

# Coronations Today

By Philip Evans

The introduction of Coronation Sussex in the late 1990s was tremendously exciting, Philip Evans their developer is even happier about this attractive variety today.

It is now 27 years since the first Coronation Sussex appeared and my breeding initiative featured in a story introducing the variety in the June/July 1998 issue of AP. I'm still breeding this line and the birds have improved in size, type and markings over the years.

I still breed and show poultry, but with a limited range of breeds and less often. The breeding sheds have only Light and Coronation Sussex, RIR (large and bantam), New Hampshire and large Indian Game. I'm more conservative in the numbers bred these days, but I still like to have young ones coming along to show and sell off any surplus.

## The Lavender Colour

I'm a hands-on person so haven't gone into the genetics involved with the lavender gene. I have found my lavender bred to lavender (Coronation) have only ever produced lavenders in all the 27 years, no other colours. And I've not mated them with Light Sussex or any other colour.

## Breeding Practice

With breeding birds I choose my best type/colour and mate best to best. This year I'm only breeding from eight females, one cock and three cockerels and am aiming to hatch and rear about 50 young.

Breeding began in late July and adult birds are fed Laucke Showbird Breeder, wheat and greens and vegies from the garden. Once breeding has finished they're allowed to forage outdoors in suitable weather. All birds are run on deep litter in the pens.

## Hatching and Rearing

In the main I use an incubator for hatching, but when a broody is available I'm happy to use her. Chicks are reared in brooders, usually there is a mix of breeds and they grow together. Putting grass in each day for pecking over seems to help limit bullying – all the breeds produce strong, robust active chicks – and it reduces feather pecking too so this doesn't



One of Philip's well grown pullets.

become a big problem for me. I do ensure feed is available at all times.

## Rearing in Tassie

I'm based with my wife Cheryl at Geeveston, which is 70km south of Hobart. The cooler conditions in Tassie are very suitable for the larger birds with weight gain excellent and feathering good and tighter than on Sussex from warmer areas.

I don't have any problem meeting the standard size required for the large birds. I place size of both males and females high on selection criteria so good size and weight result in the spring.

Readers might be interested in the weights of the birds I'm using in the breeding pens this year. *The Australian*

*Poultry Standards* weights for Sussex large fowl are, male: 4.10kg, and female: 3.2kg minimum. My cock bird (2–3 years old) is 5.3kg, the hens (also 2–3 years old) are 4.1–4.5kg, cockerels (10 months old) are 4.4–4.8kg and pullets (also 10 months) are 3.5–4.0kg.

Culling is based around bird size, poor type, poor markings and I'm especially careful of feet as bent toes were prevalent in the early years. Birds that don't make the grade are redirected to the table.

## Well-Earned Success

The development of the Coronation wasn't a planned exercise, I'd bought Light Sussex eggs from a Victorian breeder, the late Cam Millwood, and when





*Philip checking one of the females.*



*Cockerels weigh between 4.4–4.8kg.*

I'd visited his place had noticed a few birds running around with washed out markings. When I hatched the eggs I'd bought several chicks displayed this characteristic, with lavender or blue markings instead of black. I'd thought of them as culls but a visiting fancier from WA suggested they were Lavender Sussex and a search through poultry books found mention of a variety called Coronation that was said to have lavender or light blue markings.

I mentioned in the article that was featured in AP that I was anxious to see the variety spread around Australia, as I believed egg output would be good in warmer areas.

The Coronation was taken up Australia wide and eggs made their way to America via Mark Tully, Qld, around 2007. We know since then that fertile eggs were sourced in the US and taken to the Netherlands by Connie Veenendaal and that the variety is growing in popularity. It seems it is

going to make it into the *European Poultry Standards*, which is great.

I'm proud that this all started from here in my backyard in Tasmania.

If anyone wants information they can call me ph [redacted] Since down-sizing I have limited numbers of eggs or birds for sale.

Note that 'The Coronation Sussex Reappears' was featured back in AP Vol 9, No 2. ❖



*A close up of the neck hackle with the lavender markings.*

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