

## **Picking a Breed**

**By Bruce Clapp**

Breeding Program Coordinator

Middlesex County 4-H Aviculture Club of Massachusetts

There are many breeds of standard and bantam poultry. They come in many varieties (colors and comb type) and breeds. Most standard breeds have the bantam version (1/4<sup>th</sup> the size) but there are some "True bantams" like Silkies and Japanese that have no standard size. Everyone seems to have their favorites and also ones they are interested in. At the 4-H fair you had a chance to see just some of the many types of birds.

By visiting shows you will see many more breeds and get a better idea of what show quality birds look like. We suggest you pick one breed and variety to start this program. If you have your own birds or buy a pair or trio (1 male and 2 females) that is all you will need. You only need to hatch 6-12 chicks this coming season to get some show quality birds.

Finding the breed you like can be a lot of fun. Looking at catalogs like Murray McMurray or *The Standard of Perfection* can give you lots of ideas. Best again is to go to the shows and get a close-up look at the real thing. At most shows breeders sell extra stock that can be used for breeding and showing. These people are very happy to talk to young kids who want to breed and show. Pairs are usually sold for between \$15 and \$20, and many breeders will sell for less to 4-H kids.

One of the best places to buy birds is the Northeast Poultry Congress show in Springfield this coming January. There is a large sales area at the rear of the show hall. Get there early so you can get the best pick. There are lots of birds to choose from. Also, if you don't see the breed you like for sale but they are in the show, get the exhibitors list and find the name of the birds' owner. We can help you track them down at the show. The list is a great recourse to have because it has the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the exhibitors and also the breeds that they show.

The next time we will help you with all that is involved with setting up your breeding pens!