

THE BRAHMA CLUB OF AUSTRALIA

President

Andrew Rathbone
"Carcolla"
Bathurst NSW. 2794

Ph 02 6337 3840

Secretary

Carol Abuid
PO Box 100
Maldon Vic. 3463

Ph/Fax 03 5476 2758

Email:

brahma@telstra.easymail.com.au

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PRESIDENTS REPORT

Hi to all members,

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all new members to the club. By now most fanciers would have their breeding programs well under way or nearly completed, but ultimately we're all kept busy these days babysitting our growing (and Healthy!) chicks.

It has been an exceptional season in the Central Tablelands of NSW with the countryside looking very green and lush. Some regions of Australia however are calling out for rain and are in drought conditions. My flock of fifty Angora goat breeding does have just about completed their kidding (waiting on just one doe), and I'm well ahead on the Doe kid : Buck kid ratio ... a very pleasing 60:40

The season is causing some problems though, with changes from cold and wet weather to very warm and dry, resulting in varied results with each poultry breeds incubation. Some have stopped laying while some haven't stopped. One breed has very serious fertility problems (two pens of trio's) , others have 100% fertility and good hatchability, while another breed has reasonable fertility but I can't hatch many chickens. Fortunately my Brahma's belong in the success category.

I'm getting some excellent results from my Large Light Brahma program, by using stock that are crossed with yellow-legged Sussex. One pen is a brother/sister mating (50% Brahma 50% Sussex ...something that I have not tried before due to the dominant white leg factor) , that is giving surprising results, with most chickens exhibiting pure brahma traits and only 15% Single Comb and 15% with no foot feather but having shank feather.

Carol is very keen to hear from members who are willing to submit articles and stories about their Brahma Breeding programs, Handy Hints, creating new colours ecto include in the newsletter. It would be much appreciated.

As this is the last Newsletter before the Festive Season, I would like to wish everyone a Safe and Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Wishing You many bold and beautiful Brahma youngsters,
Andrew

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Hi Everyone. Hope you are all having a good breeding season, we need as many as we can get on the ground to promote the Brahma.

We have had quite a lot of enquiries regarding the Brahma Club, from all states now, which is good. We now have an advertisement in Australasian Poultry, the cost of this is \$30/yr. and hopefully it will generate even more enquiries for the breed and the club.

Khris and I met one of our new Victorian members who came and stayed for the weekend and helped out with our Open Day along with another Brahma Club member, Lance Hicks. Bryan, Lance, Megg, Khris and myself had a good chat about Brahma's on the Saturday night till the early hours of the morning. The Afternoon shift as we (Khris and myself) called them arose after 10.00am, mind you it was a very hectic morning for us all, blowing up balloons, putting up signs etc. We had a good turnout for the day, good numbers and enquiries came from the Open Day (we are also members of The Australian Rare and Minority Breeds Association) this was why the Open Day. As members of the Association we had a stand at the Royal Melbourne Show at which again gave us a venue to promote the Brahma. A lot of fertile eggs were sold plus a pair of birds.

I haven't received much feedback from our first Newsletter, I take it everyone was pleased with it. The colour cover will only feature on Special issues due to the amount of ink taken to produce it and the cost.

We have some members down here putting pen to paper on articles but it would be great to hear from other members. Again we need feedback from everyone, so please take time out and respond as we down here can only do so much, we need everyone's ideas.

Now to a happy ending, may Khris and I wish you all a Chicky Christmas and Happy New Year, and may it be safe and rewarding.

Until next issue,

Carol

PS. Some members have not returned their membership forms. Could you please do so as soon as possible and return it so that we can get our database up to date. As you can see we now have a directory added to the Newsletter, without this information we cannot update it.

THE BRAHMA

A Giant Fowl in all ways.

By Megg Miller

Reprinted with permission from Australasian Poultry Vol 10 No 4

Brahma have long been a controversial breed. So passionate was the debate on them last century, that devotees managed to string it out for nearly 50 years. It is hardly surprising then, to learn that current followers are prepared to dedicate decades to the tedious work of re-creation. Brahma it appears inspire fervour and obsession.

The introduction of the Brahma followed in the wake of the enormous popularity enjoyed by Cochin. They were immediately embraced as being a larger more useful fowl, and were purported to be more lively, of hardier constitution, to lay better and be more prepotent. That the noses of the Cochin breeders were badly out of joint goes without saying and it is possible some of the argument over origin was fuelled by those who had invested heavily in the first favourite. With prices of 100 Guineas paid for a pair of Brahma in 1853, Cochin breeders had every reason to panic.

“On the origin of the Brahma there has been much controversy, and the facts were for a long time buried beneath a mountain of misstatements, designed in many cases to deceive the unwary.” (Brown, E, Races of domestic poultry, UK 1906). Not only was there an ongoing wrangle about whether the breed was Indian or derived from Chinese stock, agreement couldn't be reached over who should take credit for developing it.

By the late 1860s it was becoming obvious breeders in the US were selecting and standardising a somewhat different looking Brahma to that of their English counterparts. The preoccupation in England with heavy feathering, while creating a top show bird, ultimately led to the breeds demise in that country, its appeal as a pretty but costly fowl to feed having little to recommend it alongside newer and more productive breeds.

The heyday for Brahma was in the 1870s, entries for the Great National Show in 1875 exceeding 500. Settings of eggs were in great demand and booked out months ahead, selling for 12 1/2p per egg. “Like the Cochin, the Brahma became the fancier fowl supreme and in getting precision of markings and a lot of splendid plumage the breed lost the very useful properties which it had when first imported.” (Eason Smith, Modern Poultry Development, UK 1976).

The fall from favour occurred later in America, in fact not until the turn of the century. After years of prominence as an exhibition and market (table) fowl, an award at a New York show catapulted the breed into chaos. The winning Light Brahma Cock although beautifully marked was noticeably short legged, and when its award went uncensured by judges and breeders, an immediate fashion for similarly shaped stock developed. This displeased the poultry growing fraternity, the new shape failing to meet the market needs, and they responded by abandoning the breed in favour of another. Interest soon waned amongst fanciers and the breed never managed to regain popularity.

Many breeds today carry Brahma in their background, including varieties of Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte, Sussex, Faverolles, the Barnevelder and in Europe, Marans , La Mante, La Gournay, La Bourbourg and Malines. The legacy of the Brahma and its close associate, the Cochin, cannot be measured by genetic inheritance alone. The enthusiasm these breeds generated laid the framework for modern poultry keeping.

Size.

Brahma are big birds with only Jersey Giants being listed as heavier. Lack of size is a serious defect for Standard Brahma. The *Australian Poultry Standards* recommends weights of 4.55 – 5.45 kg (10-12 lb) for males and 3.20 – 4.10 kg (7-9lb) for females. For bantam Brahma, males should be 1190 – 1415g (42_50oz) and females 1020 – 1255g (36_44oz)

Description

Brahma are upright standing birds of symmetrical proportions. They have a broad square deep body, short wide back that sweeps up to the almost upright tail and a full breast with horizontal breastbone. Medium- sized wings are carried horizontal along the body. The medium sized tail, as stated is carried high. The structure of the tail is a unique feature seen more clearly on the female. It is broad at the base with the upper portion oval in shape. This oval is covered with soft short plumage. The tail of the male is also broad at the base. The quill feathers are well spread, and almost hidden by an abundance of broad, curved coverts.

The powerful, well-muscled legs are moderately long and positioned well apart. The thighs are large and hidden under the lower breast feathers. Hocks ideally are covered with soft, rounded feathering though quills are acceptable when balanced with heavy shank and foot feathering. Shanks carry profuse feathering that extends from under hock feathers to the ends of the middle and outer toes. Vulture hocks - stiff quill feathers at the hocks joint – are undesirable.

The neck is long and slightly curved, and covered with a cape of long hackle feathers, proportionally shorter on the female. A noticeable depression should be evident between head feathers and upper hackles. The head is small, short and reasonably wide with overhanging brows. The beak is short and strong, eyes large and prominent and a small pea comb should fit closely. The face is smooth and clean, ear lobes long, wattles small and rounded, all free of feathers. It is not uncommon for females to display a small dewlap.

Plumage, while quite profuse is hard and carried close when compared to the Cochin.

Colour

Brahma can be found in several colour varieties, Buff, Gold, Dark and Light and occasionally White. With the exception of the latter the pattern requirements are very precise and correspond to particular Wyandotte patterns. These are Columbian (Light Brahma) Buff Columbian (Buff) Silver pencilled (Dark) and Partridge (Gold). It is essential to obtain copies of the standards for these, as they run over several pages and are too long to reproduce here.

Individual colour requirements aside, all Brahma have beaks of yellow or yellow – black, orange-red eyes, bright red comb, face wattles and ear lobes and yellow or yellow – orange legs and feet.

Production

It is difficult to predict what the productive properties of stock under re-creation will be like, but Brahma were medium layers of small, tinted eggs with the ability to lay during winter months. It was as a table bird that this breed excelled, especially when crossed with Dorkings or other white fleshed birds.

Other Characteristics

Brahma are very placid birds, active foragers and easily contained behind low fencing. Their robust constitution enables them to adjust to a wide range of management systems. Hens are good sitters but less prone to broodiness than Cochin, excellent mothers and chicks are easily reared although noticeably slow growing.

The problems that arise with the breed are due to difficulty in achieving exhibition standard stock. Double mating is required in both breeds. Enthusiasts should familiarise themselves with the process of breeding the appropriate colours and also try and obtain photocopies of Lewis Wright's articles on Brahma along with coverage by Compton in *The Australasian Book of Poultry* (Aust 1899).

It is a tragedy Brahma have been allowed to die out in Australia. It is assumed they arrived here around 1860 and fulfilled the dual role of farmer's fowl and exhibitors darling. Sadly, they could find no special niche when the newer, more economical and flashy breeds arrived from the 1880's onwards, and gradually disappeared. It is exciting that a new, enthusiastic band of followers have appeared and there is no doubt that birds of Brahma type will appear again in coming years. Those American oldtimers – Cornish, Bennett and Burnham – had no idea what they were starting when they first selected their Grey Shanghae 150 years ago.

Note: The complete article appears in Oct/Nov 1999 Australasian Poultry.



An exquisite pair of Dark Brahma (1903) drawn by T.I. Bennett for the 'Reliable Poultry Journal' (USA). These would have represented ideal type and pattern.

HOW I GOT STARTED

By Bryan Jon

Welcome all Brahma Club Members.

Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to Thank Carol and Khris for getting the club Newsletter up and running, and it is up to all of us to support it and make sure it is a great source of information to provide help where possible, heaps of encouragement and to share our knowledge and experiences and even our failures, so that we can say in years to come we have created Dark, Black, White, Gold Partridge, and Buff Columbian to go with John Mercieca's Light Brahma's that he spent many years developing.

Carol rang last Sunday for a chat and put the hard word on for a H.I.G.S (How I got started). I am only a beginner in this poultry business and know very little (Probably just as well), well after seeing Light Brahma's at John Mercieca's place, they were for me. But I soon discovered they hardly existed, so after a lot of pleading, John sold me a Black red cock and through a friend Lillian, I met Lance Hicks who donated a light Brahma pullet. (Thanks Lance) So, a trip up to see Megg Miller for lots of helpful advice and a large dose of reality, with Megg telling me it may take up to ten years to produce good dark Brahma, I was still going to have a go.

I used Malay Game for size and to help with the comb and yellow in the legs and beak. After my first year I was left with one Light Brahma and one Black Red Brahma (both cocks) two Gold pencilled and two Brown pencilled pullets. My main aim was for size and type with type being the hard part.

This year I was lucky to get a D/W Malay Game/Wyandotte cross cock and hen from Ken Bjorskten of the Warragul P.C. also two Silver Pencilled Wyandotte hens from Graham Marks Wyandotte Poultry Stud at Labertouche (thanks Graham) as they are hard to find. By chance, when I was in Canberra at Poultry 2000, I was very lucky to bump into Percy Wong, as we were both looking at Duckwing Malay Game, only to discover that we were both trying to develop Dark Brahma. So there were phone calls, photos and discussions about genetics that I found it hard to fully comprehend (you know those recessive and dominant things).

Percy has given me his dark Brahma program to continue on. He sent down his cock and hen with Robert Hunt when he came to Melbourne to the Royal Melbourne Show (thanks Robert). Percy's cock bird has a silver spangled chest but has excellent type. It also needs size and leg and beak colour. The hen is small and was from Light Brahma Stock. I'm using her with Ken's Malay Game/ Wyandotte cock as he is very large and has good colour and I'm using Percy's cock bird over the hens. Both the cocks birds have a very bad attitude problem, remember Brahma have a very docile and gentle nature.

Currently, I have about 55 F2 chickens from my early season program and hope to have about 100 from my dark Brahma program. The only problem is that two of the Silver Pencilled Wyandottes have gone clucky and one of them has 25 chickens "What a hen". If you can manage to have the chickens hatch in the incubator at the same time as the hen, in the evening just slide another 10 in with her life becomes a little easier.

Well that's all for now, so in years to come may be we will be arguing whether we produced Brahma to look like the colour Plates that Ludlow and Lyndon drew or true to The Australian Poultry Standard. I'm sure that between all of us we will before or after Meggs 10-year period.

Happy and Successful Breeding.

HOW TO FIX THOSE BABIES

Sprawled Legs:- This happens to chicks that walk on a slippery floor of the incubator or if they are put on dry, slick newspaper.

Fix:- Fix by tying a piece of string on one leg and then give enough length of string between to allow them to walk and to stand up. For quail it is about .75 to 1 inch and for pheasants it is a little longer. The tie to the other leg. Use caution when doing this and make sure that the string is not tight on the bird's leg. This may take several minutes due to the small string and the birds desire to not co-operate. Make sure you have a great deal of patience when doing this activity. Check this bird about three times a day to make sure everything is well. After a week the legs should develop properly and the chick should walk fine.

Crooked Toes:- Sometimes a chick gets caught on the wire in the brooder and develops a crooked toe due to it being caught. To fix this you can tape the toes in the correct place. You need to put the foot on the ground in the correct position and spread all the toes on the tape. Remember to cut off the remaining extra tape. The toes should correct themselves and with strong bloodlines, the chicks will not have any reoccurring problems.



*Light Brahma cockerel. (1903) from the
"Reliable Poultry Journal" (USA).*