

THE FOUNDERS PROGRAM

STUDY GUIDE

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WHAT IS THE FOUNDER PROGRAM?

The founders program is used for the establishment of a new breed, variety or strain from the breeding of unrelated birds.

COURSE #1 - WHAT CONSTITUTES A STRAIN?

Each strain is the result of one man's vision, and his attempt to perfect and perpetuate fowl that are uniquely linked to him, with the hopes of securing his legacy for future generations.

1. **How to know if you have a true strain?** - The way to know if you have a true strain is when all your fowl come uniform and consistent in all their characteristics and traits, year after year, generation after generation.
2. **How common are true strains?** There are but a few well-established strains in this country. Genetic diversity is at an all-time high.
3. **How long will it take to create a strain?** - It normally takes five to ten years to create a family that is uniform and consistent in all their characteristics and traits, and ten years to "fix" or "set" their characteristics and traits.

COURSE #2 - PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES NECESSARY FOR CREATING A STRAIN

1. **Specialize In One Or Two Strains** – By putting all your energy into one or two families, you are better able to progress your strains.
2. **Establishing A Breeding Plan** - The most successful breeders know the value of breeding plans and follow them. Most breeders fail because they are not properly prepared at the end of their line-breeding program.
 - a. **Set long range goals** - Start by writing down a series of steps that will allow you to accomplish these goals. For instance, plan out each line-breeding program for the next five years, which will include line-crossing at the end of those five years.
 - b. **Set short term goals:** Once you have figured out your long-range goals, break them down into short term goals.
3. **The Proper Age Of Broodfowl** – Is it better to hatch eggs from young hens or old hens? When is it time to retire a particular cock or hen?

- 4. Broodfowl Must Be the Exemplar of Health and Vigor** - Starting out with healthy broodfowl is an important factor when creating and maintain a strain. Here are important fundamentals to look for when selecting broodfowl:
- All broodfowl must come from vigorous stock.
 - Never hatch eggs from birds that shown signs of illness.
 - Birds expressing weakness should never be used as breeders.
 - Make sure to secure the best matings possible.

COURSE #3 - OBTAINING THE RIGHT BROODCOCK AND BROODHEN

These are Seed Fowl (the Adam and Eve) of your future strain. Take your time, and select the very best birds. Never settle for second rate fowl.

- 1. Finding the right brood cock (Adam)** - Selecting the right brood cock should never be done indiscriminately. Make sure he excels in the following points:
- Must be a good representative of his breed and variety
 - Must have good Conformation of Body
 - Must have the proper Color of Plumage
 - Must have a good temperament
 - Must be a gentleman to the hens, and nurturing to the chicks
 - Must come from a great bloodline
 - Must be free of defects and disqualifications
 - And, must be healthy, and have strong constitutional vigor
- 2. Finding the right brood hen (Eve)** - Don't make the mistake of thinking the selection of the hen is not important, for she is the matriarch of the strain. Make sure she excels in the following points:
- Must be a good representative of her breed and variety
 - Must have an exceptional Conformation of Body
 - Must have the proper Color of Plumage
 - Must have a good temperament
 - Must have good maternal qualities
 - Must come from a great bloodline
 - Must be free of defects and disqualifications
 - And, must be healthy, and have strong constitutional vigor
- 3. The selection of broodfowl** - When selecting fowl for breeding be sure they possess the very qualities you wish to develop in your strain.

4. **The best time to select broodfowl?** It's best to wait until they are through the molt, for most breeders, this occurs in late fall or early winter.

COURSE #4 - MATING METHODS USED FOR CREATING A STRAIN

The most common methods of mating that are used in creating or maintaining a strain, is "pen mating," also known as "group mating," and "stud mating," also known as "single mating."

1. **Pen Mating (Group Mating)** - Is the mating of a cock with two or more hens, and is only used to produce a large quantity of offspring.
2. **Stud Mating (Single mating)** - Is the mating of a cock with one hen at a time, or to multiple hens, each individually penned. Stud mating is the preferred method of mating when creating a strain. It allows the breeder to know the parents of every bird on his farm.

COURSE #5 - THE PROCESS OF CREATING A STRAIN

The creation of a strain is made up of four main mechanisms: isolation, selection, mating and breeding, which encompass a variety of methods, such as, inbreeding, line-breeding, and line-crossing/infusion.

THE 5 STAGE BREEDING PROCESS:

- **STAGE ONE - THE CONSOLIDATION OF TRAITS (OUTCROSSING)** - This stage involves the merging of characteristics and traits, belonging to unrelated birds, through the process of outcrossing or crossbreeding.
- **STAGE TWO - THE FIXATION OF TRAITS (INBREEDING)** - This stage involves breeding brother to sister, and is used to fix or lock the desirable characteristics and traits and to improve uniformity.
- **STAGE THREE - THE CLONING OF TRAITS (LINE-BREEDING)** - This stage involves breeding the parent to his or her offspring, in the effort of replicating a great individual, or reproducing a desirable trait(s), and is achieved through the process of line-breeding.
 1. Begin by breeding these cocks to your selected hens (sisters), which will be your last inbreeding. The offspring from this mating will carry $\frac{1}{2}$ of the cock's blood.
 2. The next year (year 2), you will breed these same cocks to their daughters, making sure to cull the undesirables, and select the few that stand out. The offspring from this mating will now carry $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cock's blood.

3. The following year (year 3), you will breed these same cocks to their next generation daughters, which are also their granddaughters. The offspring from this mating will now carry 7/8 of the cock's blood.
 4. In the following year (year 4) you will breed these same cocks to their next generation daughters, which are also their great-granddaughters. The offspring from this mating will now carry 15/16 of the cock's blood.
- **STAGE FOUR – THE INFUSION OF TRAITS (LINE-CROSSING)**- This stage involves the bringing together of separate lines, within the same family or strain, and is called line-crossing. This method is used to improve genetic diversity, vigor, while maintaining uniformity, all without the introduction of outside blood. Line-crossing plays an enormous role in the creation and future maintenance of a strain.
 - **When to perform future Line-crossings?** When line-breeding, it is best to line-cross once you reach 7/8th or 15/16th of the main brood cocks or brood hens blood. Or line-cross earlier, if and when, you start noticing serious faults arising in a majority of the progeny.
 - **STAGE FIVE – THE MAINTENANCE OF TRAITS (LINE-BREEDING)**: Thus far, we have combined the genes and traits of unrelated birds, through the process of outcrossing. We have fixed and locked-in the desirable traits, through the process of inbreeding, and we have replicated those desirable traits through the process of line-breeding.
 - In stage four we improved our chances of success by separating the family into a number of individual lines, and we have improved their genetic diversity, while maintaining uniformity of traits through the process of line-crossing.
 - Once you are pleased with the infusion (line-crossing), and the offspring are looking good, it is time to select the fowl needed to reestablish a new line-breeding program.

COURSE #6 - FORM AND FUNCTION IS EVERYTHING! (Select the conformation that best represents your breed)

For most breeds, form and function is everything, but how to improve it? Each generation, select traits that are not only beneficial, but those that best represent the breed. Never hesitate to cull birds expressing defects or traits that are detrimental to the strain.

- Any bird lacking the proper conformation of body is a poor representation of its breed, and should be culled. And, if bred, will most likely pass those poor traits onto their progeny, and will have long-lasting effect of the strain, and on their performance/production ability.
- The selective breeding of form and function, for several generations, not only improves the quality and performance of the strain, but allows the breeder to combine and intensify the favorable genes, while eliminating those that are useless or detrimental.

- By breeding to his best birds, the strain will become more uniform and consistent in all their characteristics and traits.

COURSE #7 - THE POWER OF PREPOTENCY (And its effects on the development of a strain)

A bird that is prepotent is one that has the amazing ability to transmit its traits, in greater abundance to its offspring than its mate. A bird having this kind of influence is a powerful individual.

If the individual possesses this power, and has the traits you desire, he or she is a valuable specimen, and should be bred as often as possible.

If a bird has this power and has traits that are detrimental to the strain, it can be a very dangerous bird, and should be avoided at all cost.

- Whenever both parents express the same desired trait(s), the chances are greater that the favorable genes will be expressed.
- Prepotency gives the gene the power of expression, and is increased whenever inbreeding and line-breeding are practiced.
- Not even full brothers and sisters are equally prepotent.
- All successful Master Breeders, know that the hen is the more valuable of the two, and it is around great hens that a successful strain must be built!
- Without the right hen, you have nothing!