

Breeding Champion Chinese Owls

By Rick Tucker, March 2014

Since you have decided to breed, raise and show Chinese Owls on a competitive level, I will try to tell you what has worked for me. Study the standard first and foremost understand how every part of the standard comes together to form the overall balanced ideal bird. The key word is balance, more so today than ever before, certified Chinese Owl judges are judging to the standard. I have seen in the last eight to ten years more judges picking balanced birds nationwide.

The most important part of the standard to me is carriage, only 10 points but in my opinion the most important. I call it “show ability”. I look for birds that when put in a show pen will go right to station and stand for long periods of time with little or no coaxing.

I look for birds that are smooth over the back and have what I call roller back cover. The secondary flights should fit tightly over the back covering the rump. Try to avoid open backed birds and rough over the back, reversed or turned feathers on the back. Turned feathers on the back will show up even if you breed from good smooth backed birds. It is a kick back from original imports many years ago.

Forked or split tail in Chinese Owls is a disqualification. Normally it will affect the outside tail feathers being deformed. I breed for a tight stacked tail which will result in a tight rump and in turn help control forked tails. I have not bred from forked tailed for many years but will still get one from time to time. Forked tail is also a kick back from original imports.

The upper breast frill above the horizontal part is what I call the top frill. I breed for top frill that is wide above the shoulders and comes up over top of the shoulders. To obtain and maintain this quality, I do not breed from birds that have a lot of down frill.

If you pull the outer layer of the top frill down towards the horizontal part you will see the under layer of the top frill growing towards the horizontal part. Some birds have more down frill than others. You can pull some of their down frill out on both sides of the chest. When this is done, it will let the upper frill come further up towards the neck frill and give an appearance of more and higher top frill. This is done for showing purposes. I seldom, if ever, do this. I prefer to breed for less down frill. Through select breeding you can breed better and more natural top frilled birds.

The lower breast frill below the horizontal part is very well developed in today’s Chinese Owl. When looking at the bird from the front you want the upper frill to be as wide as the lower part of the bottom frill, evenly proportioned on both sides. In other words, you do not want the very bottom of the frill to be wider than the top of the top frill. You do not want the frill to have a pyramid appearance, narrow at the top and very wide at the bottom.

The neck frill should have a bowl appearance, not fitting close to the neck. It should be closed in the front with a break behind the head. The back of the head and down to the back

should be as smooth as possible. Some birds have collar extensions or so called horns. They may even have a slight mane down the back of the neck. This type of collar most often will excel in height reaching the bottom of the eye cere. The pre-mentioned type of collar should never be mated together, however mated to a bird that is weak in the collar. Many Chinese Owls shown today lack in the collar height. When viewed from the side profile it does not reach the bottom of the eye cere. To correct this fault look for birds that are long cast. The longer casted birds will almost always have higher collar height. You can use these long casted birds to improve collar height as long as they station properly and have no disqualifications.

When picking mates, always mate station to station. Without station you do not have a show bird. To make improvements in your birds mate birds that excel in some area to a bird that needs improvement in that area. After a couple seasons if your progress isn't where you want it to be, look to bring in a bird or two to improve your stock. Even though I do very well with my birds at the shows, I am always looking for birds to complement mine. The key to success is never be satisfied with the quality of your birds. I believe you need to always try to improve. Above all enjoy your birds. Go to shows, meet and talk to as many breeders as you can. You will make long lasting friends and they will become as important to you as the birds themselves.