

BUFF COCHINS

by Matt McCammon, originally published in the December, 2010 Poultry Press

This month I will focus on the buff color. There are experts in this variety around today, and I wish they were writing this. I am just borrowing some ideas from the Cochin Bantams booklet published the ABA. Originally, buff Cochins were the main torchbearer of the breed, and still are in large fowl. But in bantams, buffs have really taken a tumble. Several breeders are trying to resurrect the buffs, and I think they are getting it done a few at a time. Here are some comments from Cochin breeders of the past....

Henry McKean comments that "real and true buff color is a very soft color, and a rather light color in actual shade. For buff feathering, the color is described as "golden buff". Golden, as used, demands that the buff feathering shall be bright, alive, vivid; having reflectiveness and brilliance. The color buff is not bright and reflective, but soft and rather flat. The color golden buff is intensely brilliant and alive, having the reflectiveness of glittering gold. The term golden merely qualifies the term buff by denoting the impressions that should be given by this color buff, when viewed. The more experience I get in the handling of Buff birds, the more convinced I become of the futility of a wide margin of counteraction. That is, I mean the practice of using dark birds with light birds , in attempts to get the desired and proper color. This amounts to nothing more or less than using two separate colors and involves all the complications incident to that practice. Color counteraction must be held within narrow margins so that colors foreign to the one to be desired, are not introduced. Actual buff has distinct bounds, beyond which limitations the color ceases to be buff at all and becomes, in reality, some other actual color than buff can be said to be."

He goes on to discuss the importance of undercolor in buff birds. "A rather light bird, with solid undercolor has a greater power of color transmission than a far darker bird with poor undercolor. Proper color intensity and its transmission is dependent upon undercolor much more than upon surface coloration. When undercolor is considered as the basis upon which to judge a bird's power of color transmission, rather than surface color, wide margins of counteraction are not found to be necessary and other colors or shades are largely eliminated. When the real and true "golden buff" is seen I believe it to be best described as being a very soft color in its general impression, I believe it to be a rich color in its color value, and I believe it to be a very intensively alive in its brilliancy. I frankly do not believe that there is only one such color as the true and real "golden buff" but I do believe that there is a one and only kind or sort of color and that this color is distinctly limited as to actual hue.

I offer these thoughts on the breeding of the Buff Cochin Bantam in no authoritative way but merely as my experience in the breeding of chickens. I believe it incumbent upon those with experience to divulge their experience to those who may be interested and right or wrong as my statements may be in the minds of others I have used these thought and shall continue to use them in my attempts to breed better and better Buff Cochin Bantams..."

I especially liked that last comment. That is the message I am trying to relate with these articles. Not that I have an opinion and am choosing articles to support that opinion, but instead I am just throwing some ideas out there to develop a healthy discourse on the correct breeding of the various Cochin colors.