

Evaluating , Pairing and Breeding

It's always hard writing articles or finding information for our club, since most everyone are top end, seasoned exhibitors, thus highly educated and experienced already. This always makes it tough to supply or write anything you may find valuable or helpful. The next pages/articles I added in this newsletter, only from either true questions I received or from specific discussions with others exchanging ideas of how we do things.

During many shows, as you all know, sitting around and discussing birds always leads into, "What do you do", "What practices do you follow", or "this is what I do or don't" talks. All of the articles or pages I have added where form these sit downs with other top winners at some shows. I again am fully aware most of you already have your own ideas or procedures and systems you follow, I am adding mine in case and hoping maybe just one small piece sparks and idea.

I love talking with others, and sometimes even the simplest of ideas, one that is so basic, it is pure genius, and how is it I never thought of it. I definitely am no genius, but just sharing some ideas and practices from a few discussions had at this past years shows. Some discussions about say importing birds is a great discussion point for our meeting and something I believe is paramount in our breed. I mention in the article about how I pair, that I keep 3 lines separated, is a luxury I, Brian and Niall's have above most. We have Irish Fancy's from England, Northern and Southern Ireland, and honestly, Yes there is a difference you can see. Each area breeds to a certain standard, all the Irish Fancy standard but still what they see and their ideas of the breed. Over there they are at the point where the breed and breeding has reached the evolutionary progression all breeds go through. The refinement, if you will, and even the adjustment in standards, which right now only involve stance, but is progressing into the head, neck and size specific thoughts being practiced in different areas and countries.

With all of that said, please, I repeat please, if you want to share anything, or have an article or idea, way you do something or even tips, please share them, so we can share them with everyone in the club. Just send them to me and I'll put them in here. We all have ways we do things and very helpful ideas, share them please.

Thank You Mike

How I pair up birds for breeding: Mike Corbeil

I spoke about this last year, but was asked the question again by multiple people so I will share it again. Last year was very fun since Brian Byrne and Niall Hyde came to my house and we did it all together. I must admit, “if” you have the chance, invite people into your bird room and have fun doing this together. We spent a few hours doing it, then sat around and had a few drinks and talked birds afterwards. Having another set of eyes and thoughts is always a benefit, especially looking at and discussing birds to standard and to pairing. Now to how I do it, but of course we all are different so maybe something I do will help.

Before showing I separate all my birds, so all my show birds are in individual cages, or one side of double breeders. I have watched them and shown them so every cage has either a pink or blue binder clip on it designating female or male. On every cage there is also a small 3 x 5 card which has the background of every bird, parents, year, show results etc. So anything I would wish to know about that specific bird is right there. Now I take a bunch of 2 x 5 cards and cut them all in half, each half being numbered, 1 thru 20 or however many pairs I will set up. So I have 2 x #1's, 2 x #2's, 3's, 4's etc. I then begin pairing. I set back and evaluate every bird, and as I do I come up with the best ones in order. The best #1 female I attach the #1 card to that cage, then the same for number 1 male and then number 2, 3 and so on, until I have all the birds marked #1-#20 in both sexes.

Now comes where you must dance a bit, because not every #1 female will match up to #1 male. This is where I adjust. If #1 female does match #1 male well that is my premier pair and I move on. When I arrive at a number that doesn't match up, feather color, genetically I adjust. I use the highest number female and then find the highest number male who matches her for a pair and mark that the next premium pair and so on until complete. I will add a little caveat here I have used for years and it has served me well. There was an old adage or wives tail, that I still believe in and use, and it is: “Use Females for type and Males for color”. Since females hide or can have something hidden to the visual eye, they are always evaluated by type first, then color. Males always visually show their true color, thus nothing hidden so used for color. Now of course one must know their birds and know that recessive genes such as cinnamon can be in the males blood, and knowing so can be used to a known cinnamon or fawn for that matter, but again one must know which birds they possess who carry that gene.

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It takes some time doing this, but it allows you to really evaluate your stock and match them per your needs or wishes. I generally pair my top pairs without thought of the overall picture, meaning they are just the best and thus paired to get the best period. When I get into say pair 11 and above I start thinking about what I need or want and how to get there. Say you want more yellows, fawns, cinnamon, whites, whatever, I start pairing for the long term. Following true pairing rules I will take the next best bird whatever it may be, for an example, let's say it's a strong yellow green male, I will look through everything I have for the best buff yellow female I have, thus hard or intensive feather to a non-intensive soft feather. I do not double buff nor place hard feather to hard feather unless trying to correct something. I will add I have not done that nor had to in many years. This is a technique only to be used for severe corrective action and should not be practiced except on purpose and for very good reason, and then even only once and record kept that you did to avoid it again.

I will move through all the birds until the 20 pairs are all selected. I then have them all marked and transfer that to breeding sheets so I may keep track of the young they have and everything for needed information later. I then will always look through the final birds, not yet matched anywhere and select, using the same fashion, the best in order of what is remaining. I try at that time to keep a broad spectrum of colors for this since these are my spares. One should always have spares, since we all know, you will have losses sometime, hopefully not. But it can occur, so be prepared. I keep 5 of each sex and again a broad range of color, which honestly any of the best yellow greens, either buff or hard feathered are safe as spares.

A few pairs of birds I know either came from great parents or are known great parents are also held back as pairs for fostering only. I use these and condition them to come into condition and be laying at the same time as my best pairs. This is in case I need them as fosters, they will be ready and you have a safety net. Just let them lay and pull their eggs replacing them with ones you care the most about. Again, long term preparedness saves much heart ache and scrambling if you think it out ahead of time and are ready.

Now I conclude the pairing with what I call my fun pairs. Fun pairs to me are ones that I am pairing up for fun and to get what I want or am not sure about. Last year, 2017 as an example, I paired 2 pairs of Blue Males to Buff Yellow Hens. One pair from 2 clutches gave me, yellows ticked, buff yellow, white and variegated, plus one blue and one white variegated. So by keeping records I know where these came from and how to use them in following years.

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Now I do look at my overall flock before I start to have in my mind where I am at, FLOCK WISE. What am I deficient in or need or even want. Do I want more yellows , buff yellows, blues, whites, fawns, cinnamon etc. and how do I get there. Now please keep in mind, getting what you want or need can be a lengthy road, so this may or may not be a starting point, with a 3 or 4 year long term thought process. Defined as, what I get may be the first step of a multi year process to get to the end goal. It all starts with short and long term goals in mind and in best practices written down and following a game plan.

I look at classes in shows and fill them as I can. Meaning I like to have numbers so I hit every class if I can. So pairing to match and get there is what I follow.

Clears / Buff's / Greens clear and buff / Variegated both again / Whites / Blues / Cinnamon and Fawn. I obviously have abbreviated all classes but the base of each are listed and how we use them to get everything in between is the key. I also know and watch timing within the breeding. This past year 2017, I had two show teams, one from the first clutches and the second from later clutches or ones I had to address and get ready. (The best in show bird at the FCF show I won with was just such a bird). It wrecked its tail feathers in the cage and I knew it would not be ready for the Miami show, so a month before the Miami show I tailed the bird, meaning I pulled All of its tail feathers. (Keep in mind this technique if you haven't done it is the quickest way to through a bird into molt, as well as cure a broody hen from laying and sitting). In this case I just wanted it to grow in its tail feathers cleanly, so I did not pull all of the tail feathers, but did a partial tailing and removed the corresponding effected ones to match up after growth. In this birds case it worked and I knew it would not be ready for the Miami show but the added 4 weeks until the FCF show, 10 weeks total, they grew in nice and where almost perfect. I think the extra attention also settled the bird or made it more steady in the show cage.

So pairing your best clear yellow to buff yellow, Yellow green to buff yellow and yellow greens gets you the largest class sections, a few blues and whites, and then attention to a pair or two of cinnamon or fawn will yield hopefully good birds in all classes. The truth is we only need to breed one great bird to win the top spot, so the clear and firm pairing of your best to your best should be done first. I do not practice pairing one bird who has a fault to another without that fault. I truly believe all you do is perpetuate that fault period. I do also run 3 separate lines as well. I keep these lines separated and only cross the lines with birds 3 generations removed.

Mike