

NEWSLETTER

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The UK Spanish Chicken Breeders Group Newsletter 3

Welcome

Welcome to our end of year newsletter. Congratulations go to Andy Marshall for winning best Spanish at the National this month and being placed second with his trio of Spanish. Congratulations also to the other participants namely Eleanor Russell (who travels all the way from Northern Ireland), Chris Hull & Brian Read. Let's see if we can increase numbers at the 2020 shows. Congratulations also to the participants at the Federation show and to Steve Edwards for best of breed. Congratulations to Chris Hull for winning Reserve Rare with his Spanish Cockerel at Billington.

Spanish Chicken Breeders Group meeting held 25th September 2019 @ RBST Offices, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire – MEETING NOTES, (thanks for helping Lucy)

Attended:- Paul Morgan, Andy Marshall, Gareth Gough, Daren Norman, Lucy & Brian Miller, Eleanor Russell, John Smith, Adrian Forester, Patricia Fieldhouse (RPS) Christopher Price (RBST)



Prior to caging some 25 birds we were each provided with a copy of the DEFRA document Bio-security Information for Poultry Gatherings Participants and also of Poultry Gathering. A Participant Declaration Form was duly completed and returned.

Having settled the birds in the cages in the adjoining barn an informal discussion continued over coffee prior to the start of the meeting.

Breed Registrar Paul Morgan started the meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for taking the time to attend and further thanked people for undertaking such lengthy journeys.

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It was noted that the National Agricultural Centre (NAC) Stoneleigh's location was originally chosen as a "central" location making access from all parts of the UK possible.

The meeting started with Introductions of all those attending.

Paul outlined the Agenda for the day :-

Guest Speaker – Andy Marshall

Tea & Coffee

Discussion outside in the barn with Andy individually assessing and commenting on members birds and a general informal discussion.

Lunch

Presentation by Rare Breed Survival Trust (RBST) CEO - Christopher Price

Presentation by Rare Poultry Society (RPS) Secretary – Patricia Fieldhouse

General discussion

Tea and Coffee, conclusions of the meeting.

Close

Paul was happy to Introduce Andy Marshall as guest speaker.

Andy's breeding of Spanish and other breeds goes back over many years and he regularly exhibits his birds at major shows where he has won many prizes and accolades over the years.

Andy is also a show judge and a regular contributor in the poultry press. Indeed Andy has allowed some of his articles to be reproduced on our website.

Andy started by asking "why keep Spanish chickens?"

Their obvious outstanding beauty, rarity and personality and many have kept them as children.

They are a heritage breed and a breed of historic importance (see genetics article on website)

Records show they were once the primary provider of white eggs in the country but there are no records of the origin of the name Spanish. They have always been called Spanish in the UK whilst in the rest of the world they are referred to as White Faced Black Spanish.

Chickens need vigour to keep viruses away – they need to be able to exert their natural behaviour.

There are 5 freedoms required'

- **FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST.** by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor.
- **FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT.** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- **FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY OR DISEASE. ...**
- **FREEDOM TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOR. ...**
- **FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND DISTRESS.**

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The most important thing when breeding is health and vigour.

Health = vigour = testosterone = fertility

Feisty males make best breeders as they have more vigour.

Females will happily roost up in trees in all weathers but males must be looked after due to their face (Vaseline comb helps protect but not the lobe or wattles as this can lead to blistering and irritation – food sticks to it etc)

Diet – grass, space, fresh air, pellets not mash (as mash sticks to the comb and irritates, also encourages female to peck the face of the male and damage it).

Fast changes in diet are undesirable. Even when changing food brand introduce it over several days.

Hard grain given 1/2hr before bed in cold weather keeps them warm.

Baby chicks – introduce carrots from the start (full of trace elements). Carotene in carrots eventually promotes good egg colour. They learn to eat new things much better at this age.

Encourage them to peck at carrot by smearing oil on it and sticking some of the food to the outside.

Chick crumb to start and introduce growers over 3 week period, then introduce layers slowly 3 weeks before POL .

Chick flint grit should be given for 1st 10 weeks at least and is very important.

Treats are unnecessary.

Spanish do not like confinement at all (different to Minorca's). Separate males early to avoid damage to lobes. Easi-chick is one of the best types of bedding especially for the males as it is dust extracted so doesn't irritate the lobes.

Important not to feed on wet ground.

Airy dry conditions for males and leave females outside wherever possible.

Looks

Black is the only colour standardised in both large and bantam. Blue and white are non standard as they are so rare. Recreated in the 1980's but no one wanted them and it's difficult to breed clean examples (blue tend to be smutty, white often have a black feather or two!)

Leg colour slate blue (Minorca's are black). Leg colour must be correct in males but females are less important as the leg will fade as they come into lay.

Males - White lobe must go below the wattle. The bottom should be rounded not pointed.

Any red in the face is serious fault.

Eye's should be dark as possible.

Comb should follow the line of the head.

Females - should show a bit of thigh. Be broad and heavy (a handful).

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In pullets the comb when flopped over should not obscure the eye (ideally should fall at right angles).
+ White between the wattles.

White tips to feathers are a fault in exhibition birds.

Serious faults:

Knock knees

Rye Tail (lays one side)

Squirrel tail (back on itself)

Side sprigs on comb.

All above are hereditary - once you breed it in you won't get rid of it.

When buying in stock it is better to buy females if you have a good example of a cockerel.

If you breed good green sheen to good green sheen you can get purple barring in the feathers

(can also caused by diet changes including food brand).

To breed good green sheen – look for a cockerel with red feather in the hackle!

Start hatching early in the year to produce birds ready to be shown in the main two shows of the year at the National & Federation both held in December.

Prepare enough pen space to be able to separate the chicks into males and females at around 10 weeks of age.

This will encourage the females to relax and eat normally. As if males and females are left together for too long the males can pester the females away from the food and their growth is therefore affected.

Selection of the best chicks versus the sub standard chicks is important and is a gradual process which is necessary to enable selection of young stock as replacements or for sale.

One big threat in the Poultry World is bronchial virus infectious coryza.

The UK was clear 20 years ago but vaccination is compulsory in Europe so virus has been reintroduced to the UK via imported birds who are carriers due to vaccine.

Infectious coryza is an acute respiratory disease of chickens characterized by nasal discharge, sneezing, and swelling of the face under the eyes. ...

The disease is seen only in chickens

THE END - Any questions

Tea and Coffee

The discussions which followed were held outside in the barn with Andy assessing and commenting on members birds. Andy explained the finer points of the breed and good points and bad points of the birds on show.

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His favourite bird on the day was Adrian's cockerel.

Discussions continued over Lunch.

Presentation by :- Rare Breed Survival Trust (RBST) CEO - Christopher Price

Paul introduced Christopher and firstly thanked him and his staff for the use of their facilities, refreshments and their help in organising the day.

Christopher started by saying he and his staff were happy to welcome Spanish Breeders to the RBST Stoneleigh Offices. He then outlined the RBST aspirations and goals in the support of breeds on the RBST Watchlist. In particular poultry and in our case the Spanish Breed and he was happy to be able to support our breed in new and innovative ways particularly within the framework of the 3 yr Breeding Programs.

Presentation by Rare Poultry Society (RPS) Secretary – Patricia Fieldhouse

Paul introduced Patricia and firstly thanked her for the use of her cages for displaying the birds.

Patricia outlined the aspirations of the RPS in promoting and supporting the chosen breeds on the 3 year Breeding Program. She continued by discussing the need for co- ordination of activities and promotion of the Spanish breed and that

she and Paul were working closely in this regard.

Patricia outlined the need for an up to date census as it appears the number of Spanish breeders are not showing up as members of the RPS in their annual survey. Paul agreed to share his census information when available to better assess the position of the Spanish breed at the current time.

Patricia responded to Paul's question on the application for the Spanish to be promoted by RPS to be allowed us to join the DEFRA Breeds at Risk Register. Patricia responded by saying she is coordinating these applications but further stressed the need for census accountability as required by DEFRA.

This to justify supporting those breeds most active when applying to join the scheme. For instance the numbers of breeders and birds Paul mentioned will show the increases in their numbers in the last 2 years . Patricia ended by saying this was the second such breeders meeting held this year and that it is a requirement of the breeding program to meet every year. She is very positive that it is worthwhile for breeders to meet at least annually to compare notes and she looked forward to our 2020 meeting.

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Patricia also thanked Christopher for the help he and his staff provided to her in organising the meeting and the use of the facilities and refreshments etc.

As time was getting short it was agreed to combine the general discussions and conclusion on the day over tea and coffee as some people had long journeys to make.

It was generally agreed that it was a worthwhile day and something that would be good to repeat in 2020. Paul said that he hoped more people could be encouraged to attend in 2020 as the breeder base was growing steadily. It was further agreed that everyone had learnt something on the day and in particular Andy's presentation gave ideas on the quality breeders should strive to achieve.

They thanked Andy once more

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