

THE CORONATION SUSSEX REAPPEARS

TASMANIAN BREEDER HAS A VERY RARE EXPERIENCE

When poultry breeder, Phillip Evans of Greeveston, Tas, about 70KM south of Hobart, wanted a new bloodline for his own flock of Light Sussex in 1993, he visited Victorian breeder, Cam Millwood's yard. There he saw some birds that he would liked and arranged a permit to import some fertile eggs. During his visit he noticed some birds in the flock that appeared 'washed out' in the usual Light Sussex black neck hackle, tail and wings.

When Phillip hatched his new line, several of the resulting chicks also had this 'washed out' look. Some of these were sold as cull but a few were kept outof curiosity and reared to adulthood. Instead of the usual black markings these birds had lavender or pale blue markings. It took a visit from Western Australian breeder. Kevin Nordstrom, to uncover something important. Kevin said that in his opinion they were not culls but were specimens of the Lavender Sussex.

A literature search was made and finally in an old book by Dr. J. Batty, breeds of poultry and their Characteristics, (UK 1990). mention was made of another variety of sussex, the Coronation. This was said to have the lavender or light blue markings. It appeared that Cam Millwood, now deceased, was unaware of this unusual varieties existence at that time.

As nobody had seen them before in Australian, Phillip, who had three hens and one six month old male, mated them to see what would happen. All the eggs were fertile and more importantly, hatched chicks were true to colour. From the non, Phillip



kept all he hatched, tried to get some of his culls back. And started breeding them seriously. All have bred true to the colour markings, and he believes he is the only beeder of this variety in the country. That it is rare is obvious by its absence from the varieties of Sussex listed in the latest edition of the British Poultry Standards.

Phillip is anxious to see this variety spread around Australia as he believes it may do better in terms of eggs productions in a climate that is basically warmer then Tasmania. To this end, he is hoping to show them at Bega, Canberra, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and possibly Perth this year, and offer all that he shows for sale. With his wife Cheryl, and two sons.

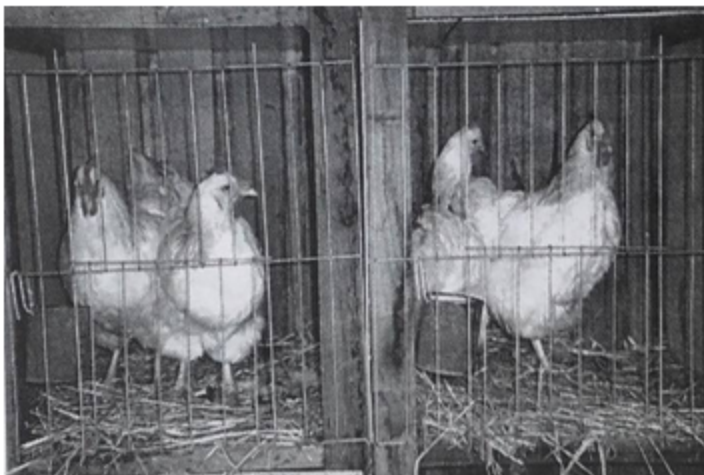


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Phillip, who is now in his 50s has a 6ha (14acres) property just out of Greeveston and he works as groundman at Dover District high school. Prior to this he was farm manager at Greeveston District High School farm until the government closed the farm down. He has lived all his life at Greeveston where his father had an orchard, and started an interest in poultry when he was 10 years old. His interest declined when their two boys became involved with competitive swimming and he did not show for a while, but started again in 1989.

Phillip said, "I started with Rhode Island Reds, Then I added the Sussex which are my real favourites. I am also interested in what is not prevalent in Tasmania and now have



in large softfeathers breeds, Australorps, Rhode Island Reds, Rhode Island Whites, Light, Speckled, Silver and Coronation Sussex, Dark Plymouth Rocks, Silver Laced and Columbian Wyandottes, and Welsummers."

"In softfeathers bantams I have Australorps, Sussex, Rhode Island Reds, and Rhode Islands Whites. In Hardfeathers i keep Modern Game, Indian Game and Old English Game and a few OEG Bantams. I show at different times of the year, exhibit-

ing something different for variation."

When asked about his general breeding program, Phillip replied, "You have to breed at least 20 birds each year to select from and carry on with a strain. As far as mating goes, I rarely mate pullets, the exception being late in the season to see what they will be like for the next year. The bulk of my matings are with two, three and four year old hens. These I mate with a cock bird if possible. If fertility and chicks are good you have to use the cock again."

"I line-breed as much as possible, but try to avoid mating brothers to sisters, going no closer than son to mother or father to daughter. None of my birds are vaccinated and I try to breed for natural immunity. This seems to have worked well, as I lose very few birds now. There was a Marek's disease problem in the early years which is not there any more. Sometimes they get a respiratory trouble in the autumn which coincides with starting to moult and the onset of colder days. When this happens, I use Dynamalin. My main losses are due to hawks taking young birds and this year I have a permit to trap them for relocation."

My hatching system varies. Sometimes I use artificial lights on big birds which take a long time to mature, to get eggs early in the season to be in time for shows. As there are few broodies around then, the eggs are hatched in an incubator and brooded artificially using pendoral ceramic radiant lamps.

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At other times, I may start eggs in a incubator, test for fertility, then put them under a broody. I also put incubator hatched chicks under a broody at times. " Phillip Continued.

I usually mate up soon after mid-June and get the eggs early in July for hatching. Because I want big birds I start them on chicks crumbles and feed this for 16 weeks. After this they go onto a grower ration for about eight weeks and then get a breeder type layer feed. When they are old enough I put the Young out in coops on grass where they get a lot of exercise. They stay there until the males start to fight and then have to be penned up."

Once the birds are penned, they are given some green vegetables and lawn clippings. I often encourage hens to go into an early moult by cutting out their usual diet and giving them a modest amount of wheat daily for four or five days."

Commenting on his birds length of life and productivity, Phillip said, " This varies, some breeder lay well while others only do so in the breeding season. However, pure breeds seem to live longer and keep producing as compared to commercial hens which lay well for one to two years only. I have had three years old Sussex hens lay 120 eggs in a breeding season. Rhode Island Whites lay well and produce a dark Brown egg, The Reds lay better with 200 or more eggs but the Shell are paler Brown. Some of the other purebreds do not lat as well except during the breeding season.



"I general hatch from 6-800 birds each season and this year hatched 130 Coronation Sussex, as I want to spread them around. In general I try to keep a minimum of at least 10 birds per breed. Being big birds, disposal of cull males for meat is easy on the asian market because they have flavour, while the pullets have a ready sale as backyard layers."

Phillip Evans is to be complimented for his foresight in keeping a few of his little known Sussex variety to see what would happen, and for his enthusiasm in trying to establish it in other states.