



# Relative Popularity of Dominiques

By Mark A. Fields

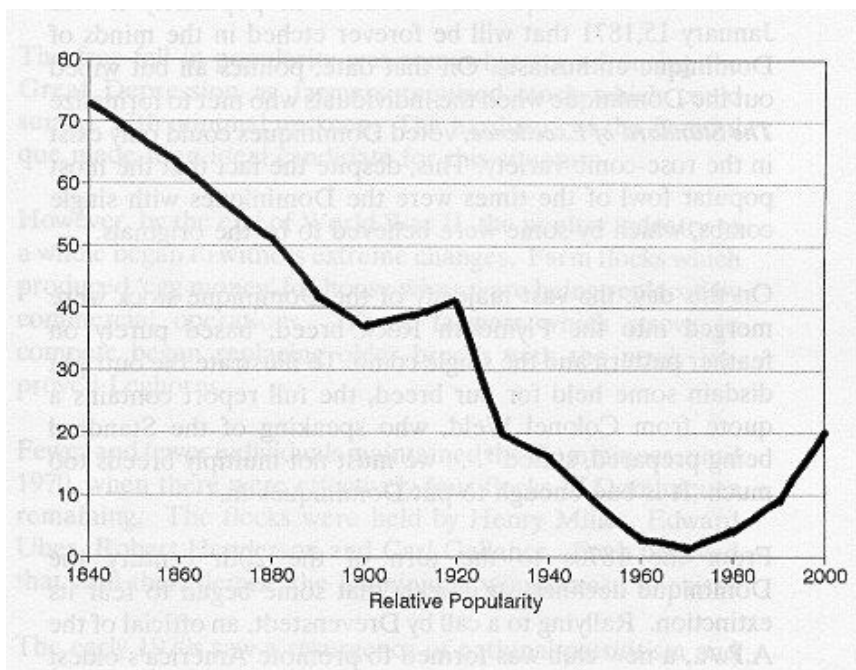
It is impossible to present a complete review of the Dominique's current status in this limited space. For more information on the current status of the breed, refer to *The American Dominique* by Mark A. Fields.

There are several significant events in poultry history that have had an effect on the Dominique's popularity. Prior to the 1840s, the Dominique had no equal in the farmyards and doorways of our developing country. However, the 1840s saw the beginning of "Hen Fever" with the introduction of the Asiatic breeds.

The popularity of the Asiatics spread quickly and stock from these imports were used to create many new breeds, combining the ruggedness and fertility of our older breeds with the heavier carcasses of the new arrivals. The older breeds, including the Dominique, began to decline in popularity as Hen Fever spread throughout the poultry world.

While the Dominique had already declined in popularity, it was January 15, 1871 that will be forever etched in the minds of Dominique enthusiasts. On that

date, politics all but wiped out the Dominique when the individuals who met to formalize the Standard of Excellence, voted that Dominiques could only exist in the rose-comb variety. They did this despite the



fact that the most popular fowl of the times were the Dominiques with single combs, which some believed to be the originals.

On this day, the vast majority of the Dominique stock was merged into the Plymouth Rock breed, based purely on feather pattern and the single comb. To illustrate the outright disdain some held for our breed, the full report contains a quote from Colonel Weld, who, speaking of the Standard then being prepared, stated ". . . we must not multiply breeds too much. It is bad enough to put Dominiques in."

From the 1870s to the turn of the 20th century the Dominique declined so quickly that some began to fear its extinction. Rallying to a call by Drevenstedt, an official of the A.P.A., a new club was formed to promote America's oldest breed. Three gentlemen of high repute were instrumental in the success of the National American Dominique Club. They were Davenport, Harwood and Carter.

Using Dominique stocks that traced back to the early 1800s, they began to breed and exhibit the "old-style" Dominiques, devoid of any Asiatic influence. These strains became the pillars of the Dominique resurgence, which occurred between 1900 and 1920. During this time many new flocks of high quality Dominiques were established. Sadly, when these three gentlemen passed away, the National American Dominique Club became inactive and ultimately folded. With no driving force to sustain it, the Dominique's popularity plummeted.

The free-fall in popularity was somewhat stayed during the Great Depression as farmers required stock that could survive with minimal up-keep. The hardiness of the Dominique made it an ideal candidate for this situation. However, by the end of World War II, the poultry industry as a whole began to witness extreme changes. Farm flocks, which had produced "egg money" for housewives, were being replaced by commercial operations. Those farmers who wanted to compete began replacing older breeds with the newly improved Leghorns.

Fewer and fewer individuals maintained the Dominiques, until 1970, when there were only four flocks of Dominiques remaining. These flocks were held by Henry Miller, Edward Uber, Robert Henderson and Carl Gallaher. They believed that with their deaths the Dominique would cease to exist.

The early 1970s saw a resurgence of national patriotism and an interest in things uniquely American. Through the efforts of a few dedicated individuals contact was made with each of these older breeders and the Dominique was again rescued. From 1973 to present, the interest in Dominiques has been steadily rising with a noticeable increase during the early 1990s. This spike coincided with the

publication of several articles and an effort by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy to raise awareness of the Dominique's critically low population. While we cannot realistically expect to return the Dominique to the level of popularity it enjoyed prior to the 1840s, we can, with dedication and good breeding practices, return them to the level of the 1915 - 1920 era. You are invited to join us in this effort.