

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BREEDING SEASON

by Tom Roebuck, Jr., originally published in the Winter, 2003 CI Newsletter

It's that time of the year again, and since we have a number of new members who are not only new to the club, but new to the fancy, I thought I would pass on a few helpful hints for the breeding program. Make sure to keep your cage bedding dry and your housing for your birds draft free. This will promote good health. Feed a good breeder crumble or pellet. The breeder mix has a higher protein content to help the birds along through the rigors of breeding season. In tandem with the quality feed, make sure your birds get plenty of fresh water. In the areas of the U.S. where your Cochins are exposed to freezing temperatures, try to give them fresh water twice a day for at least during the time of day when there is ample light left to allow them to drink their fill of water. In the warmer weather, keep the water cool and clean. Water is an important factor in healthy, vigorous birds and good fertility.

If you are breeding your Cochins the natural way versus Artificial Insemination, you are going to need to remove some feathers around the vent areas of both the males and females. On the males if you decide to clip the feathers, do so around the vent and down a couple of inches toward his abdomen. On the females, trim around the vent and above. Some breeders trim the tail completely on the female. The general idea is to remove the feathers enough to allow successful mating to take place. Many breeders pluck the feathers instead of clipping them. If this is the method you choose, don't pluck the feathers all at the same time, do it over the course of a couple of days so you don't irritate the skin.

Collect your eggs every day and mark them to identify which cage they came out of. A pencil works well for this. Good record keeping will allow you to track the results of your breeding efforts once the birds are mature. If you have the room in your incubator, separate your eggs in compartments (these can be made of small gauge wire) at hatching time. [Matt uses small onion sacks]. This will be a sure fire method of identifying your chicks if you have eggs from several pens of the same variety coming off on the same day. You can toe punch your chicks to keep track of them until they are old enough to band. Some breeders also use parakeet leg bands on newborn chicks, but you have to keep an eye on them so they don't cut into the chick's legs as they get older. These small bands can be used until they are old enough to wing band if that is the method you choose.

These are just a few helpful hints. Feel free to contact a club officer or breeders in your area if you have more questions.