

Wash, shampoo, and dry, please

Poultry fancier prepares birds for Farm Show

BY JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent

RED LION — In preparation for the Pennsylvania Farm Show, exhibitors have been busy clipping claws, currying steers, scrubbing hogs and shearing sheep.

And some, like Don Flory of Red Lion R2, have been hard at work shampooing their chickens.

Although Flory has been a poultry fancier and show competitor for 25 years, this is the first year he's ever attended the Farm Show with his collection of bantam varieties.

"These are strictly show chickens, and it's strictly a hobby," he assures visitors enchanted by the small clucking birds.

With a chuckle he insists, "There's no way you could make a living at this."

The Flory family really does wash these bantams before taking them to poultry shows.

"We put them in a container, like a basin, of warm water and wet their feathers thoroughly. Then we work in a regular shampoo or a mild soap to get them clean," explains Don's wife, Jackie.

"And then we dry them with a hair dryer," she adds.

Bantam bathing has presented an occasional problem from time to time. Jackie Flory remembers a year long ago, soon after Don began showing the birds, when he asked their small daughters to help him prepare for a show by washing the bantams while he was away at work.

But the two youngsters didn't quite understand the concept that the bantams' heads had to stay out of the water while the feathers went in. They immersed the show birds and to their dismay drowned them.

Flory's flock of 40 to 50 show bantams includes White Rocks, White Rosecombs, White Cochins and Dark Cornish varieties. While he specializes in the small chickens, he notes that most breeds of chickens do have both bantam and the standard-size lines.

Most of the year, the flock is given the run of the backyard and the adjacent sheep pens that house the Flory children's 4-H project animals. About a hundred chicks are raised each year, hatched with a small incubator.

Over recent years, the bantam population has been joined by other feathered species. Jackie acquired her

favorites, "Pete a mostly-tame peacock and his mate, plus a pen of graceful white doves. One corner of the poultry house is filled with cooing pigeons, in muted shades of grays and browns.

Flory is a long-time member of the York County Poultry Fanciers, which sponsors a show annually at the poultry exhibit hall of the York Fairgrounds. There's even a poultry fanciers' publication that originates in York, the Poultry Press, which carries news, sales notices and advertising related to the show bird hobby.

Show requirements for the different breeds vary according to the average weight of these birds in ounces, not pounds. Although these tiny bantams are similar in overall size,

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One of Don Flory's most recent show poultry additions is this small, but solid-built, Dark Cornish bantam.

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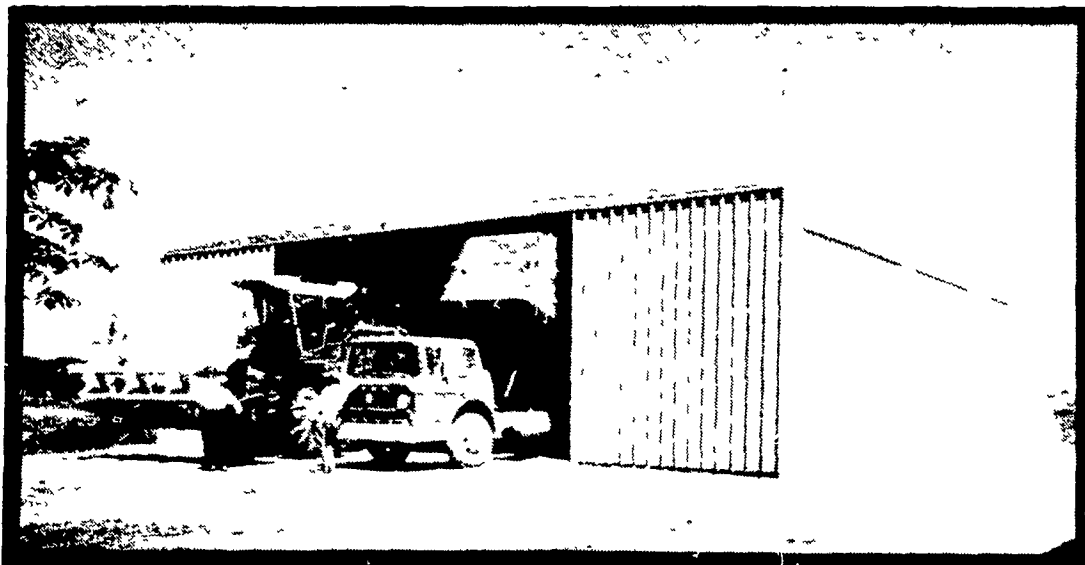
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