

## MODERN GAMES: AN INTRODUCTION

*I have had the fortune of knowing several Master Breeders of this fine breed . The term 'Master Breeder' that I use is not the loose term that it is today in many circles, but from a time when it meant just that - someone who had mastered the knowledge to produce birds that met the standard . I give great thanks to 3 gentlemen in particular for giving me knowledge, taking time to explain the fundamentals of this breed, and being my friends and mentors. They are, by name and in no particular order, Mr. Fred Kentner of Acton, Ontario, Canada, Mr. Gordon Ridler of Guelph, Ontario, Canada and Mr. Weldon Idol of Kernersville, North Carolina, USA. These fine gentlemen were the information highway of their day for the modern breed and I feel very fortunate to have had the privilege to know them. Gordon is still with us and is still actively breeding birds and has a great flock of BB Red Moderns. Unfortunately, Mr. Kentner and Mr. Idol have passed on to their eternal reward. Gone but not forgotten. To these three men I dedicate this article .*

*-Troy LaRoche, Modern Game Admirer, Breeder and Exhibitor*

Modern type must be in the forefront of our minds at all times. It is what makes our breed. The combination of short bodies and long neck and legs are a site to behold when right, although not always the easiest combination to obtain.

Let's break down the sections of the bird: The neck and head of the ideal modern should be of a long slender nature. Eyes as close to the top of the head as possible. Clear and bright showing vigor and life. The neck should also be slender with an arc that gives a long snaky appearance.

The body of an ideal bird can be described as heart-shaped when looking at it from the top of the cage & showing great shoulders. A common fault is a long tube-like or narrow-shaped body. The body should be wide at the front of the bird (shoulder area with a curving outward appearance) and tapering to the vent in an elongated heart-shaped fashion. Birds that are the same width from front to back are not conducive to production. This became apparent when I obtained a line of birds that had this body type. The females laid but only a few eggs and most were so small they were useless for reproduction. These birds were quickly eliminated from my flock. The underline of the body of a modern game of good form should be of a smooth, convex nature. It has been described to me by many old timers as 'a half of an orange slightly tilted in an upward direction.' Another description is that of a half moon. In either case they should have a round underline as described.

Tail angles are always a point of controversy. The APA & ABA standards (North America) call for a tail to be carried at near horizontal. The UK standard allows for a higher carriage. In either case, the tails should be formed in a whipped manner. This is a true breed characteristic.

The main and obvious feature of the Modern is its extensively long legs. Although length of leg is of great consideration, leg placement is also of concern. In order to be balanced, the bird must have its legs in the middle of the body. If this is not the case, the bird will either rear backwards, giving the appearance of being balloon-fronted and dropping its tail, or lean forward and not show its full potential of height, and appear to be looking for something on the ground. In laymen's terms the bird needs to get its balance in order to walk freely and not lean. If the legs are not in the center of its body, either of the conditions I have explained will occur to compensate imbalance.

The overall appearance of a good modern should be a bird of style, grace and substance. This is not to be confused with coarseness in combination with height or a short frail bird of poor muscle and body tone. An even balance of fullness of body, with finesse of type and an exaggerated element of height, is the desired feature of a good modern.

For the showroom, a modern must be trained to pose. This feature is in most of the successful lines of birds out there. For the most part it is an inherited quality. If a bird is wild it has little or no chance of winning in hot completion. Many methods have been used over the years to train this desired feature in moderns. Whether you train baiting birds with treats ranging from bread, cheese, dog food, etc., to training strictly with a judging stick or finger, the goal is the same: getting the bird to pose for the judge to show all the above attributes it has to its fullest potential. Many use a combination of all these methods to ensure the judge is able to get the bird to show to the best of its ability.

The modern game has many features that make it attractive to the novice as well as the veteran breeder and exhibitor. The modern's striking features are only increased with the various color patterns that they are bred in. The APA and ABA currently recognizes the following color varieties: Black, Black Red ( BB), Birchen, Brown Red, Blue, Lemon Blue, Silver Blue, Silver Duckwing, Golden Duckwing, Red Pyle, Blue Red, Wheaten, and White. The ABA recognizes all of these varieties as well as Barred, Creole, Cuckoo, Ginger Red & Self Blue.

In closing, I hope this small article has inspired you to explore the -possibility of keeping one of poultry's most intriguing breeds of chicken. The bird that has it all .....Style, Grace, Personality and Challenge - The Modern Game.

-Troy Laroche   Georgetown, Ontario, Canada