

## BREEDING BLUES

by Clarence Minnich, 1974

(As published in the World Cochin Family Yearbook, 1976-77, Volume II)

I have been interested in raising and showing Cochin 1955, when my brothers and I each had our own varieties. We raised Cochin Bantams under the name of "Minnich Brothers" and of course we were being guided by our father, Russell W. Minnich.

After a tour in the service, I met and married my wife Sharon in 1968. Even as we were starting our life together I found that my interest in Cochin Bantams, that I'd had from boyhood, was still strong. I had always raised and showed White Cochins but I felt a need to do something more challenging, consequently my interest in breeding Blue Cochin Bantams.

As I attend shows, I find that I'm not alone in my interest in the Blue Cochin Bantam. Five years ago it was not unusual to go to a show and not see a Blue Cochin Bantam. In the last two years, I've seen thirty or more Blue Cochin Bantams at a show shown by four or five exhibitors. Not only are more exhibitors showing Blue Cochins, but they're doing something not at all common before, they're winning the top awards in the Cochin classes. In 1973, twice I saw where the Blue Cochin won best Cochin. This year (1974) in York, Pennsylvania I won best opposite sex Cochin and best opposite sex feather leg on a Blue Hen.

With this new interest in Blue Cochin Bantams, my mail has contained many requests for information on my breeding and showing Blue Cochin Bantams. The reason for this article is to tell you a little bit about how C. H. Minnich and Son breed and raise Blue Cochin Bantams.

I raise around two-hundred Blues each year starting as early as possible after January 1st.

In raising any Cochin, type is your first consideration. Always put your best birds in the breeding pens. I slightly favor using my older birds but do not hesitate using a good to excellent young bird.

After type, color is your next consideration. A Blue Cochin is considered a partly colored bird. It is very easy to raise a self blue, but The Bantam Standard calls for a Blue Cochin. A Blue Cochin is a medium shade of blue with a darker lace around each feather. This darker lace is difficult to get and keep.

My breeding pens are all trios. In Blue, I use my best eight females and best four males. I am more concerned with mating a darker color to lighter color or vice-versa, than I am young to old.

I never put a bird with a bad defect into a breeding pen no matter how perfect it is elsewhere. You're better off with three or four little defects rather than one large defect. If you have more than three or four good females and only one good male, do not put a poor male with these females. I prefer to rotate the male every two days to two different females. As long as the male is in the pen one out of three days, I've never had a problem with fertility.

I prefer to mate four trios of Blue Cochins. In order to throw a better color blue offspring, the males can be a slight bit brassy. Brassiness is a fault in the show hall, but I'm sure most Blue breeders will agree it is good in the breeding pens.

When mating blue to blue you only get an offspring of 1/3 blue. You also get 1/3 black (which has a very close resemblance to a black cochin) and you get 1/3 splashed (blue and white). Your blues are what you're interested in, but you should not forget the black and

splashed. I feel they are necessary in the breeding pens.

This next section is where many different breeders will not agree. There are many different ideas and ways to cross back your black and splashed. This is my personal way and I feel the best.

I use one breeding pen with a black male (out of blue) with two splashed females. Another breeding pen with a splashed male with two black females (out of blue). In selecting your black, type first, stay away from any purple or purple barring. When selecting your splashed after type, check the quills of the feathers. The darker blue the quills, the better color the offspring. Do not pay too much attention to how much blue or white feathers are showing on the surface. The only way to get and keep the darker lace around each feather is by crossing the black and splashed. You also get healthier and stronger offspring and usually 100% Blue Cochins rather than 33% from Blue matings.

Crossing a pure black to a splashed every several years is not necessary! Unless you have a major fault or plenty of money, keep within your strain as much as possible; because it will take approximately three years to benefit from any cross.

Finally remember to always have your best birds in your breeding pens and later in the show hall. You're only going to raise a few good birds out of good to excellent matings, and it makes little sense to mate average birds to get average to poor offspring.

I hope the experience C. H. Minnich and Son have gained will benefit you in your quest for a better Blue Cochin Bantam. If you are an experienced breeder with problems or a new breeder trying to develop a good strain, we hope we've been of help to you. We're all trying to obtain an excellent Blue Cochin Bantam and maybe you can be the first with the birds we see in our text books. We at C. H. Minnich and Son will be striving for that perfect Cochin Bantam so together we may all benefit from our common knowledge.

