

CAPONS AND CAPONIZING

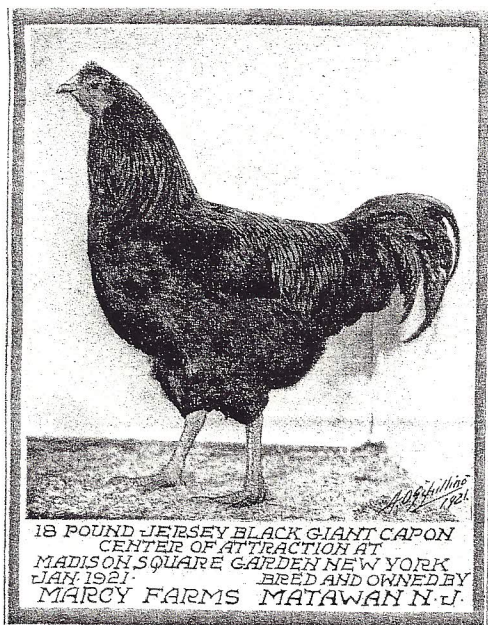
The mention of capons in the last newsletter brought up questions about caponizing chickens.

A capon is a castrated male chicken, corresponding to a steer in cattle. After the removal of the sex organs, the capon becomes quiet in disposition, not being easily excited, seldom crows or shows aggressive behavior, and develops a small comb and wattles on a more refined head. Capons usually achieve greater size and weight more rapidly than a comparable cockerel, with the flesh considered by some people to be better quality, being more juicy, soft, and tender.

The Marcy Farms brochure from about 1940 states that "9 to 10 pound plus Jersey Giant capons could be grown in 7 months". It goes on to state that "Giants were originated for a purpose, and not all purposes, always remember this. Few breeders in America ever seem to care about telling the public what their particular breed is not proper for, most of them would have you think their particular breed was just about perfect for any purpose and this is in most cases absolutely false. Giants were made for large capons and roasting chickens in males and medium or fair size roasters in pullets and heavy fowl in hens. Neither blacks or whites are fit for broilers, fryers or even small roasters unless they are a small strain and if they are such they are not Giants. If one wishes the Giants for their own table use they are pretty fine table birds at most any weights desired but absolutely not for commercial market purposes".

The 1923 issue of POULTRY magazine had an article reporting Jersey Giant capons weighing 12 pounds at 7 months of age. It reported one Jersey Giant capon that weighed sixteen and one-half pounds at 9 months of age, and at the time of the article was 6 years old and weighed 20 pounds. This bird having been exhibited at shows from coast to coast and traveling thousands of miles in railway express cars.

It was felt by many that the turkey industry was on the wane, a substitute would be needed, and Jersey Giants would be the rival. But the turkey industry expanded, the commercial chicken broiler industry soon came along, and the labor intensive caponizing became too costly for widespread commercial use.



First Prize Black Giant Cockerel

Drawings by famed poultry artist A.O. Schilling from an undated Marcy Farms brochure. They are obviously not to the same scale as the 18 pound capon was probably approaching twice the weight of the cockerel and proportionately larger