

STUBS!



Feather stubs on Orpington legs.

*Mini leg feathers on a cross
between 1907 Cochin and
Leghorn.
From: Davenport.*

Feather stubs on supposed clean-legged chickens by their Standard is mostly caused by several genes which are not identified (yet).

There are a few established stub-genes (adult version not chick fluff on legs) however 'ours' are not described in Crawford's listing of established (by those who investigated them) genes. Ours are leg feathers on the shanks, the leg below the hock.

Serebrovsky described stubs just below the hocks on the inside of the shanks, that's different from what is shown here. He called it Ht from heel tuft.

A trait without a single gene underlying it, is called polygenic. Several unidentified genes underlie such a trait.

The results of experiments do not give unambiguous results in terms of inheritance of such traits. This may have several causes, not discussed here.

'Our' stubbish chooks have a sort of primitive mini leg feather stubs. It is more like an onset of leg feathers. Either you need a magnifying glass or the stubs are really feather like. In clean legged breeds it shows up as a scale having an incipient feather. On white-skinned legs with a black stubs, this is easily visible.

Are stubs little leg feathers?
Think of leg feathers in reverse order as generally presented. Not as a cumulative trait from





light feathering as in Langshan to as heavy as in Brahmas and Cochins, but in a stronger or weaker preventer of leg feathers. When you think of a preventer of leg feathers there is a dosage effect visible. The reverse leg feather thinking was an idea after finding dinosaur fossils with feathers including leg feathers. In freak experiments chicken embryos could be triggered into developing leg feathers and even teeth while they had, the latter obviously, not. The cell differentiation to make teeth and/or leg feathers could be switched on while they were switched off. Although chickens don't have teeth (anymore) some still have leg feathers. There are plenty of chicken with a claw on their wings too, useful for climbing trees.

That is where the reverse leg feather thinking comes from, ancient traits are 'only' switched off. Switching on leg feathers, even rudimentary ones, can happen by whatever trigger, today.

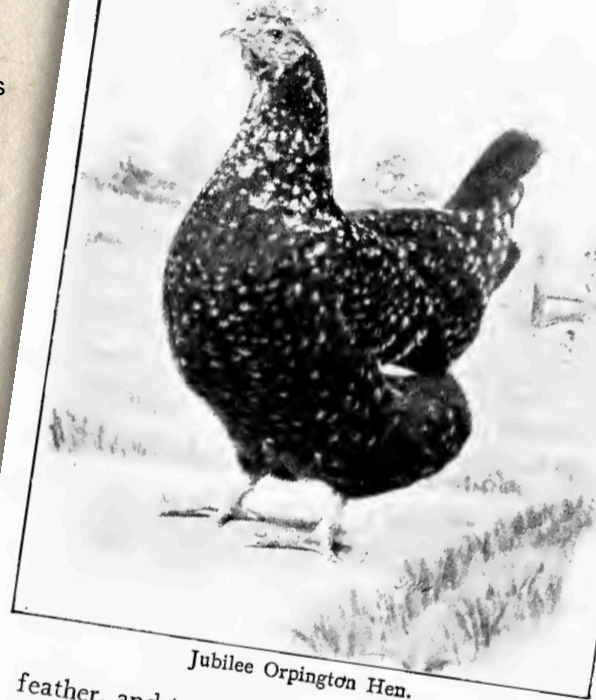
Genes of ancestors

... can be silenced or switched off; however, they can be reawakened when they are still present. New breeds like Orpingtons, Barnevelders, Wyandottes and such, have their origins in leg feathered Chinese chickens brought ashore in the 1840s, too. Leg feathers were present in lots of ancient European and Eurasian proto-breeds for centuries before we started to sort them by region and looks and gave them names accordingly. The Hamburgs had a bit leg feathers, same for the crested chickens we now call Polish, Padua, Appenzeller, etc. And of course there were plenty of bantams with leg feathers all over Eurasia and NW-Europe. The progression from bare legs to rudimentary leg feathers in the form of feather stubs in modern adult birds, to eventually wings on the legs is not illogical if there was ever an ancestor with leg feathers.

The only question is, do you want it or not, those rudimentary leg feathers. The men who decided on the Poultry Standards made clear agreements on this: it is with leg feathers or without and not somewhere in between (stubs).

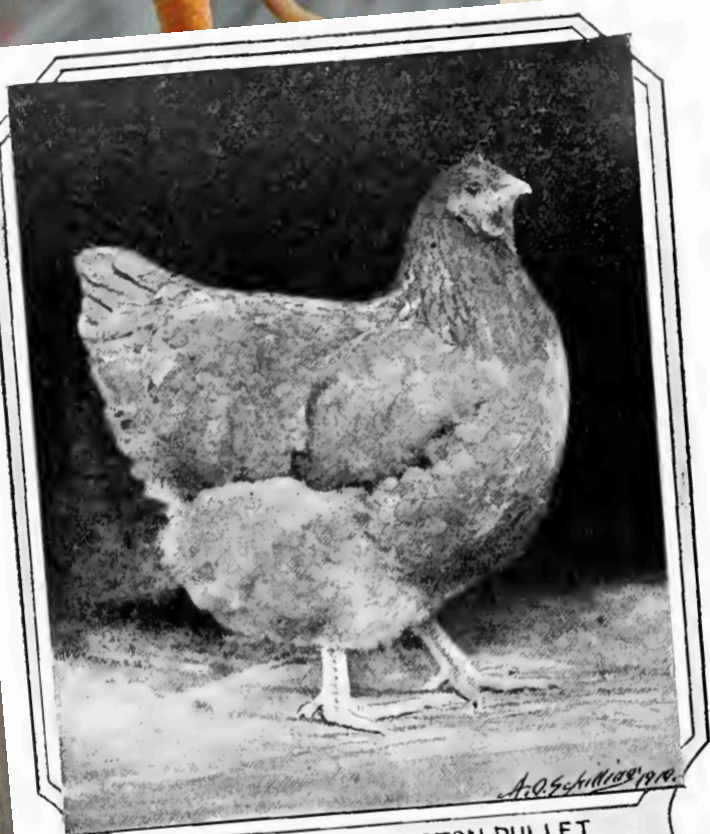
Snippets from 1911 and 1912 on Orpingtons where stubs are mentioned as remnants of ancestors, depending on the colours.

Cuckoo is the blocky type so prominent in all the Orpingtons. They are extremely hardy, and lay a very large, rich brown egg. "Single mating only is required, so that even the purchase of a small pen is sufficient to build up a good foundation stock of a general, all-round useful and handsome fowl. The colour is a light, bluish-grey ground, having bars across the feathers of a darker blue-black, proportioned to the size of the feather and the same on all parts of the body. The beak, legs and feet are pure white; lobes red; comb small, firm and evenly serrated. "Defects to be avoided are white in lobe, any yellow in legs and feet, long legs, stubs or feathers on leg, side spikes, and more than four toes."



Jubilee Orpington Hen.

feather, and to-day are exhibited showing even markings of the three colours. They are cobby in build, are deep and broad, with short, white legs and four toes, all quite free from any stubs or feathers. The comb should be of



FIRST PRIZE BUFF ORPINGTON PULLET
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN N.Y. 1909-10.
DUNROBIN FARM CHATHAM N.J.

penciling or ticking in females; bluish legs, a trace of their Hamburg ancestors; and mealiness and patchiness in both sexes. Other defects that will be a little troublesome for some time are stubs on legs, and yellow shanks showing Cochins blood; side sprigs on comb, and white in ear-lobe,