

Recessive Reds in Giants

by: Stu Austin

So you want to raise recessive? I started raising recessive reds in 1977. I got the reds in show quality in the first five years, I didn't have any help from the other breeders as they were winning in the red classes of four or five, but couldn't win against other colors, they were always at the bottom.

When I started in Giants eleven years ago, my favourite color was still in recessive reds. In my other breed I always stayed away from recessive yellow, because it is one step lower in quality, just as in dilute, in all colors. In Giant Homers it seems as yellow is closer in quality to red, as it seems to clean up the color of smut.

In all pigeons regardless of color, white, red, yellow, black, blue, ash red, lavender, or whatever, carry two factors for pattern, bar and checker; in check you can have open checks, t-pattern (black check) and velvet, (closed T-pattern). I shall over simplify here and leave out the possibility of other factors such as barless, it is very rare in Giants, that I can disregard it. Every mating carries two factors for bar, or check. Also some birds carry the factor for light or white rump (bad for reds) while others carry the factors dark rump and darkish tails. Other factors which will affect the quality of color, includes sooty and smoky and other as yet unanalyzed plumage darkening factors. Also found in pigeons are 'grease feathers' and other gloss producing factors which give the colors depth and sheen, in contrast to the dry and dusty plumage.

Recessive red and yellow are more sensitive to their

background patterns and colors than, lets say blacks and duns. Reds and yellows carrying the bar or checker factors not only have plum colored or ashy rumps, can also have a distinctly visible tail bar and may even show a slaty wing bar. The best matings to overcome these faults are with a good rich red or yellow, or with a good rich deep colored black or solid dun, to substitute a closed T-pattern (velvet) that shows a dark color throughout it's body. Now when you choose a black, dun solid or even a spread ash red. Look at the outside tail feathers to see if there is a light stripe on the outside of each outside feather, we will call this an 'iridescent stripe'.

This stripe shows that the Giant that you are looking at is carrying bar or check. This will also show on recessive reds and yellows. Find a * homozygous spread and the iridescent stripe will not be there, now remember in Giants, they are hard to find, Do not use brown in any form as it will leave it's mark in all reds with the 'false pearl' eye.

Indigo is a great color to enhance and darken recessive red and yellow, but remember to use a velvet closed T-pattern with a dark body, if at all possible. You see this every once in awhile at the shows, not every year.

The ideal way to put quality back into recessive, every now and then a pair with type and quality of some other color will throw a recessive baby. The color is not very good for all of the reasons as described before, but type is better and an outcross is needed. Put this Giant on the best colored recessive you have and go back

with their babies to best colored to achieve your goal, it will work. Another thing to remember is a recessive red or yellow will never be homozygous, it will always carry another color and factors that you will not see on the bird, but red to red or yellow will always throw reds and yellows and hopefully good color.

Any Giant may contain masked features which will only be exposed as you mate the birds in different ways. Several generations are sometimes needed to 'set' color, but as a first determination it may be necessary to try several matings. But we know yellow to be dilute of red and is the same as red, so we mate a yellow hen to a cock of any color and their progeny will be carrying red. Then mate F1 to a red or yellow and you will get both reds and yellows. In order to get a yellow cock, mate a yellow hen to a red cock and their sons will carry one dilute chromosome to produce a yellow cock with a yellow hen. A yellow cock on a red hen is sex linked by dilution and you will produce yellow hens and red cocks that are split for yellow. When you get a yellow from two recessive reds it is sex linked and is always a hen.

* NOTE- You noticed I used the word homozygous meaning pure, and in this case I mean pure spread.

This article is not to scare anyone who wants to start in recessive reds and yellows, but to let breeders know of the challenges. It takes a lot of good choices in making matings, and a lot of luck.

THANKS; STU