blue wheaten. The Ameraucana characteristics of wheaten and blue wheaten Ameraucana are quite well established, and the large fowl and bantam wheaten and blue wheaten Ameraucana are widespread among breeders. The ongoing focus for the wheaten and blue wheaten Ameraucana is the maintenance of type, the improvement of egg shell color, lobe color, blue breast feather lacing in the blue wheaten cocks, and creamy wheaten hens. Work needs to be done to continue the elimination of black/blue striping or ticking from the hackles of the female and male wheaten and blue wheaten birds. To eliminate black from the hackle of wheaten and blue wheaten one needs to breed cocks with the cleanest hackle feathers. Concerns have been expressed that the wheaten and blue wheaten large fowl are too closely related and may be experiencing the symptoms of inbreeding depression. The problems are probably originating in birds who have been unknowingly sibling mated or inbred for too many generations. The introduction of a wheaten or blue wheaten cockerel or cock from a different flock than the

originating flock should allow needed genetic variability if the breeder is concerned that the flock may be too closely related. The lesson learned from this experience is to keep good records and to purchase stock from separate flocks or lines when starting with a variety of Ameraucana, or to ask the questions necessary to inform the buyer about the genetics of the birds being purchased. It is good to check with the owner of the birds being purchased to establish how closely related they are. Some breeders keep several lines of each variety and may be able to provide the genetic variability required to help a flock regain its vitality. When a breeder is not able to find a wheaten or blue wheaten to cross with his birds to provide needed genetic variability a cross to buff is genetically advantageous. Such a cross is not for the faint of heart, for several generations will be needed to clear up any feather color/pattern issues and will involve line breeding and possibly inbreeding, but if the goal is genetic variability a cross to another variety of Ameraucana will work.

The buff variety of Ameraucana has a very good start in the bantam size, but is struggling in the large fowl. The bantam buff Ameraucana has established itself as an outstanding show bird and probably the best natured of the Ameraucana's in the author's opinion. While small in population, the buff bantam Ameraucana has a growing following and an increasing number of breeders are building on the hard work of founders of this most attractive variety of Ameraucana bantam. In contrast the large fowl buff Ameraucana struggles with type and Ameraucana character, although a growing number of breeders are working with the limited large fowl buff population. Much of the work with the large fowl buff is focused on establishing type.

At this point an outcross to another breed is not recommended when an unrelated bird of the correct variety of Ameraucana cannot be located; instead the recommendation is for the breeder to cross to another variety of Ameraucana. When working among the large fowl buff a cross to white, wheaten, or blue wheaten Ameraucana is the general recommended cross. The extreme of this situation is to cross large fowl to the bantam for new blood and should only be tried by experienced breeders who have calculated the possible risks, because multiple generations are required to regain the size of the large fowl and in some instances appropriate size may never be regained.

The brown red variety of Ameraucana is in much the same state as the buff variety of Ameraucana. The bantam is established and growing in numbers due to a number of dedicated breeders and is another of the bantam varieties with an engaging personality. The brown red bantam has a tendency to have an earlobe that is white and the red earlobe needs to be bred for. Sound breast lacing is sometimes an issue and cleanly laced birds need to be bred for. The breast lacing pattern for the male and for the female should be a fine lacing of orange that "extends around the

visible perimeter of each upper breast feather. The lower breast should be solid black." (Gilbert, 1998) Mating over-laced birds to under-laced birds is the best way to address the issue of lacing and then line breeding to establish a line of brown red Ameraucana with excellent breast lacing. One needs to avoid shafting on the breast and hackles of the brown red. Attention needs to be paid to the color of the head and hackle feather lacing. A rich deep orange is preferred over lighter shades of yellow and orange for the hackle color for brown red Ameraucana. The few large fowl brown red in existence need work on breast lacing, lacing color, and type. To increase the numbers of large fowl brown red Ameraucana, the preferred method is to cross to another large fowl Ameraucana variety and line breed for color and type. A blue or black bird with gold in the hackle would be ideal to cross to, but white would also work for the cross. The brown red Ameraucana is the only recognized Ameraucana variety that definitely has the E^R (birchen) gene at the e-locus. It should be noted that some whites or blacks may have the E^R (birchen) gene at the e-locus, but one cannot tell from their appearance.

The silver Ameraucana is a most beautiful bird and in extremely limited numbers in both large fowl and bantam. Silver is the most difficult of the patterns and colors to work with because it is influenced by so many other genetic factors. From the beginning of the Ameraucana Breeders Club there has been discussion and documentation of work around silver Ameraucana bantam and large fowl. For various reasons the variety has never established itself, although its potential is great in the show room and in the poultry yard. As with the buff large fowl and brown red large fowl, the silver bantam and large fowl Ameraucana need dedicated breeders to work cooperatively together to improve and establish a viable population. The characteristics of the silver Ameraucana that need continued work are red ear lobes, a pea comb, and correct color and pattern. The male silver must have a pure black breast without lacing or sootiness and each hackle and saddle feather needs to be shafted with black. The female silver needs to have fine even stippling and as little shafting as possible on a bluish grey feather. The breast color of the female silver Ameraucana needs to be an even color of salmon with as little shafting as possible. Beware that the silver variety is not for the faint hearted, and a program to produce silvers is a challenge to even the most dedicated breeder.

To begin a program of silver Ameraucana find the best stock possible. For this example it is assumed that a large fowl silver cock was available. The following breeding suggestions may be applied to other colors and situations. Mate the large fowl silver cock with blue (black, or white may be used) large fowl and bantam hens of excellent type. Hatch as many chicks as possible, 100 or more, and from the offspring keep the best pullets and cockerels for the next generation of breeding. Make sure

to keep separate the offspring from the large fowl cross and the bantam cross for in the next generation one will establish both the large fowl and bantam lines for the silver Ameraucana.

To establish the large fowl line mate the best pullets from the first generation to the founding silver large fowl cock and hatch as many chicks as possible. From the second generation select the best pullets and once again use the founding silver large fowl cock if possible or the best second generation cockerel over the best of the second generation pullets. Continue line breeding each generation by selecting the best pullets from each generation to mate back to the original cock.

To establish a bantam line of silvers from the original mating of the large fowl cock to the blue (black or white may be used) bantam hens one needs to select the best type and smallest cockerel(s) and pullets. Try to keep cockerels and pullets that have good breast color, limited red on the wings, a bantam look to them, and a size close to that of a bantam. A pullet that is of good color should not be eliminated at this point just because she is somewhat large, instead use her with a smaller cockerel to balance the sizes. From the next generation of offspring begin to keep several pens or lines of silver bantams to cross back together in the future. Good records need to be kept so that several distinct lines can be kept and crossed together as needed. When a breeder gets to the point that the silver bantams are relatively stable it is good to share with other breeders so that the population continues to grow and become more genetically diverse. As a side project to the ongoing development of the silver large fowl and bantam Ameraucana, blue silver Ameraucana could be developed at the same time and provide genetic diversity when needed.

The latest variety of Ameraucana to be proposed is tentatively named black gold. The black gold has gained a following and the bantam is currently making gains in development of the pattern and color. The general description of black gold is for each feather of the bird to be black, but laced and shafted with a golden straw color. Work needs to continue in the stabilization of the correct feather color in the bantam Ameraucana. At this time only cursory work has been done in making the correct crosses to establish large fowl black gold. The main obstacle in creating large fowl black gold is the lack of brown red and buff large fowl to make the initial crosses necessary to begin to develop the black gold large fowl Ameraucana.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Post your questions and comments about Ameraucana chickens and the Ameraucana Breeders Club on the ABC Forum -

www.ameraucana.org/abcforum

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PLANNING TO SHOW? Cutting Through The Jargon

By M. K. Gilbert, June 2005

The first level of competition at a poultry show is known as a "class." The term class has another meaning also, as we will see later in this article. At the first level a class is comprised of all the entries in one particular breed, variety, sex, AND age group. An example would be the "bantam white Ameraucana cockerels" class. The breed is bantam Ameraucana, the variety is white, and the age and sex is designated by the term cockerel. The four possible classes within each variety are as follows.

- ♦ Cocks (C) males over one year of age or hatched prior to January 1st
 - ♦ Hens (H) females over one year of age or hatched prior to January 1st
 - ♦ Cockerels (K) males under one year of age or hatched after January 1st
 - ♦ Pullets (P) females under one year of age or hatched after January 1st
- Each class is placed by a judge according to the relative merits of the individual entries, i.e., 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. Oftentimes only the top three to five birds in a class are placed in order to save time depending on individual show management policies.

The best entries of each class then compete for BV (best of variety) and RV (reserve of variety), or sometimes BOV (best opposite sex of variety). When the latter award is chosen the BOV is the top bird of the opposite gender from the BV winner. For example if a pullet wins BV, the BOV must be a cock or a cockerel.

Then all the variety winners within a breed compete for BB (best of breed) and RB (reserve of breed) or sometimes BOB (best opposite sex of breed). All eight recognized varieties of Ameraucanas, if all eight are represented, compete for BB and RB or BOB. Varieties not recognized by the official printed standards of the American Poultry Association and/or the American Bantam Association may be placed in a group called AOV (any other variety). For example, Ameraucana varieties in the making such as black gold, splash, blue silver, etc. would be AOV's and as such could do no better than BB. They would not be eligible to compete at the higher levels.

Besides individual entries, trios and displays are also often judged. A trio consists of a male and two females, all of the same age group. A trio entry consisting of a cock and two hens is referred to as an "old trio," while one consisting of a cockerel and two pullets is called a "young trio." Individual trio birds can and often do win BV, RV, BB, or RB. So they are really competing as a group and as individuals all at the same time.

A display consists of a group of entries all of the same variety. Show rules will vary, but usually the requirement for a display is a cock, a hen, a cockerel, a pullet, and either an old trio or a young trio for a total of seven birds. Display points are won on a mathematical basis according

to the number of entries in each class, and the computation of display points is beyond the scope of this short article.

The individual winners at the breed level go on to compete at the division or "class" level. Here the term "class" means a major group of breeds. For Ameraucanas, that means bantams compete in the AOCCL (any other comb clean legged) class. At this level they will compete with such breeds as bantam Cornish, Sumatras, Buckeyes, Polish, Araucanas, and a number of others. Other bantam classes at this level include SCCL (single comb clean legged), RCCL (rose comb clean legged), Feather Legged, and a couple of others, including bantam ducks.

What may be confusing at first to beginners is that the large fowl classes at this level are completely different than the bantams. In large fowl, the Ameraucanas are in the Miscellaneous Class, which is almost always grouped with several other classes into something called the "AOSB" division or class. AOSB stands for All Other Standard Breeds. Other large fowl classes at this level may include English, Mediterranean, Asiatic, American, and Continental, in addition to AOSB.

When the champion and reserve champion division winners have been selected they go on to compete for the next highest level of awards attainable at the show. Generally those levels are champion and reserve champion bantam and champion and reserve champion large fowl. Sometimes they have to go through an intermediate step first, such as champion and reserve champion bantam chicken or champion and reserve champion land fowl. Often a "supreme champion" and "reserve supreme champion" of show are selected as the final step with all bantams, large fowl, waterfowl, turkeys, and guineas competing. It is entirely possible, though rare, that the top two birds in one class at the lowest level of competition go on to win best and reserve of show. For example I once saw the BV single comb light brown leghorn hen win best of show, and the second place single comb light brown leghorn hen win reserve of show. The owner of both these hens went home mighty happy that day!

Sometimes the coop tag of an entry is marked "Disq" which means the bird was eliminated from all competition at the show. Usually an explanation is given. "Wg" could mean slipped wing, angel wing, split wing, etc. Or D.F. could mean duck footed, a condition in which the rear toe curls around and points forward instead of backwards as it should. Stubs are tiny feathers or bits of down on the legs or between the toes of clean legged breeds. Other common disqualifications are foreign plumage color or leg (shank) color, side sprigs on single combs, inverted points or spikes on rose comb or pea comb breeds, wrong earlobe color, external parasites or disease, or entry in the wrong class.

There are also disqualifications specific to certain breeds. For example missing muffs or the presence of ear tufts in an Ameraucana entry should disqualify it. Judges are human, however, and can make

mistakes. Don't be afraid to talk to the judge, but wait until his work is completed as a matter of courtesy.

If a person intends to show in competition on a regular basis he or she should obtain a copy of the American Poultry Association's (APA) Standard of Perfection or the American Bantam Association's (ABA) Bantam Standard. These books should be studied diligently, as they contain a wealth of information both in text and in picture form. Talking with other exhibitors can be very helpful too. Good luck and have fun!

COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

C = Cock, H = Hen, K = Cockerel, P = Pullet
LF = Large Fowl

BV = Best of Variety, RV = Reserve of Variety

BB = Best of Breed, RB = Reserve of Breed

AOV = Any Other Variety,

AOCCL = Any Other Comb Clean Legged (Bantams)

AOSB = All Other Standard Breeds (Large Fowl)

ABC = Ameraucana Breeders Club

ABA = American Bantam Association

APA = American Poultry Association

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President and first lady, Mike & Mary Gilbert
at the 2002 ABC National Meet, in Columbus, Ohio.



Wheaten Bantams ~ Susie Winder, ID



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former Secretary/Treasurer
and President



Michael Muenks (2005)
ABC Member and
Contributing Author



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Silver Large Fowl ~ Barbara Campbell, TN

WHERE DID THE BLUE EGG COME FROM AND HOW CAN I IMPROVE IT?

Compiled and Edited by Michael Muenks, 2005
from articles written for the ABC Handbooks and Bulletins
By Don Cable, Mike Gilbert, and John Fugate

"William O. Cawley's position paper, "Poultrydom's Mystery Chicken the Araucana", sets the facts out rather succinctly regarding the history of the breed. It was found that there were actually three types of Chilean chickens. First, there was the common fowl which did not differ physically from European breeds but which was frequently found to lay blue eggs. Secondly, the rumpless chicken (Collonca), which nearly always laid blue eggs, and finally the Quetero, with ear tufts and normal body shape which rarely laid blue eggs.

Investigation found that seldom if ever did all three traits (rumpless, tufts, and blue eggs), appear in an individual native bird, and the appearance of these three traits in the same individual was a very abnormal condition. The Araucana recognized by the American Poultry Association (APA): tufted, rumpless, and laying a blue egg was the product of years of selective breeding.

What then of the bearded, muffed, and tailed Araucana? Is it possible that this could be the native fowl of Chile which did not differ physically from European breeds, but was frequently found to lay blue eggs . . . Dorian Roxburgh, Secretary of the British Araucana Club, reports that a Chilean nitrate ship foundered off the coast of Scotland in the thirties and descendants of bearded and muffed, tailed Araucanas that were aboard are now found scattered among the Inner Hebrides. Bearded, muffed, and tailed Araucanas became the principal variety bred in the British Isles, and a bantam Araucana with beard, muffs, and tail was created by George Malcolm of Scotland." (Cable, 1984)

The supposition that the Ameraucana is a "new" breed based on crosses may be called into question when one looks at the history of South American fowl and the information from the British Araucana Club regarding the British Araucana. The fowl of South America are diverse in type and still today one can observe birds with varying shades of the standardized Ameraucana characteristics.

The basic genetics of egg color is fairly straight forward, and a detailed explanation of the genetics of shell color may be found at the following website:
http://marsa_sellers.tripod.com/geneticspages/page0.html. The cross of a blue egg layer with a brown egg layer will produce a hen that lays an olive/green shaded egg. The cross of a white egg layer with a blue egg layer will produce a hen that lays a light blue egg. The blue egg shell color of the Ameraucana penetrates the entire shell, and is not an

outer"coating" on the egg as the color of a brown egg is. Nothing can be gained for the Ameraucana breed by outcrosses to other breeds of chickens to improve egg shell coloring. One must really concentrate on improvement of the egg shell color from within the breed.

The Ameraucana standard calls for a blue egg shell with the majority of Ameraucana bantams laying a light sky blue egg and the majority of large fowl Ameraucana's laying an egg of turquoise blue shell color or a very light blue shell. The color of the egg should be even and the shell of the eggs should be strong.

The best approach to improving egg shell color is to hatch from only the best colored eggs. To truly improve egg shell color one should keep and line breed from cocks and hens that have hatched from exceptionally colored eggs. Continuing to breed the cock to his daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters will greatly improve the shell color of the line. When replacing the cock in the breeding pen, once again select a cock of the best type and color that has hatched from the best colored egg possible. It is possible to line breed for color, type, and egg shell color simultaneously, which is the surest way to quick improvement of all aspects of the Ameraucana as a breed.

An alternative to line breeding is a concept referred to as "flock mating" which allows for a broader genetic base to the improvements in a flock and can be sustained long term. An early Ameraucana Breeders Club (ABC) member, John Fugate, wrote of a family flock of Dominiques that had no new blood introduced for 80+ years at the time of his article, which had been flock mated. The basic idea is to hatch from eggs produced at a time of low production so that one is hatching eggs only from the best producing hens. For Ameraucanas the breeder would want to additionally select only the best colored eggs to hatch. From the offspring produced, one would keep only birds of the best type to add to the flock. Over time production, egg shell color, and type would be improving and the genetic diversity of the flock would be maintained. Other breeding schemes referred to in the Breeders Toolbox may also be used to improve egg shell color.

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VIEWS ON OUTCROSSING

By M. K. Gilbert, May 2005

It is common knowledge that various breeds of chickens and bantams were originally crossed with muffed & bearded, tailed, colored egg chickens and bantams to produce the purebred varieties of Ameraucanas we have today. What may not be generally understood, however, is that the road to desired uniformity of most varieties was often traveled by way of trial and error. If one idea did not work out to accomplish a certain goal something else was tried. And each time a different breed was introduced into a bloodline it brought with it a number of undesirable characteristics which then had to be bred back out over time. Since so few breeders participated in making the Ameraucana breed it has taken much longer to achieve "near perfection" than anyone could have anticipated.

The primary attribute the founders of the breed possessed in common was that of perseverance. They committed to long term goals and persisted. Knowledge of basic chicken genetics, a sense of camaraderie, enthusiasm, and just plain luck all played a part, but "sticktoitiveness" was without a doubt the essential ingredient in the mix.

New varieties are not the product of one or two or three breeding seasons. Oh, the occasional single ideal specimen may not be that difficult to produce, but we are concerned here with lineages that reproduce high quality progeny year after year for an indefinite period of time. That requires a real commitment and may become a project that lasts a lifetime, or it can seem that way if the breeder becomes impatient for results.

Let's take buff bantams as an example. Many years ago one man started out by crossing buff Orpington bantams with wheaten Ameraucana bantams. After a year or two he became discouraged and moved on. Another breeder crossed buff Orpington bantams with white Ameraucana bantams, raised many hundreds of culls over the years, but finally ended up with a respectable line of buff Ameraucana bantams. Another fellow took the long route. He started out by crossing a buff Brahma female with a buff Orpington male, then crossed their offspring with wheaten bantams. Eventually buff Wyandotte blood was used to obtain better buff color, and that idea panned out. Eventually breeder number two and breeder number three collaborated to combine their two lines, and eventually both lines improved even more. Today we have very respectable, showable buff Ameraucana bantams because these two breeders worked long, hard, and eventually together.

During the breeding-up process for many varieties a lot of traits had to be removed to meet Ameraucana standard requirements. Single combs, rose combs, feathered shanks, white shanks, willow shanks, split

wings, crossed beaks, brown/green egg color, etc., etc., all had to be dealt with. Not to mention various outbreaks of diseases from time to time.

Someone may ask, "So what? What does that have to do with the here and now?" We would respond to such a reaction by reminding the skeptic of the oft repeated phrase, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." To expound, as each variety is refined the selection process will naturally result in an ever shrinking gene pool. In time this will result in too-close line breeding and inbreeding. Eventually productivity, fertility, and hatchability will suffer; outcrossing will become necessary to restore long term viability of the variety. Inbreeding depression has already occurred in some cases.

As one who has "been there and done that" I would strongly advise breeders to consider out crossing only from within the Ameraucana breed itself instead of going to outside breeds for help. Doing so will require much less time and effort and will yield much more satisfactory results, but anyone with masochistic tendencies should ignore this advice.

Even within the breed outcrosses to other varieties should be carefully considered. Contrary to one old-timer's advice recessive white is not usually a good choice because it is impossible to know in advance what color-genes the white might be covering up. And who wants recessive whites reoccurring in a colored variety generation after generation after all? Instead the breeder should try to match up varieties to cross that at least have the same primary genes in common at the e-locus. The e-locus genes are relatively few in number and often control the expression and/or interaction of lesser color producing genes. Rather than go into a lot of boring detail, we will list here the current Ameraucana varieties with their corresponding e-locus genes and their symbols.

Silver	e+	(wild type)
Wheaten	eW	(wheaten)
Blue-wheaten	eW	(wheaten)
Buff	eW	(wheaten)
Black	E	(extended black - normally)
Blue	E	(extended black - normally)
Brown-red	E ^ R	(birchen)
Black-gold	E ^ R	(birchen)
White (recessive) ?		(could be any of the above or even others)

Now let's explore a practical example. Say certain A.B.C. members have complained their particular buff bantams are not very fertile and perhaps are not great layers either. Both these symptoms are signs of inbreeding depression. What to do? Unless another line of buffs can be obtained (large or bantam would do) an outcross to another variety would appear to be the best solution. But which variety? According to the chart above, the best choices would be either wheaten or blue-wheaten. I would personally favor wheaten because the dominant blue

(Bl) gene found in blue-wheatens might cause a fading or lack of intensity in buff color. We have observed that blue-wheaten male hackles are lighter in color than those of wheatens. And blue wheaten females are generally lighter in color than their wheaten counterparts.

Assuming a fertile buff male is available a wheaten female or females should be selected with as little as possible black occurring in wings and tail feathers. These females should be ideal for type, egg color and shape, have bay eye color, and be as productive as possible. Make sure they are from a line that does not throw the occasional willow shank color as some lines of wheatens are prone to do. It would not be wise to add yet another fault to the buffs while attempting to correct another.

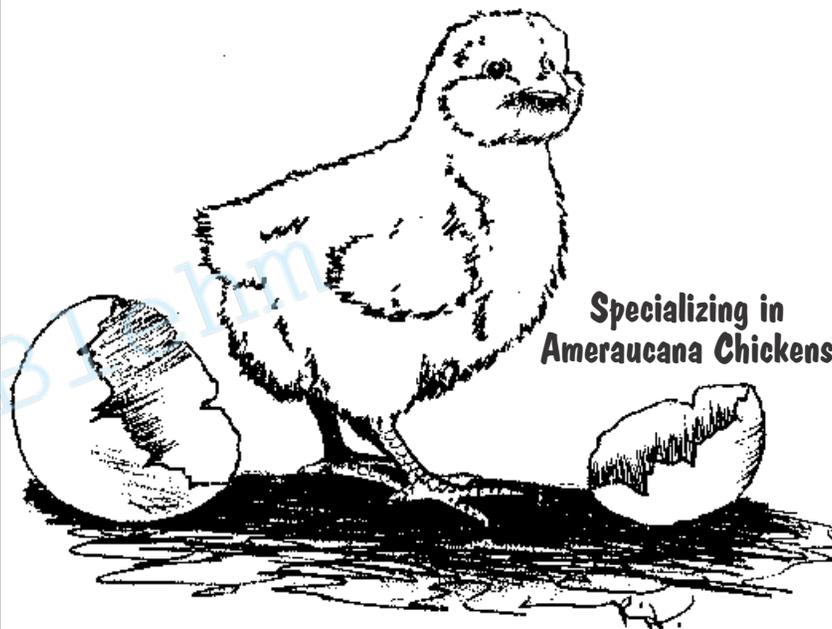
Once the correct bantams have been selected for the outcross the breeder should hatch just enough chicks to ensure a decent selection from among the progeny to breed back to the original buff line. All the F-1's (first filial generation) will be wasters as far as showing is concerned, but they will be valuable breeders. They won't be a good buff color and will most likely be larger than their parents due to hybrid vigor.

Next, mate the best cockerel(s) back to several pure buff females, and mate the most productive F-1 pullets back to pure buff male(s). Keep track of each of the results to prevent full brother/sister matings in the following generation - a practice that may have led to the problems being dealt with in the first place. Enough keepers should be obtained in the second generation to reestablish proper size, type, color and (most importantly) good reproductive traits in the buff bantams. From that point on it will just be a matter of selective breeding each successive year. To avoid repeating the outcross procedure in the future, at least two lines (three is much better) of the buff bantams could be separately maintained to ensure different strains would be available to cross from time to time as the need arises.

One old timer and well known breeder of Silver Wyandotte large fowl always kept three pens of his Silvers. Each year he would rotate a cockerel produced in pen A to pullets from Pen B, a cockerel from pen B to pullets from pen C, and a cockerel from pen C to the pullets from pen A. Following this annual routine he was able to keep his line of Wyandottes going strong without reproductive problems for 40 to 50 years until he was forced to retire from the business. Of course not many hobbyists have facilities to accommodate such a plan for very many varieties. We might accomplish more by becoming specialists in one or two or three varieties - but that requires a level of willpower that many of us do not possess.

The preceding example of renewing buff bantams was hypothetical, but hopefully some essential principles were outlined or alluded to that might prove useful for readers to apply to outcrossing situations. We believe poultry breeding is partly a science and partly an art form. Remember to take the time to enjoy your Ameraucanas each step of the way.

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*A good name is more desirable than great wealth.
Respect is better than silver or gold.*

Proverb 22:1

THE BREEDERS TOOLBOX

Compiled by Michael Muenks, 2005

The following are a collection of breeding terms and strategies which may be useful to the reader of this handbook. The toolbox is meant to be a reference for terms used throughout the handbook, and as a vehicle to communicate and clarify the meaning of terms and ideas. The toolbox is alphabetized for ease of use.

The Blue Color Gene (BL) is one of the easiest color genes to understand, and one that is extremely useful for those breeders keeping Ameraucana, because it is connected to the direct production of four of the eight standard colors, and may be present in the buff and white varieties of Ameraucana. The genetics of the black and blue colors lends to the simultaneous improvement of type for the paired varieties of blue/black and wheaten/blue wheaten by a breeder. A blue mated to a black will produce a ratio of 50% blue and 50% black offspring, a blue mated to a blue will produce 25% black, 25% splash, and 50% blue offspring, the mating of a splash with a black will produce 100% blue offspring, and the mating of a splash to a blue will produce 50% blue and 50% splash offspring in theory. The ability of a splash and black mating to produce 100% blue offspring explains the value of a splash cock or hen of outstanding type. The previous theoretical percentages hold true for wheaten, blue wheaten, and splash wheaten.

Blue Egg Shell color is one of the factors that draw the novice and experienced breeder to the Ameraucana. The standard calls for a blue egg, with most bantam Ameraucana eggs being of a sky blue shade and large fowl Ameraucana approaching turquoise blue shades. The best approach to improving egg shell color is to hatch from only the best colored eggs. To truly improve egg shell color one should keep and line breed from cocks and hens that have hatched from exceptionally colored eggs. Continuing to breed a cock hatched from an egg of outstanding color to his daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters will greatly improve the shell color of the line. When replacing the cock in the breeding pen, once again select a cock of the best type and color that has hatched from the best colored egg possible. To learn more about the genetics of egg shell color the following website is a good resource: http://marsa_sellers.tripod.com/geneticspages/page0.html.

Cross Breeding normally refers to crossing two breeds of fowl, and is sometimes used instead of out crossing to introduce a characteristic to a breed. An example of cross breeding would be to breed a Polish to an Ameraucana.

Diatomaceous Earth is a natural product that may be added to feed and acts as a natural wormer when added to feed. Diatomaceous earth may also be used in dusting holes, litter, and scattered on the

ground of runs to control lice, lava, and earthworms. If using diatomaceous earth be sure to purchase food grade diatomaceous earth and make sure not to use it in a way that will get into the lungs or eyes of the breeder or the poultry. An alternative method to feed diatomaceous earth to poultry is to make a mineral suet cake of sorts with diatomaceous earth, kelp meal, grit, and seeds. The following are several websites that sell diatomaceous earth: <http://www.groworganic.com/a/a1.html>, <http://www.welterseed.com/default.aspx>, <http://www.ohioearthfood.com/supplements.htm>, along with Cutler's Poultry Supplies, and several other vendors of poultry products.

Feed Mixes are an interesting subject because most breeders have definite opinions concerning feed, the use, and the proportions of additives used in their feed mix. In general most premixed feeds are meant to be consumed with no need for grit or calcium and come in a variety of percentages of protein. Corn and scratch grains should be limited because they are the equivalent of candy for poultry, although they are useful for quick energy on cold evenings before the birds go to roost. Whole oats are valuable for birds in molt or growing birds because oats contain nutrients valuable for feather production. Black oil sunflower is a good food for energy and provides essential oils for feather production and appearance. Soybean meal, cotton seed meal, catfish food, dry cat food, and dry dog food can all provide a mix of both vegetable and animal proteins for poultry. Other foods not normally thought of being fed to poultry on purpose are garlic, hot peppers, cranberries, squash and pumpkins which all have astringent properties and help clean out the digestive tract of poultry. Kelp meal may be used as a supplement to provide micronutrients not normally included in regular feed mixes.

A Flight Pen is a concept where a large amount of pasture or yard is enclosed on the sides and top to prevent the loss of poultry to predators. A flight pen will generally contain a shelter and be tall enough for the birds to fly within it.

Flock Mating is a breeding plan that has characteristics of line breeding within it without the intensive structure of line breeding. Flock mating is also known as oriental breeding. The process of flock mating calls for the selection of the best possible cock to head the flock. To perpetuate the flock one hatches from eggs laid early or late in the season to select for the best layers and in the case of the Ameraucana from the best colored eggs. The cock would be used for as many years as possible to perpetuate his outstanding characteristics among the offspring (line breeding). When looking to replace the sire of flock one would select a cockerel that hatched from an exceptionally colored egg and that has outstanding color and type.

Free Range is a great way to raise healthy and vigorous cockerels and pullets, and to increase fertility among cocks and hens. The method

involves allowing the fowl to range freely in the yard or field to forage for their own food. The challenges of a free range flock include the collection of eggs, the successful raising of offspring, and the danger of predator losses.

Inbreeding is the process of mating closely related birds together. The term inbreeding generally refers to the continual mating of sibling birds. Inbreeding is necessary when attempting to isolate specific characteristics of a variety. Over time repeated inbreeding of successive generations may result in low fertility and vitality in a flock so it is important to always select for vigor in the offspring.

Line Breeding is the process of mating a founding bird to successive generations of offspring. An example would be mating sire to daughter(s), grand-daughter(s), and great-grand daughter(s). Selection for vigor is important when line breeding, because along with the intensification of the outstanding characteristics of the founding bird(s) with each generation, the weaknesses of the founding bird(s) are also intensified.

Mass Selection is a breeding scheme that deserves some consideration due to its ability to facilitate quick improvements in a variety. To start, a breeder begins with six cocks and fifteen hens of a particular variety of fowl. During the breeding season the individual cocks are rotated each week to a new pair or trio of hens. All eggs are hatched and the rotation continues until upwards of 300 chicks have been produced. At the end of the breeding season the best six cockerels and fifteen pullets are kept and all of the remaining cocks, hens, cockerels, and pullets are culled. While seemingly massive in scale, if applied to a black/blue or wheaten/blue wheaten set of breeders, the improvements could be significant. The mass selection breeding scheme has several advantages, disease prevention through the continual replacement of the flock, increased chance of improvement due to the large number of chicks hatched, and genetic diversity.

Medicated Starter is the general feed suggested for starting chicks. In general it is recommended that bantams be started with a game bird proportioned starter (28%) to get them off to a quick start and large fowl to be started with a chick starter (22%). Breeders are cautioned not to assume that using a medicated starter will prevent coccidiosis. Medicated starters do not prevent coccidiosis, it simply suppresses coccidiosis to a level that is tolerated by the chick and allows chicks to build up immunity to coccidiosis over time, and so good husbandry is still required even if using a medicated starter. Chicks can be weaned off starter around six weeks of age, although many breeders use starter formulations long term with no problems. Some breeders reduce the protein level for started large fowl cockerels to prevent leg problems due to accelerated growth connected to high protein feed.

Medications are a lightening rod topic. There are a broad range of medications that can be successfully used and the list is continually being updated. The best references for medications are your local vet, supply companies, and your fellow fanciers.

Out Crossing relates to the process of mating two distantly related birds in order to introduce a characteristic into a flock or to instill "vigor" into a flock. An example of out crossing is to breed a blue Ameraucana to black Ameraucana from a distantly related flock.

Cockerel Flock/Pullet Flock is an interesting breeding scheme that requires the maintenance of two flocks of a variety. In the first season the breeder raises from the starter flock at least 50 or more chicks of which the best 2-4 cockerels are kept and 8-10 pullets are kept. The second season the best cockerel is put with the original hens to make the "cockerel flock" and best cock is put with the pullets to make the "pullet flock." In this second season chicks are raised from both flocks. It is not necessary to track the origin of chicks because at the end of the season the best 2-4 cockerels and 8-10 pullets are kept to populate the cockerel and pullet flocks. The old chickens are put together and evaluated with the overall best 2-4 cocks and 8-10 hens being kept. In the succeeding years the process of season two is repeated and gradual improvement of a genetically diverse flock occurs. The source for this breeding scheme is the SPPA Bulletin, spring 1999, volume 4, #1, by Craig Russell. More information may be found at <http://groups.msn.com/SPPA/breedingsystemb.msnw>.

Pasture for poultry is generally thought of as a large fenced area that fowl are released into to forage.

Plumage Color and Pattern Genes are a source of mystery, wonder, and sometimes frustration for many breeders. One must remember that every variety of Ameraucana contains both patterns and colors. For instance the silver Ameraucana is a wild type pattern (e+) that has had the gold color gene (s) replaced by silver color gene (S). For club members interested in learning more about the genetics of plumage color and patterns genes a good print reference is Bantam Chickens, by Fred P. Jeffrey along with the website maintained by the Sellers family of Brookings, South Dakota http://marsa_sellers.tripod.com/geneticspages/page0.html.

Self-selective Breeding is a slower method of genetic management and improvement for a flock that allows for a larger amount of genetic diversity. In self-selective breeding the initial flock is set up with the best birds possible and several cocks are allowed to mate freely among the hens. As with the flock mating method the eggs hatched to maintain the flock are selected at times of low production to perpetuate the genes of the best producers and additionally for the Ameraucana breed egg shell color would be considered. The juveniles allowed to remain in the flock would be selected for type, color, and vigor.

Sex-linked refers to a genetic characteristic that is located on the gene that determines the sex of a bird. Fowl are opposite of mammals genetically in regard to the sex chromosomes with the male XX and the female XY. Barring, the gold gene (s), the silver gene (S) are all examples of sex-linked characteristics. The Sellers family of Brookings, South Dakota maintains a website

(http://marsa_sellers.tripod.com/geneticspages/page0.html) that is devoted to poultry genetics and is a good reference for those wishing to learn more about poultry genetics along with the print resource Bantam Chickens, by Fred P. Jeffrey.

Shelter for poultry is a broad and diverse topic ranging from cages, hen houses, range shelters, to poultry barns. In general the Ameraucana is a very hardy bird and only requires shelter that will keep them dry and out of prevailing winds.

Vaccinations are given to poultry to prevent disease. Some of the more popular vaccinations are Mareks, Laryngotracheitis, and Fowl Pox. Breeders interested in vaccinations should check out poultry show requirements, state requirements/recommendations if any, with fellow breeders, and with vendors for vaccination recommendations and options.

Worming is an interesting and at times controversial topic. There are several good chemical wormers on the market that can be used safely before egg production starts that are listed for poultry. All are chemical derivatives of Piperzine-17. No other chemical products are listed by the FDA as safe for poultry, however several are listed as safe by other countries and are used extra label by prescription from a veterinarian. Common extra label use wormers are Ivermectin, Eprinex, Tramisol(levisole), and Panacur. There are several natural products that may serve as wormers. Food grade Diatomaceous Earth is made of tiny sharp particles that cuts worms and insects to shreds and may be used in bedding and as a feed additive (See the entry for Diatomaceous Earth for more information). Ground raw hulled pumpkin seeds contain a coating that will paralyze worms so they may be expelled. Real apple cider vinegar added to water at a rate of 1 tablespoon per gallon daily will also act as a worm preventative.

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