

Fifteen (yes 15) Things You Should Do to Become a Good Poultry Breeder.

Submitted by Rip Stalvey, respected breeder and licensed APA poultry judge. Thank you Rip for your words of wisdom!

I was thinking some about what I would tell someone who asked me what they should do to become a good chicken breeder. So here's my list.

1. Study the APA Standard of Perfection. Not just about your chosen breed either. The first thirty or so pages contain great information. Plus learning about other breeds will be invaluable to you.
2. Be honest with yourself. Don't suffer from coop blindness and fool yourself into thinking your birds are better than they are. Not being able to see the faults in your own birds is another issue.
3. Find a mentor. Good mentors are hard to find but worth their weight in gold. Look for someone that's been breeding birds at least fifteen years. Then follow their advice!
4. Keep your line pure. Crossing two different lines is the fastest way to fail that I know of. If you feel you need new blood get an unrelated bird from the same line you're working with. Always introduce new blood by using a female rather than a male...your results will be better over the long term.
5. Know where you want to go with your breeding. What needs to be fixed about your birds? What is your primary focus; type, color pattern, or egg color. Don't try to fix too many things at one time.
6. Build from a solid foundation. Get the very best birds you can lay your hands on. That way you be light years ahead of many. Re-read numbers 1 and 4.
7. Remember the rule of tens. For every ten chicks you raise usually only one will be good enough to keep. For every 100 chicks raised count on ten being good enough to keep. Never keep a bird that won't move your program forward.
8. Cull your birds rigorously. The tendency is for most people is to keep too many birds. Don't do it as it will only set you back! Re-read number seven.
9. Limit your numbers. Only hatch as many chicks as you can adequately care for. Chicks reared in crowded conditions never reach their full potential. If you have space for 50, hatch 40.
10. Keep really good "forever" records. Document every thing...matings, results, egg color, growth rate, vigor, etc. This will document your progress and guide your future. Hang on to these records for dear life.
11. If you're in it for the money you won't succeed. Sadly there are too many folks that are out to make a quick buck. Typically their birds are pretty inferior representatives of the breed.
12. Breed from Cocks and Hens. When you do this you're dealing with a known quantity. It's a case of what you see is what you've got. Cockerels and pullets will change a lot as they full mature.
13. Support the APA and the breed club. Become an *active member* in both. These are the organizations working to improve the hobby and the breeds.
14. Accept responsibility for your birds. *It's not right to blame your line's creator for the faults in your flock.* Once you acquire your start and begin breeding them they are your line not theirs.
15. Share your knowledge. Never be afraid to share what you've learned with others. Many old time breeder I knew were quick to help a new comer. We don't see much of that anymore and that's a shame because too much knowledge has been lost.

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