

# FEATHER

# FLUFF & VANES

**SOFT FEATHERED BREEDS**

**As you know a feather has a downy fluff part (lower part to the skin) and a vane part (the rest of the feather). Due to the loose feather barbs of fluff you cannot see a pattern if the chicken has a pattern.**

Sometimes fluff consists only of the 'undercolour', which varies by e-allele and colour genes. Besides not seeing a pattern, there is a visual separation between feathers and fluff.

In patterned birds, you want to see as much pattern as possible running ALL over the bird, from front to rear.

Now, what if the trousers (thigh) under the wing is all fluff?

The visual unity of the chicken stops right there, below the secondary wing feathers [the primaries are tucked under the secondaries].

The visual unity is broken by fluff having no pattern or consisting of a different structure.

Especially in soft feathered breeds the amount of fluff can be massive until you have almost a half ostrich looking chicken.

For example large Orpingtons: their fluff starts on the thighs and extends across the belly. Some fluff feathers might have remnants of a vane, a little triangle at

the end of the feather. But mostly they are ostrichie.

To avoid disrupting the visual unity of the pattern or in even coloured, the feather structure in soft feathered breeds, it is important to keep an eye on the amount of fluff. Don't let fluff chew the vane away.

Or: ensure that, over the generations, fluff doesn't move further and further towards the breast... from the belly, over the thighs and even beyond the thigh to where the breast feather field starts.

However, a chicken is not just the feather quality, just the colour or pattern, just the build. It is the sum of everything together.

*Brahma bantam hens, one with hackle pencilling the other a better feather quality. The one with fluff thighs won. Hackles are more important than the overall pattern.*



*Top, the more fluffy, the less pattern, the transition from breast feathers to thighs is abrupt. Left: the thighs are part of the overall pattern.*