

Infertility: Jack Anderson

I am sure that all owners of American Giant Homers has experienced infertility at one time or another. It usually occurs in the first round of eggs, but can continue even longer.

The American Giant Homer is a large bird that normally doesn't get a lot of exercise. Too, the breeders of these birds tend to over feed them and as a result we get some very fat birds (especially hens) that are non productive until the situation is corrected. The recommended cure is to place a pair of fertile eggs under the non productive pair and normally this corrects the situation. What actually happens is that the infertile pair become a lot more active feeding the youngsters and lose much of their excess weight.

Another cause of infertility is mating our birds up at too young a age. I am confident that hens reach breeding maturity much sooner than the cocks. It is advisable to mate young hens to old cocks and young cocks to old hens if possible. There are certainly exceptions, but many of our Giant breeders have found this to be the best policy.

Failure to clip the vent area and failure to keep this area free of an accumulation of manure can also cause infertility. Many of our Giant breeders like to cut an inch off of the tails of both the cocks and hens and feel that this gives the birds a much better possibility of fertilization.

The number of daylight hours is a very critical cause of infertility. An investment in a timer whereby you can have a minimum of 14 hours of light in your lofts can pay big dividends. Always set your timer to come on during the very early morning hours and go off after daylight so your birds will not be caught off of the nests during darkness.

Of course overcrowding of breeders in a loft or leaving young birds in the breeding loft after weaning can cause major problems.

I am assuming that all of our Giant breeders keep their birds wormed and free of parasites. A thorough cleaning of the breeding lofts periodically, clean and sanitary feeders and waters are a must and your personal observations of your birds can often solve many problems.

I am confident that even if you follow all of the above you will still experience some infertility in your Giants, but in my opinion your odds of raising a lot more youngsters will be greatly increased.