

## Breeding Recessive Reds and Yellows

I was asked to write one of the articles in a series of color specials we are doing for the bulletin and got appointed the Recessives. Honestly, I don't think the others wanted to tackle this one too much and I happened to walk up at the wrong time. We all had a good-natured laugh about it but when it was all said and done, I still had the Recessives to write about.

I wrote an article for the bulletin a few years ago about recessives as a tribute to Marion Graham. He had spent no small amount of time, money and resources trying to get the color back in Recessives as there weren't many good colored ones around and even fewer with good Giant Homer type. As I had noted in the previous article, I read with interest the articles Marion, Ed Blaine, Earl Deal and others had submitted to the bulletin on this subject. Ray Arnold had some very good ones back in the 70's and was always ready to field questions. Their knowledge came from years of trial and error with limited success and a lot of frustration.

I evaluated this information along with the articles from Gerald Hobbs in APJ Giant Homer specials back in the 70's and 80's. This gave me ideas for a game plan to try and raise some quality Recessives. I knew this would not be a popular move as there was very little support given to the recessives. Most breeders in our general area shunned them in their lofts because of the difficulty they proposed in breeding them in top form.

When I finally decided to go ahead with the project, I had to patiently search for the right stock birds. I knew I wanted to get the spread factor and ash red on the same bird under the recessive factor. I had a pretty good black hen with good, jet black color. I was able to secure a Severson recessive yellow cock that Jack Anderson had bought a couple of years earlier. Out of this mating I raised three ash yellow t-pattern hens. The recessive factor they carried made them a funny colored ash yellow, almost like a mix of khaki and ash yellow. I kept the best one of these and mated it to a good type recessive red cock I bought at the '96 Futurity auction from Roger Schoon. This bird had very good type and a large, round head with a lot of backskull. He didn't have perfect color as he possessed a plum rump but was a good stock cock to work with. From this mating I raised several recessive red cocks that had good type, feather condition and most had good to very good color in that they were very red all the way through. I never had any trouble with white feathers popping out in the head or rump as some strains have

had. I have continued to breed birds from this family and they are still producing good to excellent color. I know I will soon have to outcross again to keep up the type. The last couple of years we have produced a few recessive yellows as the dilute factor from the old ash yellow t-pattern hen is finally showing up in the progeny.

I have tried other venues of outcrosses that didn't work out for me but I blame most of it on not having the proper stock birds to start with. One year I crossed an andalusian cock on a recessive red hen and got some of the prettiest birds you ever saw. They were a spread indigo with very reddish wing shields and a lot of red cast throughout the bird. I think this could be a good possibility for an outcross as this will really deepen the red color but you may fight dark colored beaks/toenails. The ones I raised were so far off in type that I couldn't justify using them and they became supper one night. I would stay away from using blue checks or bars as an outcross but a good, deep colored black is a good choice. Any of the ash red family is a good cross with a spread ash being my top choice because of the nice even color you will get. Browns would be good but you may fight pearl eyes from now on.

The main thing I think we need to recognize is that in order to upgrade these recessive colors, whether it be recessive red/yellow, milky, reduced, etc., we must mate them to our best birds in order to keep the quality blood in the stock parents. This takes a bit of commitment to take one of your key line breeders out of the loop for a year in order to carry on these colors. They are no doubt a great challenge and would be a miracle if one could raise one to championship status. However, with a lot of patience and a little time, it can be done.

Best of luck in the fun of color breeding, Mike Jones

#### Some Simple Guidelines for Color Mating

A key item to remember is red is dominant to blue and blue is dominant to brown. If the cock and hen are the same color and you get a color that is less dominant like dilute, reduced, or as stated a color less dominant the resulting offspring is always a hen. There are many in our club that are more up on colors than I am but I heard a number of questions on the colors I have listed on the chart. I did not get into the white because that is another subject. Others can give you more details on specific colors. Quinn has an excellent book that is easy to understand. You just have to take the time to read it and follow the steps. The Punnett Squares for others helps by following the colors and the resulting offspring based on the boxes. We have more colors in Giant Homers than most breeds. If you get various colors out of a mating on purchased birds just look at the color of the parents and look at what colors are less dominant (recessive) to the color they are and that will help you decide in some cases what sex the babies are before they are sexually mature.

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