



# **BUFF LEGHORNS**

## **A SPECIALTY OF FORTY YEARS**

**with colour photos of  
Dan Honour's  
"goldline strain"  
single comb  
Buff Leghorns**

**By D.J.Honour, Millerton,  
New York, USA. (2011)**

### **Historic facts on Buff Leghorns**

In the early years (1890-1910) of the Buff Leghorn variety, interest was so strong in developing a good buff colored Leghorn, amazing strides were made in a short time period. There was intense efforts by a great many breeders. The Buff Leghorn created what was called "Buff Fever". The buff color craze lead to the development of buff varieties in Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Orpingtons, Minorcas, and others including buff bantams. Prior to the Buff Leghorn, buff was found only in the Buff Cochin. Buff Leghorns were found among the best typed Leghorns. Buff Leghorns were of quality and serious rivals to the White Leghorns and Brown Leghorns. Madison Square Garden poultry show cooped large Buff Leghorn classes of sometimes 200, among the best in the country. Monmouth Farm won 5 times in a row (1909-1913) "best pen at MSG" on Buff Leghorns. This was a feat never equaled, by any breeder or breed variety. All breeds competed.

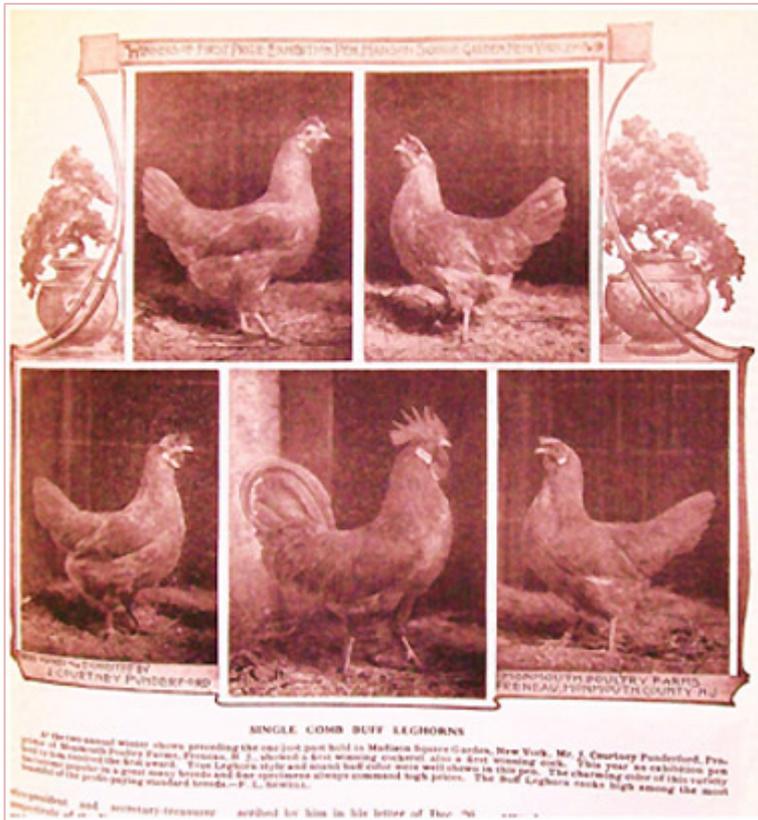
As a side note, I got my start in Buff Leghorns from Marcus Davidson's stock. I asked Marcus where he got his start from in Buff Leghorns and he told me Monmouth Farm in 1912. That is now 100 years ago.

### **THE WINNING EXHIBITION PENS 1909-1913 at MSG**

Monmouth Poultry Farms, Freneau NJ

Owner James C. Punderford. From 1909-1913 winners of Best Exhibition Pen of show, 5 years running, an amazing feat never duplicated.

(Note; James C. Punderford died Dec.1939, age 61. He is survived by a widow, one son and two daughters.)



Left:  
 Picture from RPJ March 1909, page 21.  
 At the two annual winter shows preceding the one just held in Madison Square Garden, New York, Mr. J. Courtney Punderford, proprietor of Monmouth Poultry farms, Freneau NJ, showed a first winning cockerel, also a first winning cock. This year an exhibition pen bred by him received the first award. True Leghorn style and sound buff color were well shown in this pen. The charming color of this variety has become popular in a great many breeds and fine specimens always command high prices. The Buff Leghorn ranks high among the most beautiful of the profit-paying standard breeds. F.L. Sewell

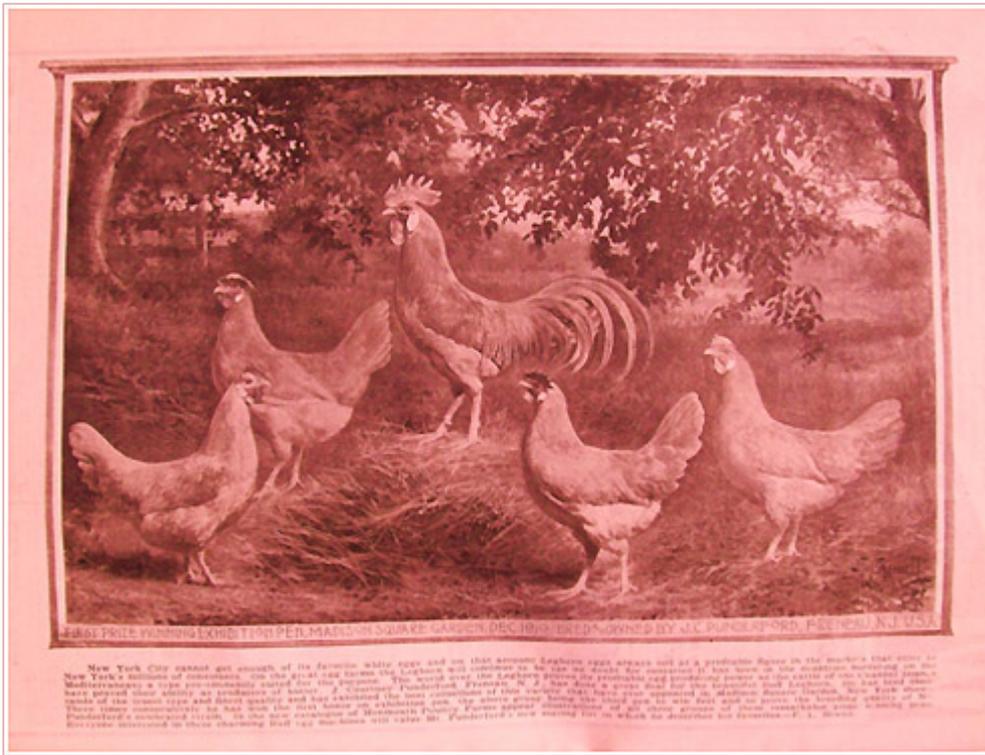
Right: Picture from RPJ March 1910, page 50.

The last Madison Square Garden show proved to be a red letter one for the Leghorns. The Buffs this year stood next to the Whites in numbers and if the NY shows indicate the general fancy then the popularity of the Buffs is getting its "second wind". It will be remembered by those who saw the first great shows in the Garden, that the Buff Leghorns were pioneers in the "buff boom", the Cochins almost alone at the time representing the buff variety of fowls. This is the second time that Monmouth Poultry Farms, Freneau NJ, have won first prize on exhibition pen in the Madison Square Garden show. J.C. Punderford, proprietor of these farms, has been a successful specialty breeder of these charming birds for a number of years. In fact to his credit progressive energy and the fine quality of birds he has shown is to be credited much of the returning, well deserved popularity of the beautiful Buff Leghorns. F.L. Sewell.



Picture in the next page, from RPJ March 1911, page 74.

NY City cannot get enough of its favorite white eggs and on that account Leghorns eggs always sell at a profitable figure in the market that caters to NY's millions of consumers. On the great egg farms the Leghorn will continue to be (as no doubt for centuries it has been in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean) a type pre-eminently suited for the purpose. The world over the Leghorn proves its profitable egg producing powers as the cattle of the Channel Islands have proven their ability as producers of butter. J. Courtney Punderford, Freneau NJ has done a great deal for the beautiful Buff Leghorn. He has bred thousands of the truest type and finest quality and has exhibited the best collection of this variety that have ever appeared in Madison Square Garden New York shows.



Three times consecutively he has won the first honor as exhibition pen, the group in the photo to the left being the third pen to win first and to prove the breeding quality of Mr. Punderford's celebrated strain. In the new catalog of Monmouth Poultry Farms, appear illustrations of all three remarkable prize winning pens. Everyone interested in these charming "Buff" egg machines, will value Mr. Punderford's new mating list in which he describes his favorites. F.L.Sewell.



Left: Picture from RPJ Feb. 1912, page 1649. Buff Leghorns continue to grow in favor and there was considerable improvement evident in the quality of the entries at the splendid exhibition held Dec. 1911 in Madison Square Garden, New York. For the fourth year in succession in competition with the best in the land, Monmouth Poultry Farms, Mo.Co. Freneau NJ, won first on exhibition pen. There were 116 beautiful Buff Leghorns at NY this winter and they

formed the purest colored and showiest classes of this charming variety that we ever saw at MSG. Fanciers of Buff Leghorns owe much to J.Courtney Punderford, proprietor Monmouth Poultry Farms, for cultivating a national appreciation for it, such as it so justly deserves. Those who are interested in seeing and comparing the four exhibition pens of Buff Leghorns that won the last four years, the premier honors at MSG, can have that opportunity by writing Mr. Punderford for his new illustrated catalog that is now being printed. It will be one of the handsomest issued this year and will be well illustrated besides containing much interesting reading matter. F.L.Sewell

Picture in the next page: First prize exhibition pen, Madison Square Garden New York, December 31, 1912 – Jan 4, 1913. For the fifth consecutive time, bred and owned by Monmouth Poultry Farms, Freneau NJ, USA.



### Forty years breeding Buff Leghorns

After forty years breeding Buff Leghorns and thousands of birds later I have a few observations and advice. Give yourself time to learn, make mistakes and progress, but know and admit the difference to yourself. Keep the best birds and use them wisely for further improvement building in your own yards. Raise large numbers, even if you do not have the space to keep them all to maturity, just cull at all ages throughout the year. With

limited space you will not be overcrowded, if you cull. Many make the mistake of using too few breeders and raising too few offspring. You soon lose out with increased inbreeding and decreased vigor.

Most breeders want their own strain. It takes at least 5 generations to make the stock your own line. By allowing your line of blood to predominate in bloodline percentage, you can add new blood and retain your bloodline intact for years. If you are lucky enough to have few loyal customers, you can go back to them for new blood to reinforce vigor. With their distant relationship they will be warm new blood rather than cold new blood. The mixing is usually very successful with warm blood.

Pay close attention to small differences in your birds, it will make your selections better choices for matings. Use the outstanding individuals, heavy in the breeding pens, to get their genes diffused throughout the flock.



## Buff Coloring on Leghorns

Like Leghorn type, buff color breeding is improved by small degrees, progressing and refining slowly and gradually over many years. Adding to the accumulated improvements, in time will transform the flock to high quality.



With buff color, keep refining the buff by reducing the faults. Insist on better color and less faulty color each year. By raising a good number of chicks you will assure yourself something good to pick from. With buff color, use "many male offspring" as a key tool in selection, of color improvers. The long sickle feathers in the Buff Leghorn cockerels is a last deciding factor for good breeders. A sound buff long tailed male is the ultimate in buff color, as this section often shows the slightest off color. Yes Buff Leghorn females can show buff under color, but often females are nearly white in under color and lack in quill (feather shaft) color.

Which is the worst, white or black in buff? Both are defects but black is the hardest to use with Buff Leghorns. Black is a strong pigment and must first be reduced to dark chestnut red, then to dark buff. So often the females with black will show it in the backs and wing secondaries as well as wing primaries, not just peppering but black markings and quills, and sometimes dark coloring in the beak. I prefer to keep black out of the breeding pen or to a minimum. I once read that Arthur Schilling said white and red will mix to make buff but not red and black, that is an Artists' perspective. To me white is the lack of pigment. If you have white in the tails, reduce the amount in that section yearly. If the tails with white are used for breeding, try to have the mate's tail solid buff. When you have refined the buff color to the solid buff tails, you can then get very strict on color. You want evenness of a medium buff tone, or a shade darker buff. An even (pale lemon yellow) buff is still a weak buff. Feather structure influences color pigmentation, the broad feathers of the wing and tail carry a shade deeper buff. Match the males breast feathers with the females back feathers, as in this

section the feather structure is similar between the sexes. Watch for too light a neck hackle and saddle, they can be a pale yellow.

### **Real Leghorn Type**

I cannot stress Leghorn type enough. Shape makes the breed and it is the biggest determining factor to a quality individual. It should be the first thing you see and the most important. The comb and head might be the second thing to notice but it is not of the importance of type. I speak of the American type Leghorn here. The main tail feathers are quite long in Leghorns as well as sickles. For style, elegance, and curves, the longer tailed profuse (multi-



feathered) Leghorn male; has eye appeal. A short tailed Leghorn lacks finish. A narrow feathered bird looks rough and a wide feathered bird looks smooth. Long tails and sickles in the males, takes longer to grow out due to the feathers being in blood feather stage while growing. This is the tail growth gene; it takes 2-3 months in cockerels and longer in older males. The multi-feathering gene is a trait where more feathers are found in a section, usually cushion or saddle, lesser sickles, and main tail. More feathers make a fuller and wider back and tail. The short tail is the suppresser gene; it is often seen in heavy and dual purpose breeds.

In the tail, the wide, spread, fanned tail is needed with wide feathers that overlap so no gaps are seen between feathers. From behind, a good spread tail looks like an "Indian war bonnet". Extra tail feathers (7 to a side is normal)but many birds will have 8 or 9 to a side(multiple feathering).The tail angle should be somewhat high for breeding as opposed to being too low. The old rule of thumb; bottom of earlobe should be in direct line to the top tail feathers. We want the body to be wide and somewhat long with legs set in the middle of the body for balance. Wide skull, width between the legs and full breast, assures a bird that is not narrow or weak.

The back of both sexes needs to be filled in with saddle (cushion feathers in female), right before the tail coverts and main tail. This will give the important Leghorn curved backline shape. The legs and thighs need length for stature and tallness. Birds will settle with age and so make sure the young are tall. You should be able to see the thighs before they attach to the body. Fluffy Leghorns are at a handicap for type. Too much vent fluff ruins the under line in the back end. Fluffy hocks and body fluff hides the underline and detracts from type. It also makes them appear short legged. Many birds have faulty wings, low carried wings that do not fold up against the body or are long and hang past the body. Many wing feathers are narrow and some can be twisted. A good healthy Leghorn has wide wing feathers .You want both males and females to have full well developed breasts with muscling, noticeable when handled. A shallow breast indicates weakness. Large thicker shanks are a good indicator of frame and size and can be found on big strong birds. The head is part of shape. The eyes indicate health; you want a deep reddish bay eye with a clearly defined pupil. The skull should be wide and indicates a wide body. The earlobe should be big

and wide with a round shape. A big white earlobe shows nice color contrast. A big lobe without roundness is a long loose earlobe. The wattles should be medium length without folds or wrinkles. The comb should be medium sized with the first point back from the beak, no thumb marks preferred, but we often have to use some defective ones. The blade should not follow the head, especially in cockerels or else it will touch the neck and twist as cocks. I like the small to medium comb, that way I get folded combs on females and strong upright combs on males. I hate double mating for combs and culling so many folded over combed males. Big combed females look nice to some, but are often coarse in texture and defective. When bred from the males will come coarser in texture, along with lopping over. I like single mating for combs and call it comb refinement breeding. I get a very high percentage of good combs in both sexes. Type breeding is a gradual progression. Keep improving each section and eventually you can birds that meet your approval. It takes years of culling and raising many chicks.

### **Vigor and health**

Always cull for health and do not use the weaker, less productive birds as breeders. You can breed for health and longevity, and a strong vigorous flock will be your reward. Hatch from large sized eggs. It helps to maintain size and the big chicks and big table eggs will please customers.



The Leghorn is a very active bird. They do best when allowed a lot of exercise and space. Large shaded runs are great, large pens and high roosts. These help body tone, strong legs and skeletal development. If you have good predator protection free range can be wonderful. The exercise, fresh air, green feeds, and insects; will put condition, bloom and vigor like nothing else. Cockerel houses and training coops will allow you to keep extra birds, have them tame and well conditioned for sale or show. If you have an egg market, all your color culls and defective pullets, can go into a large layer flock.

### **Egg Production**

The Leghorn is famed for being a wonderful egg producer. A great layer with superior feed consumption ratio. This production aspect should not be overlooked. You want a balanced bird with vigor that is capable of being a good layer. Egg size, egg shape, and shell quality; should be set at a high mark and kept at that level. All Leghorn varieties are capable of laying large eggs of good texture. If your birds lay only small and medium sized eggs, raise the bar and select only large ones for setting in the incubator. There is no excuse for small eggs and the breeder is part of the blame if he does not select for large eggs. Health and vigor are foremost, for without it, you have frail, delicate, and weak stock that lack production, disease resistance, fertility and activeness. Leghorns should be a practical fowl.