

# **EXAMINING SOME COMMON DEFECTS**

by Bob Vaughn

A question often asked is “What do you look at first when examining or culling birds”. Everyone has their pet peeves that grab their attention. Some people notice immediately the number of spikes a bird has on its comb and wouldn’t think of keeping a bird without the right number of spikes. I don’t pay much attention if a bird is shy or long a spike as long as the comb is in proportion to the bird, follows the head and looks balanced. I do immediately notice a bird that has even slightly curved toes, and never use a bird with a curved toe in the breeding pen. There are others who don’t pay much attention to toes unless they are curved or crooked to the extreme. And the list goes on as to what “bugs” one person and not another. Lets take a look at some of the more common defects to watch for in Jersey Giants and their relative importance.

First, how serious is a particular defect? In brief, the American Poultry Association definition in their Standard of Perfection section “Cutting For Defects” which we abide by states that “The point cuts for defects in any section determine the importance to be attached to such defects in relation to the total value of that section as set forth in the scale of points.”

Which defects are the most serious? The following lists some of the more common cuts for defects, but not all as listed in the APA Standard and the point cuts for each. ( ) Are my comments added.

2 points -----each for the first pound and second pound underweight. More than 2 pounds underweight, a disqualification.

2 points -----each for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>d</sup> pound overweight. No cut for the first pound overweight. (I’m not aware of anyone actually cutting a Giant for being a couple of pounds overweight)

2 to 5 points ----for crooked keel or breast-bone

2 to 2 1/2 points -for a split tail in a cockerel or pullet. (A disqualification in a cock or hen)

1/2 to 2 points ----for each crooked toe ( A deformed foot is a disqualification)

1/2 to 2 points ----for purple barring

1/2 to 1 point ----each for a coarse comb or waddles

1/4 to 1 point ----for a color of iris foreign to variety ( A bay colored eye is a disqualification in Whites)

1/4 to 1 point ----for lack of luster or sheen as required (Greenish sheen required on blacks)

1/2 point -----for each comb point more or less than required (6 well defined serrated points required)

1/2 point -----for a horny well defined spur on females

It is important to note that the most critical areas for Jersey Giants are the economical ones – weight, and keel or breastbone. These are what we should be giving the greatest emphasis to. As my son Richard always says, “You can’t judge a Giant until you handle it”. We don’t just want a big looking chicken made up of a lot of fluff. Then of course along with the weight and size we are looking for that distinctive Jersey Giant shape, and not just a big black, blue or white chicken.

After size, weight, and type we quickly drop down to some of the issues that catch the eye of us exhibition people first but have less and generally similar importance in the overall scheme of things – number of points on the comb, slightly curved or crooked toes, purple barring, eye color, etc. These issues are important to work on but they are defects not disqualifications and we need to remember not to go overboard about them. But yes, I’m just like the rest of you, I know what I like and I’ll keep looking first at the things that “bug” me and then try to keep them in perspective as I look at the overall package that each bird presents.

So in summary, these are some of the more common defects we see in Giants that we need to be aware of and work on eliminating from our birds. Remember the quote in the heading of our Giant club newsletters - “It is reasonable to have perfection in our eye that we may always advance towards it, though we know that it can never be reached”