

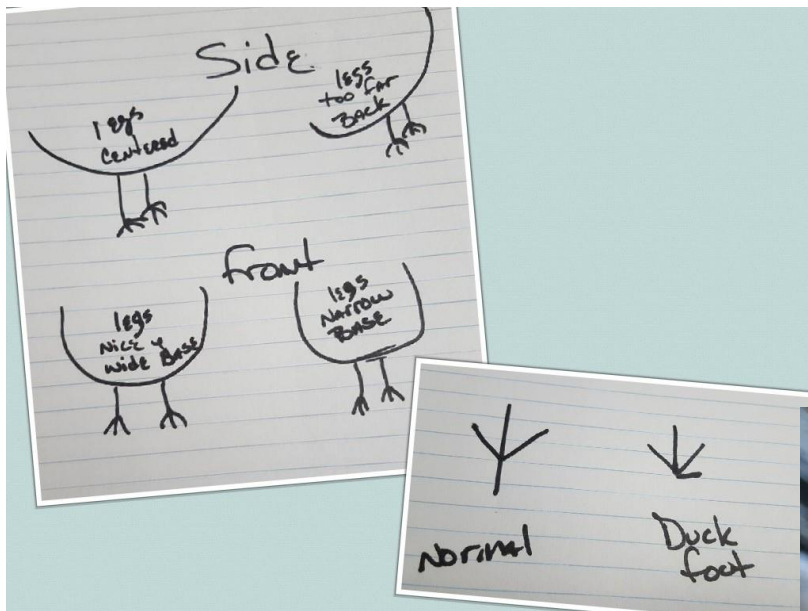
Culling down your grow outs

Written by Courtney DuCharme, 1st published 4/25/17 PBC Newsletter Spring '17

First I will say- cull is considered by many to be an ugly word. Many people only connect it to “kill” but cull is just to remove from your flock. Put out an ad on craigslist for pets (you need to tell people what is the defect the bird has), drop extras off at an auction, sell of birds at a swap, or add meat to your freezer- all of these are culling birds from your flock.

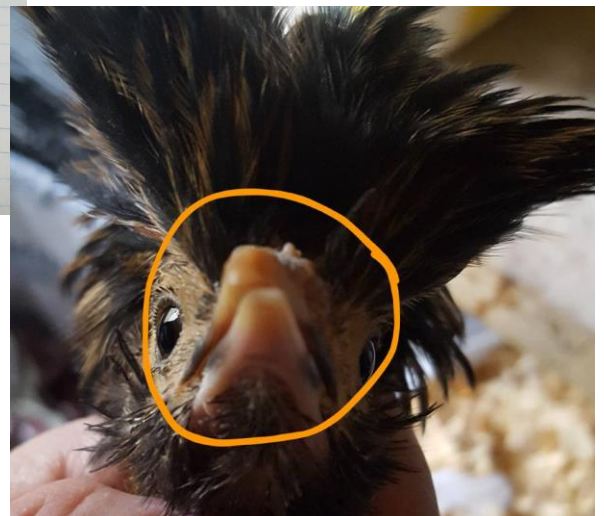
I don't know if everyone else has more baby chicks than they can count this spring (ignorance is bliss when it comes to chicken math), but I thought I might help out some visual learners with ways to cull your grow outs down to a more manageable number.

First, when they first hatch as you are cleaning a brooder or placing them in the brooder from the hatcher- flip them over on their backs resting them in your hand and when they relax watch the back toe to make sure it point back (correct) and not “toward the front” (duck foot). If you have one you question- set the chick on a flat surface and see how they hold that toe, is it pointed back- or more along the side of the foot than other chicks. If you have a chick with duck foot it will make a fine pet- but should not be bred.



Remember as they grow to pick chicks who's legs are set centered and not back to far- ones who sit back will stand upright more and are more prone to tails held too high. You also want good width between their legs to promote better structure and fluid movement.

Another issue that could come up as they age is scissor beak, where the beak is misaligned and grows “sideways” more as the chick ages.





When they are a few months old- start checking their combs, they should have a “V” or none- no more than 2 prongs, one prong is also bad. So 2 (“between the eyes set at the base of the beak”) that together make a V or none at all. Also watch for crooked toes as they grow.

When they are 4-6 months old- or younger and there are no missing feathers in their wings- start looking for split wing. They may have a wing that doesn’t fold up tightly when they are walking around that you notice- or may



not look off on their wing carriage. You will want to pick your bird up, hold it still and spread the wing out well. If there is a problem you will notice an open area in the center of the wing primaries/secondaries- there are varying degrees

of severity. Very severe will be a wide opening with feathers closest to the bird pointing toward the body and the out part pointing away from the body. However there could just be a mild case where the space is there, but narrow and the feathers look to be pointing *almost* correctly.

And then in turn at this point you should be watching how birds hold their tails, you want a smooth transition from body to tail with a 40-45% angle of the tail off of their body. This will be achieved best with birds who have level backs and legs set in the center of their bodies. Birds that tend to “stand tall” have their legs set back too far and their tail angle will be sharp and too high 60% or more is pretty incorrect, over 90% is called “squirrel tail”. Even birds that have a level back can carry their tails too high.



We will go over other issues such as wry tail, kinky back, and uneven hips in July.

