

Breeding American Giant Homers in Individual Pens
By H & H Lofts, Ross & Ruthmary Hunt, Mansfield, Louisiana

Here at H & H Lofts, we breed our Giant Homers exclusively in individual pens. There are pros and cons to this system but we feel that the advantages greatly outweigh the disadvantages. First is to assure pedigree. When we started out we wanted to establish our own family of Blue, Indigo, and Red Giant Homers. Individual pens were essential to our breeding program. We are at present well on our way to attaining this goal and in a couple of years should be where we want to be. We have the colors-Pied/Splash and Milky .At some point we will put our family of Giants into these colors for better head, body, and overall type.

We firmly believe that Giant Homers need space-room to move-not only because of their size but they just down right do better if they are not cramped up in little pens where they can hardly move. Our pen sizes vary from 4'x8'x6'H, 3'x6'x6'H, 4'x4'x2'H, and 2'x6'x2'H. It is hard for us to pick a favorite. The walk-ins are great but the smaller pens are very accessible. Once we put the breeders in the pens, we do not handle them, unless absolutely necessary, until the season is over. All pens are off the ground and the Giants are on wire. Southern weather allows us to do this. The smaller pens are under a shed that can be closed during winter and opened in summer. All droppings and spilled feed go to the ground. We have a flock of Brown-Red Old English Game Bantams that patrol the loft grounds and keep the ground under the pens clean of spilled feed. They also keep the ground scratched and in good shape. By doing this there is no feed for rodents to eat so we don't have any rats or mice. I must add that we also have 8 cats that we keep around the lofts that really help keep the rodent problem at bay. Remember a country rule of thumb is: No feed, no rodents, a lesser chance of snakes. Mowing the grass real short and sprinkling powdered sulphur around the perimeter of the lofts will also serve as a deterrent to snakes.

Another aspect of individual pens, which to us may be the most important, is the hands-on attention that each bird gets everyday. Every afternoon we change the water and feed so we have direct contact with each pair and its little ones. If there is a problem we're right on top of it. One thing about Giant Homers is to be sure to provide them with clean water, good feed, a good place to stay and good care and you will have few problems.

When placing our matings in the pens, we put the older established pairs, remated each year back in the same pen of the previous year. If we mate a pair-old bird x old bird, we put them back in the hens' pen. We want the hen to be more familiar and comfortable in her surroundings. If we place a young bird in a mating we try to go to the older birds pen. We always try to mate a young bird to an older bird. If you happen to mate two young birds together, any pen will do.

This next aspect of individual pens is where they really serve their worth. There are no fighting cocks, fewer broken eggs or crushed little ones from fighting. There is no interference from other cocks at mating time. There is plenty of peace and harmony. Each pair of Giants happy in their own little condo.

One might say that this system is time consuming. Not really! If the pens along with waterers and feeders are set up in a convenient manner, it only takes a little time and effort to attend the Giants.

Besides, we like being around our American Giant Homers-"Americas Pigeon".