

Tailing a Bird

I mentioned this practice in the "how I pair" article so I wanted to expand on it for safety. I was asked by Julio Masferrer, a great gentleman from South Florida, breeder and exhibitor, why I didn't show the bird I won BIS at FCF with in Miami, since his Raza took first BIS in Miami but took second to my Irish Fancy at the FCF show. I explained what I had to do, meaning tailing the bird. He had not heard the term or practice so I elaborated and will again here.

Tailing a bird is an old technique but not often used but I did it for a show. The practice is in all honesty a 50/50 deal. Meaning it can fail as much as succeed, so doing it for a show has as much chance of failure as it does success. The practice is actually an old technique used to address a broody hen or bird who is failing to go into molt. When you have a hen who just will not stop laying, in essence creating a situation that's delaying its molt it may not be ready for the next years breeding season, drastic measures must be taken. The hen continues to lay and sit, when she should be in molt, you take the bird in hand and pull all of its tail feathers out. This sends a signal to her system and will indeed push her into molt. Pull her tail feathers, and watch. She will, within a week begin to molt, thus stopping her from laying anymore and moving her into the time frame she should be in.

This technique as stated is generally used for this specific purpose but it can be used to readjust a birds inner clock, to get it more in line with how and when you want them to breed. Everyone has a date they wish or believe they want to begin breeding, thus when the birds will lay, hatch, fledge and get ready for show, and when the final clutch is complete, when they will molt and again get ready for shows. All of this should be in mind when breeding and showing period. Take a calendar and mark your show season, now work backwards to establish the dates you need to hit for all phases of the year. If any bird is falling outside of this one must adjust, and in some cases the tailing of a bird can assist.

Again, this practice is generally used for getting a hen out of a broody nature, so I again say this is not something which should be used all the time, only when necessary. I wanted to be clear and add this information to define the phrase, again for safety.

You can use it as I did for a show, but lastly again for safety, it is a 50/50 chance of the result you are looking for, but in my case I did it with three birds and the results yielded only success with this one bird. The other two did in deed grow in new tail feathers, but not of quality or jagged results. Great stock birds but not show birds for these two.
Mike