

## WHAT CAUSES BRASSINESS?

by Art V. Granger

*Art Granger was one of the premier breeders and exhibitors of White Cochon Bantams in the 1940's. This article written by Mr. Granger was republished in the World Cochon Family Yearbook (1976-77, Volume II). His birds were frequent subjects of Arthur O. Schilling's pictures.*

During the past two years, I have conducted various experiments to determine the cause of brassiness in White Cochon Bantams, and to try to find a remedy for its elimination. All of these experiments were conducted on male birds because the brassiness is most noticeable in their glossy feathers; although by careful examination, it can be found in the hackle of some females.

I set about to prove or disprove three popular theories; namely, that yellow corn, the sun, and green food will cause brassiness. Regarding the first, I set up three pens containing a male bird in each and fed them all growing mash, one with no yellow corn meal added, one with 25 per cent meal added, and the third with 50 per cent corn meal added. The mash was before them at all times and in addition they were fed a grain ration containing 40 per cent cracked yellow corn. RESULT: After three months of such feeding all three birds remained unchanged in color.

Next, two males were taken and fed plentifully on yellow corn. One was allowed to run in the sun and the other kept in the shade. RESULT: No difference in the color of the two birds. During the first two experiments green food was kept from all the male birds.

For the third experiment, two males were used. They were both fed mash as in the first experiment. One was given a good supply of green food while the other received none. After a while, the male having access to green food turned to the brassy order, while the other remained pure white. To test the green food experiment further, five males were allowed to roam the yard with plenty of green food available. They could also get into the sun if they cared to, but two males were kept inside. These two males were given no green food and no mash, but did receive rations of which 40 per cent was yellow corn. RESULT: The five males having access to the green food turned brassy, while the other two remained pure white. It is my contention then, that green food is a contributing factor to brassiness.

I do not believe green food alone is responsible for this color condition, but I think, rather, there are exceptions to the individuals contributed by breeding. The keen observer and fancier who has the patience to watch his growing stock closely and constantly, will note various characteristics develop on them. Birds fed from the same cup, bred from the same pen, and reared identically, will grow differently.

It is desirable to watch the individual birds that grow ideally, to note what they are when fully matured, and then follow them through their first molt. The study of color is one that starts when the chick first gets wing feathers and never ends until stay white color is an

established characteristic of your strain. To me it represents a problem that must be eliminated by careful breeding. It might be quite a job, but I know it can be done. Many White Cochins Bantams show gray striping in their feathers when pulled will grow in pure white. New feathers injured while the blood is in the quill, will sometimes be off-color, due to the coagulation of the blood. Such feathers if allowed to mature and then be pulled, will generally grow again in good color.

~ Art V. Granger

