

Introduction

Standards for pure breeds of poultry owe their origin to the popularity of exhibition and the need for a benchmark by which they could be judged fairly; individual exhibits of a breed needed to be judged against each other. There was a call, therefore, for uniformity of type (encompassing body, shape, and carriage) together with a breed's colouration while taking into account egg production and table values in those classified as Utility. Apart from these attributes, Standards needed to embody the ideal characteristics which defined not only each individual breed to make them distinctive from others but also the specific colours and markings of particular varieties within a breed. Standards needed to be formulated to serve as a guide for breeders, exhibitors, and judges alike.

It was as long ago as 1865 that the Poultry Club authorised the publication of the first *Standard of Excellence in Exhibition Poultry*, edited by W.B. Tegetmeier and published by Groombridge & Sons. This was the first book of its kind in the world. Two years later, in 1867, it was adopted by the American Poultry Society and published in the United States by A.M. Halsted, complete with alterations and additions to suit the fancy in America.

The original Poultry Club lasted just three years before being disbanded with the second, and current, Poultry Club of Great Britain being founded in 1877. During the intervening period, W.B. Tegetmeier's *The Poultry Book* was published in 1867, followed by a new edition in 1873. This book contained not only the original British 'Standards of Excellence' but outlined comparisons with those of America – notably that the original 'Scale of Points' for each exhibit was 15 in Britain while being 100 across the Atlantic.

It was Lewis Wright who next published Standards for exhibition poultry in his 1873 work *The Illustrated Book of Poultry*, making every attempt to achieve uniformity in the way the Standards were set out. Each bird was considered perfect to begin with and allocated 100 'Points of Merit', from which various points for 'Defects to be Deducted' were to be subtracted. The defects and points varied from breed to breed. Clearly, after this, it must have been realised that 15 points were inadequate when grading exhibits and, in Britain too, the 'Scale of Points' in each breed Standard was to total 100 from then on.

A Scale of Points for each breed is important. While judges in Britain may not necessarily award a percentage mark when awarding prizes, it is a breed's 'Scale of Points' which highlights, at a glance, the features which are regarded as significantly important for that particular breed. This may or may not be so apparent in the actual wording of the Standards as the following examples reveal: 'Colour' in Andalusians accounting for 50 points, 60 in a Hamburg, but just 9 in Old English Game Bantams, while a Norfolk Black Turkey's 'Head' is considered to be worth 20 points in comparison with a lowly 5 for this feature in a Sebastopol Goose where 'Conditioning & Feathering' attract 40 points. Scales of Points can be useful, too, when comparisons between different breeds and species are made to arrive at the award of Show Champion.

After the second Poultry Club was founded in 1877, its initial series of Standards Books for Poultry was initiated. The first edition of *Poultry Club Standards*, edited by Alexander Comyns, was published by the Poultry Club in 1886 with subsequent editions of 1901

edited by T. Threlford, published by Casell & Company; 1905 edited by Lewis Wright, also published by Casell & Company; 1910, 1922, and the sixth in 1923, all edited by William W. Broomhead; then the seventh in 1926, with the last of the first series, the eighth, published in 1930. Following the Second World War, *Poultry World* took over as publisher and here the modern-day series of editions began. The first edition was published in 1954; the second in 1960; the third in 1971, edited by C.G. May; the fourth in 1982, edited by David Hawksworth; and then the fifth in 1997 and sixth in 2008 were both edited by Victoria Roberts. Publishers changed during the series to Butterworths, to Blackwell, and to John Wiley & Sons, which acquired Blackwell Publishing in 2007 to become Wiley Blackwell.

Right from the very beginning, therefore, the Poultry Club has remained guardian of the Standards without necessarily being the body responsible for framing them. This task is normally undertaken by the specialist Breed Club or by the originator of a new breed or variety. So seriously, however, is this guardianship imposed, and accepted by the clubs, that until a new variety is admitted to Standard it remains unrecognised by show authorities whose events are staged under the rules of the Poultry Club of Great Britain.

Current procedures for the admittance of a new breed or variety of an existing breed to Standard are comprehensive. A Provisional Standard must first be submitted to the relevant Breed Club not only for its recommendation but also for postal ballot approval by its members. Once this is received, the proposed Standard with particulars of origin and breeding together with a list of breeders and the ballot papers must then be submitted for full standardisation by the Poultry Club. This is when further criteria, including a signed declaration, have to be met – the breed or variety has to satisfy Council as to its purity and whether it breeds true to type and colour; specimens of the proposed breed or variety need to have been exhibited in non-Standard classes; three rung generations of the new breed or colour should be available for inspection by the Poultry Club; a new breed has to possess distinctive characteristics and a new colour variety has to conform to the character of the breed concerned. The only exception to these procedures is when a recognised breed is imported from another country in which it has already been accepted to Standard.

Since the middle of the last century the introduction of hybrid strains of layers and broilers has meant that, commercially, pure breeds of poultry have been kept less and less. However, the fact that these hybrids owe their origin to Standard pure bred poultry is appreciated. The Poultry Club not only represents our hobby with the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) but as custodian of British Poultry Standards is involved with the preservation of these traditional breeds, especially those that have originated in Britain. The significance of the pool of genetic resources retained in the pure breeds is recognised as important should hybrid strains need to be remade due to disease.

To safeguard publication interests the Poultry Club has agreed not to accept or authorise publication of any alterations to existing Standards for a period of two years from the issue of this edition. The Poultry Club, through its affiliated Breed Clubs, maintains the strictest watch on these Standards of Excellence. It will not allow alterations or amendments until its governing Council has made a thorough examination of all the circumstances. Once established, whole-scale alterations to existing Standards due to fashion should not happen. They should not stray too far from the original. In this way the Poultry Club can be truly said to be the guardian of the Standards and so plays its part in ensuring that our pure breeds of poultry will be part of the heritage we pass on to future generations.

Indeed, with recent advances in the science of agricultural feeds, some breeds may be increasing in size. This is less an issue for large fowl examples; however, in order to maintain the dichotomy between the two sizes of most breeds, it is important for breeders and ourselves as the guardians of the Standards to maintain a watchful eye on size deterioration. Furthermore, greater numbers of breeds are seeing decreases in the size

differences between their bantam and large fowl equivalents – a worrying factor when assessing Standards with strictly stipulated weights. The Standards established within this and earlier editions provide distinct judging points to guide and inform the judge, exhibitor, and breeder. Although strictly defined, each Standard can be used as a guide to establish the viability of stock and provides the blueprint for judges to carry out their duties at shows.

This edition has been thoroughly revised and edited, with numerous changes to breed pictures and profiles providing a well-defined update for contemporary breeding, judging, and exhibiting. It is also intended for use as a manual to aid in the instruction and identification of breeds for the novice through to the veterinary surgeon.

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