

Evaluating Your Birds.....Two Important Tools

By Rip Stalvey

I'm regularly asked about tools for evaluating birds. Here's what I tell people that ask; if you can't do a good job evaluating birds it will be far more difficult to make improvements each year.

There are two tools that you have at your disposal that are invaluable. The first tool is your eyes and the second is your hands.

It's important to mention that you should use your eyes for more than looking your birds over. I know, I know, you're probably saying...What?!?! Well, what I'm getting at is to use your eyes to read and study the breed standard (what the breed should look like). If you don't have a really good understanding of the standard you can't select your best birds.

Use your eyes to carefully evaluate your birds as they grow and when they mature. I'll often times grab a lawn chair and a glass of ice tea and turn a group of birds out, have a seat and watch them as they move around and interact. This will let you see their type when they are relaxed and at ease. I sometime call this "culling by sitting around".

Now let's talk about using your hands to evaluate birds. Since you can't see the body beneath the feathers you use your hands to feel and evaluate the bodies. You can easily feel things like length and width of back, body depth, etc. Before you start though I would suggest reading some "How To" references that can be found here. <http://bit.ly/2EZnuhE> These will train you in the methods of how to use your hands.

Once they have matured then you can set up several coops, side by side and place one bird in each and go over each one as well as compare birds to each other. As you move from bird to bird you will begin to see and feel differences, both in color and type. It makes it easier to find the best birds to move your breeding program and bird selection for showing forward.

By using these two tools you will be well on your way to making improvements in your birds year after year. Practice makes perfect.