

Fantails

Today & Yesterday

by Gerald Champ

After 59 years of Fantail breeding, showing, judging and real enjoyment, I am convinced that the most difficult task confronting those who devote their hobby talents to Fantail culture is the maintenance of top quality year after year.

I believe that I can say without fear of contradiction that the makeup of the present day Fantail embodies a greater number, and more exacting complex of points to achieve near perfection than any other variety of fancy pigeons. Therefore it requires real breeding genius and keen-eyed watchfulness to avoid the over emphasis of certain points, or neglect to overcome faults which, if permitted to gain a hold, may require several breeding seasons to correct.

The tendency to coddle "pet points", too, can quickly throw a well- balanced loft of high quality Fantails into a state of confusion. Many of us recall the craze for short legs -- then came the creepers and sled runner wings. Later, dig was the big emphasis and the result was long sided Fantails, some with pear shaped bodies, and a pathetic loss of those lovely ball-like round bodies with plenty of under depth. It has taken years to again get our Fantails so they have a well-rounded appearance when viewed from all angles. Perhaps too, the desire for top tail and greater length of feather has been responsible for the tendency to increased size. Let's keep 'em medium small and well balanced. It's no trick to put big tails on big bodies -- the secret is generous sized tails on small round bodies.

Perhaps the Fantail standard is not sufficiently clear, and we all have a tendency to "follow the trend" in our breeding operations. Anyway, it is easier to get off the beam than to stay on it, and once we permit our Fantails to get long sided,

short-in-back, narrow-in-front, soft of feather, etc., it will take both skill and a lot of patience, plus drastic culling to eliminate the trouble.

Beware of fads. Fix in your mind the overall "blending of points" that create the balanced Fantail and get rid of all birds that could upset the balance. It is not easy to maintain a top quality stud of Fantails over a period of years, and the fancier who accomplishes the feat deserves all the trophies and ribbons he can cart home.

It is an absolute folly to breed from Fantails that do not have a good leg setting, as correct leg setting is the foundation of the modern Fantail. Beware also of short backs, thick wings and wry necks. I still maintain that the most difficult point to perfect is the "necessary head pocket" -- it is the secret, or the answer, to erect tail carriage and perhaps the correct center head position on the cushion.

An easy walking motion and up-on-the-toes strut are other feathers so important and admirable in a top quality show Fantail. I have found that certain families of Fantails are easier to handle than others, which is of course an advantage in capturing the judge's eye. A bit of pen training is always advised as wild Fantails, regardless of their quality, have little chance of winning.

In conclusion, I say "never mate birds with the same faults. Don't waste time with wasters. Visit the shows. Fix in your mind what is desired in the Fantail of today and breed consistently to attain that goal. Keep accurate records and cull continually. The Fantail fancy is a delightful hobby. The rewards in friendships are many and your Fantails can accomplish wonders toward relieving the tension created by the confused world we are living in today."