

CREST'S - THE GREAT LEVELLER

by Rob Hugo

Most of us have tried breeding another variety and in this hobby we have a few that test our knowledge and skill. All of them have with it an element of luck attached to breeding that one special bird and then to follow on with the line and breed more or better than the best one we have bred so far.

The problem with writing an article such as this is that some of us forget that the views are only that of the author and nothing more. This is one of those articles.

My views.

We can be a successful breeder in any of our varieties if we are observant and patient. The biggest problem of this hobby is the longer we are in it the less we seem to know. Sometimes we may have to take a step backwards to go forward and sometimes we are not patient enough to do this, or the big plans we have for that special bird go up in smoke when, it dies.

This variety can level the best, down to being able to breed some good ones one year and the next lady luck has walked out the door for a breather But we have to be observant. Some breeders have said that they can tell what sex the chick will be in the egg That's being observant. I am very observant of my chicks in the nest from when the pin feathers are starting to form until the feathers have fully formed.

We all know that the Crest can be spotted in the nest but can you pick the Crest Bred?

I examine the whole chick from the cere to the back of the head with a magnifying glass. looking for that twisted feather. I believe that not all normal looking birds in the nest are CrestBred. Only those that are showing a disturbance on the head some where are the true CrestBreds. More often than not the disturbance feathers over when the chick is fully feathered giving the impression that it is a normal looking bird. Be observant and make a note of this bird when it is rung it may be valuable to your breeding team. Some birds have a full crest on the back of the head and when feathered disappears in the lay of the feather.

I have never bred any Crests in 25 years with two normal birds out of a nest of Crests not showing any sort of hidden feather when they were young.

ISOLATING THE CREST GENE

Genetics is where most people get a little lost as well as me so I will not get too involved in the full genetics but a simpler version of understanding the breeding. We are all aware that we have a mutation of three exhibition types of crest and with that all three of the Crest's can be bred from one of the types of Crest.

On breeding with a pair for example :-

Pair No-1

FULL CIRCULAR Cock x TUFTED Hen

On a ratio of 4 chicks the following may be produced.

1 x Full Circular (e.g. Hen)

1 x Tufted

2 x Normal looking birds

Let's say the full circular is a Hen.

Pair No-2

FULL CIRCULAR Cock x TUFTED Hen

On a ratio of 4 chicks again the following may be produced.

1 x Full Circular (e.g. Cock)

1 x Tufted

2 x Normal looking birds

Again let's say the Full Circular is a Cock.

Now mating the Full Circular Hen chick from Pair No-1, with the Full Circular Cock chick from Pair No-2 being Full Circular x Full Circular . Continue the same pattern of mating the Full Circular and I believe that after a few generations chicks with a stronger Full Circular gene will start to be bred.

The same pattern can be used to breed the Half Circular and the Tufted.

What we are now developing is the situation of splitting the gene types from each other to have the possibility to breed true, Full Circular, Half Circular and Tufted.

This in effect will relocate the Loci.

ALL THE SAME MUTATION

I believe that the Crest loci's position on the head produces the type of Crest displayed. It is all the same mutation. If the Loci sit well forward on the head it forms a Tuft, as the full display of the circle cannot be splayed out, as there are no more feathers on the front side to display.

Again if the Loci is placed further back on the head more feathers can be displaced so the Half Circle is displayed and again if the Loci is placed at the centre of the head the perfect Full Circular crest is displayed. Again as above we have to be observant and breed for the location of the Loci as well. If we breed as we do now any Crest to any breeding possibility we will not isolate the type of Crest and the placement of the loci.

DOUBLE FACTOR OR SINGLE FACTOR

Have we thought why when breeding together a Tuft with a small disruption on the front of the head, to a True Crestbred. We can get a large number of Crested progeny and in another mating a Full Circular to a True Crestbred only produce a small number of progeny.

Let's re visit the test matings above.

Pair No1

I believe that all the chicks showing Crest (in the nest) are now with a double dose of the Crested gene.

Pair No2

This is the same result as the above pair.

NOTE: If the chick in the feather growth stage at no time showed any feather disruption at all in my opinion it is only a normal. This bird will be of no use to the Crest production.

If we breed the strongest visual Crest from Pair No1 to the strongest visual Crest from Pair No2 any Crest from this mating I believe is now a double factor. If we then decide to,

for e.g, increase the feather on the bird, we use the strongest DF visual Crest over the selected outcross of the feature we have to use for improvement.

This now being Pair No3 all chicks showing a Crest disruption in the nest now is in my opinion a single factor.

The Crest progeny from Pair No3 with the increase of feather is now used to mate with a Crest of the same breeding pattern as Pair No1 and No2 this maintains the Strength of the Crest gene in the bird. In other words we breed within the variety and then breed away and then come back to the variety. There comes a point where the bird is overly strong with the gene and this will produce the bird with multi Crest's This can be one extra Loci to multiple Loci formed on the head or back line of the bird. This bird can now be used as a stock bird for breeding more numbers of Crests with any normal with a feature you may wish to introduce to improve the show specimen.

SEMI DOMINANT

I believe the Crest is a semi dominant variety and only can become dominant if. Pair No3 is used and the progeny is used over a Normal (non Crest).

CREST OR NORMAL

All chicks in the nest should be examined and every feather disturbance should be noted on the breeding records. Any chick when feathered up and leaves the nest showing no feather disturbance in the nest, in my view is pure normal.

This view I know is different to any or most writings gone before me. If a chick had a feather disturbance and duly noted into the breeding records now leaves the nest looking as a normal, with no feather disturbance visible, it is a True Crestbred.

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