

Re: Choosing a new breed – help please

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- *From:* "Jill" <news@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Thu, 20 Sep 2007 20:18:49 +0100
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Amy Blankenship wrote:

Its the fact that publications give pet homes the impression that owning a couple of hens of XXXX breed is doing something to help save the breed that is so disingenous and has lead directly to the weakening of many "endangered" breeds.

I don't understand how that could be, since what the "other" breeders do shouldn't affect the quality of your birds, and whether they do or do not produce these birds that go on to pet homes shouldn't have any more impact than if their hens laid eggs they then ate instead of hatched.

There are no longer large flocks of any of the pure breeds [barring one or two folks] so there is no easy gene pool to dip in to to refresh ones stocks.

So, to me, each and everyone of us who breed in the UK have a responsibility to the "national" flock.

None of us are big enough to work alone any more. Those days have LONG gone. We have to make up for hundreds of breeds owning hundreds and thousands of birds as was the case some 30 – 50 years ago by each and every one of us breeding with an aim.

Each and every breeder that does not select weakens the whole.

I have the utmost respect for the breeders of show birds -- they are actively working and selecting for quality.

It is the breeders who are commercially exploiting the fashion and the work of graet breeders of day s gone by to line their own pockets but put nothing back into the genetic pool they are happy to exploit.

Unfortunately in the UK we have no national poultry assessment scheme and our rare breeds organisations are worthless for poultry and waterfowl. From the "conversations" I have had with breeders around the world, few of the national poultry schemes are really effective or coordinated.

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Seems to me all you can do is do your own thing. You can't force other people to keep birds the way you do.

I agree.

BUT when the greatest proportion of the poultry keeping public want simply useful healthy birds and most of the sellers are exploiting that without doing any of the hard work – I am allowed to be a bit peeved sometimes.

Hence my <soapbox> marker.

I know I can make little difference with our birds — we are too small and too far away.

If, when folks call from parts of the country we cannot supply, or when we are booked up, I can plant the seed of the idea that they should question the next supplier they call – I will at least have done something, rather than nothing.

And if they do keep the birds in a different way, you don't have to breed your birds to theirs. So from your perspective, it would seem someone breeding badly is the same as someone not breeding at all.

Its worse.

And I'm not sure

how this is harmful to the breed, since presumably there are breeders like you that keep on doing their thing.

VERY VERY VERY VERY few
Unfortunately.

Would a lack of dealers and new breeders bring back the old breeders?

I am realistic — I know that fashion will be supplied.
What I hope is that I — and the remaining folks, some of whom I have learnt SO much from, who are still interested in the hard work that goes into selecting for eggs and creating decent table birds, can inspire a few more to follow in the footsteps of those who went before us.

One of the major death knells of the larger breeders was the loss of national distribution of birds and day olds.
It is not possible to get them around in quantity like you can.

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That was the final nail in the coffin.

Well, an "ok" layer still lays eggs (is still fit for the purpose)

Not when a RIR generally only lays around 150 eggs a year and feed costs have just doubled.

Most pure breeds struggle to get over 100 eggs a year.

and an "ok" broiler still can be eaten.

These are not broilers — they are all fancy feathers and lots of bone and certainly not producing enough meat at 18 weeks to make feeding them even sensible.

Is the extra gain you get by putting all this time and money into breeding only the best greater than or equal to the investment? If not, there is not really a _practical_ reason to do it.

Its not about "BEST" its about maintaining or restoring the qualities of the breeds that people want and that they were designed to have. Its an ongoing process. There is no finish that "best" would signify.

Few poultry keepers are interested or are in a position to breed. Thats fine. But we have long lost the producers who were breeding from a 1000 bird flock which were trap nested and recorded.

And you think they'll come back if such magazine articles are not published...?

No, and I did not suggest they would. But if the publications were prepared to learn something about what they wrote, and took responsibility for what they wrote, they might write articles that inspired even the smallest poultry keepers to have better aspirations for the birds they wanted to keep and for the smallest breeders to take some care about the hatchings they made. I am absolutely certian that there are still raelly good birds out there. But we are loosing them year on year because there is no monitoring at all done.

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It can be done by anyone, however small.

I am completely aware that we cannot go back to how things were, but we could go forward on hell of a lot better than we are.

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regards
Jill Bowis

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–Amy

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