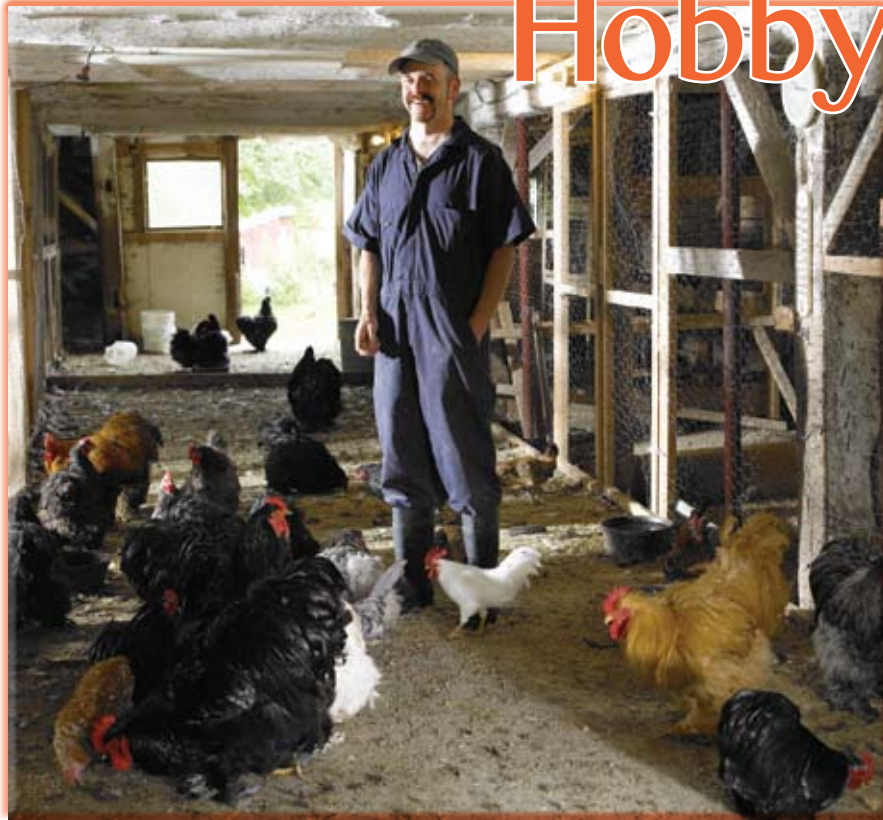


A Love of the Hobby



Jamie Matts with his treasured flock of chickens. Photos by Tamara Staples unless otherwise noted.

TAMARA STAPLES
NEW YORK

The day I spoke to Jamie Matts he was on his way to an auction to sell some of his chickens and he was a little afraid of who might buy them. He has heard that some of his birds are purchased for use in religious rituals. Jamie has hatched out some 900 chicks this year due to the warm weather and good hatching, a record year. He surveys all of his birds and can only come up with 12 he can part with. Although he doesn't get attached to his birds any longer, he still cares what happens to them. Jamie gets great pleasure out of knowing someone will enjoy his birds. He tells a story of a woman who purchased a few birds from South Carolina. Apparently, she and her husband of 70 years delight in sitting on the back porch to watch the birds play in the yard. For Jamie, these stories are the payoff.

Cochins are Jamie Matt's Bird of Choice

Jamie Matts began showing chickens at the State Fair when he was 14. When at 19,

he started showing at the more competitive one-day shows, he got serious. This was the year he chose the Cochin, and 20 years later this is still *his* bird.

Cochins became famous in the 1800s when this Chinese breed was given as a gift to Queen Victoria of England, who absolutely adored them. Since that time these birds have been a favorite at the Fancy. There are 13 rec-

ognized varieties, but Buff is the most popular color.

Cochins have a low stand but because of excessive feathering, they tend to look really large. They have a calm disposition and fantastic mothering qualities, although they do not lay well. This bird has a bright red face, yellow beak and toes, with a profusion of feathers.

Over the years, Jamie has bred these birds with such abundant tail feathers that they cannot mate naturally. Because of this difficulty, Jamie artificially inseminates his birds. This can be time consuming but the upside is that he has much more control over which birds mate, creating a more streamline lineage.

Why did Jamie pick the Cochin? The bird that still captivates so many years later? Personality was the seller. According to Jamie, Cochins are docile, friendly, and not flighty. The large and round Standard Cochin is seemingly majestic as they frolic on the lawn. However, their temperament might be compared to the Labrador Retriever: fun, happy, a little loopy.

Housing the birds is a tricky maneuver. Although you want them to have as much outside time as possible, you have to be careful of predators. Jamie builds the 4' x 8' chicken housing himself. He creates a batten style from rough cut board and tops it with a metal roof and an enclosed run area. He has 20 of these structures, each one taking up to five hours to assemble. These are just for summer, however. For the winter he brings them into his big barn for warmth. The barn, built in 1899, is half underground and the temperature rarely drops below freezing.



Jamie's love of poultry started a long time ago. Above: Already with his birds at twelve years of age. Right: At nine years old in 1981. Photos courtesy of Jamie Matts.





Jamie's prized Speckled Cochon at the Sussex Poultry Show.



Besides raising quality Cochon chickens, Jamie raises a variety of animals including 12 Pomeranian geese (above), 40 ducks, 25 pheasants, 13 peacocks, 7 horses, 8 rabbits, 5 barn cats and 4 Bordie Collie dogs (seen with Jamie below).

He Enjoys Plenty of Other Animals, Too

Jamie lives in Harpursville, New York with his wife and daughter on a large farm. When he's not at his day job as a dental hygienist or playing three weekly games of volleyball, he's busy with his other animals: 12 geese, 40 In-

dian Runner and Ring Neck ducks, Red Yellow Golden Pheasants, Lady Amherst Pheasants —about 25 total, 7 horses, 8 Lionhead rabbits, 13 peacocks, 4 Border Collie dogs, 5 barn cats.

Calling Jamie's love of raising and showing chickens a hobby seems almost trite when you consider the dedication.



Jamie Matts with a flock of Cochon chickens. Jamie has been raising poultry nearly all of his life, and showing poultry since he was 14.

Competition aside, the friendships made from this close circle far surpass the hobby itself. Jamie is almost misty eyed when he talks of the memories made there. The older breeders are generous with their wisdom and the young kids take pride in showing their first birds. This is a family affair. There are many life lessons in raising an animal and in all aspects of competition: patience, responsibility, kindness, good sportsmanship.

Getting ready for a show takes time. A week before the show, Jamie will bathe each show bird (around 15 or so) in a five-bucket wash system: first up the whitening shampoo (a bluing agent); then a white vinegar solution, to cut the soap; next is a fabric softener for fluffy feathers, followed by two buckets of clean water. He then uses a hair dryer to dry each bird, which takes about 20 minutes

each. At the show, the nails and beak get trimmed, wattles will get oil, and hopefully the stress of traveling won't cause the chickens to molt prematurely.

Not only is Jamie a judge who is in demand all over the United States and Canada, he also organizes, along with his wife Terri, the Cobleskill Show in Cobleskill, New York. This show is one of my favorites because it's smaller and quaint and is held in a beautiful old barn

during the fall. When I planned a trip to this show to photograph the birds, Jamie approached me with his generous smile and easy laugh. I knew I was in good hands. I was also fortunate enough to make the trip to Harpursville to see Jamie's beautifully landscaped farm he calls home.

If you are interested in Jamie's chickens, you can contact him by email: jamiescochincollection@cochinsrule.com.

Tamara Staples is the author of The Fairest Fowl: Portraits of Championship Chickens, published in 2001. Her second book of chicken portraits, The Magnificent Chicken: Portraits of the Fairest Fowl will be published in the spring of 2013 (Chronicle Books). Tamara is a commercial photographer who lives and works in New York City. Visit www.tamarastaples.wordpress.com or www.tamarastaples.com

The Poultry Meet of the Year

APA's Annual Meet Held at Southern Ohio Poultry Association's Fall Show

PAT HORSTMAN APA SECRETARY

The "Primo" poultry show of each year is the American Poultry Association's Annual Meet. This is where the best of the best come to compete with their top show birds; exhibitors attend from across the United States and Canada. If you are interested in increasing your flock, trading birds, or just learning more about exhibition poultry, you should make plans to attend.

To those of you who are unfamiliar with the American Poultry Association (APA), it is the oldest livestock organization in the United States, founded in 1873 by a group of individuals who wanted to see that purebred poultry stayed around. The purpose of the APA as stated in its Constitution is, "To promote and protect the standard-bred poultry industry in all its phases." Also to "Encourage and protect poultry shows as being the show window of our industry, an education for both breeder and public, and a means of interesting young future breeders in taking up poultry." The APA currently has over 2,500 members including 250 organizations who sponsor a poultry event each year throughout the U.S. and Canada. If you would like more information or would like to become a member, please contact: APA, P.O. Box 306, Burgettstown, PA 15021 or e-mail: secretaryapa@yahoo.com.

The dates for this year's annual meet are October 6 and 7 in Lucasville,

Ohio. Lucasville is located in southeast Ohio and is in the middle of very pretty country. The fairgrounds are all blacktop so you won't worry about having dust on the birds. The buildings are large and well lit and the people who put on the show are very friendly and "love" to talk about chickens to everyone.

The show is sponsored by the Southern Ohio Poultry Association. They have a very exhibitor-friendly show including a free lunch at noon on Saturday for exhibitors. They also give away over \$2,500 in cash prizes as well as some very large rosettes. The judges for this year include

an international cast of Dave Anderson, California; Tom Kelly, Ohio; and Heather Hayes, Troy Laroche, Paul Monteith, and James Carson, Canada. Judging the Junior show will be Danny Padgett and Tom Carey, Florida.

Make your plans now to attend this once-a-year special event. For show information e-mail sohiopasecretary@yahoo.com or contact David Adkins, 1988 Cook Rd., Lucasville, OH 45648.

Get more information about the American Poultry Association, their ad on page 22.



The show hall at the Southern Ohio Poultry Association's 2011 show—lots of space, people, and lots of birds!