

Rare Chinese Owls

We were curious when we saw an ad for the National Chinese Owl Club (NCOC). Turns out they're actually pigeons, not owls.

"It's an old breed that goes back to China," says Dick Holmberg, secretary/treasurer for the NCOC. "They were brought to the U.S. in the early 1900's."

The breed went through a serious makeover in the 1950's after being crossed with Spanish Owl pigeons. Today the breed is all about longer feathers and frills.

There are three distinguishing features, Holmberg says. Neck frill feathers grow up to the eyes framing the face like a collar. Breast frills part in the center with feathers angling up near the top, down at the bottom and straight across in the middle. Pantaloons frills made of fine, hairy-like feathers puff up like cotton balls in front of each leg.

Officially there are 35 recognized color classes, and breeders are working on another dozen colors.

Holmberg has had the breed for more than four decades. As owner of a variety of pigeon breeds, he is especially fond of Chinese Owls.

"They're small, very active birds that have their own personalities," he says.

Other than tail feather trimming to make it easier for breeding, the Chinese Owls don't have any special care needs. The biggest challenge is balancing the breeding to get the desired frills and colors.

"Our club is really good about getting new people started. This is a breed that if you get the right birds you can win at shows in a few years," Holmberg says.

The best birds average \$100 to \$150 per pair, and stock birds sell for about \$20 per bird. They breed for 7 or 8 years, with hens



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laying up to six sets of eggs (one or two) a year.

NCOC has a certified judging program to ensure quality at club shows as well as national shows with other pigeon breeds. Illinois was once the hotspot for Chinese Owl pigeons, but now interest in California has increased because several members from that District have been very generous to new members. The breed is also popular in the New England region. The club has 140 members.

More information is on the website, and Holmberg invites people interested in the breed to check it out.

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Converted Cub Cadet garden tractor rides on big tires, making it easy to get on and off.

Cab Cadet "Showgoer" Tractor

"I like going to antique tractor shows, but I'm 79 years old and my legs don't work as good as they used to. I didn't want to spend the money for a golf cart or an electric wheelchair, so I converted an old Cub Cadet garden tractor. It rides on big tires making it easy to get on and off. I spent less than \$500 to put it together," says Paul Michener of Waynesville, Ohio.

He bought the used Cub Cadet at a flea market for \$50, minus the engine and mower deck. He replaced the original tires with big 15-in. whitewall snow tires on back and 12-in. high, 3-ribbed tires on front. He also installed a Harbor Freight 13 hp engine equipped with an electric starter. The tractor came equipped with a hydrostatic transmission.

"The engine turns in the opposite direction as the transmission, so I had to put it in

backward and build an adapter for the driveshaft," says Michener. "I paid \$225 for the engine, which was more than I spent on everything else put together. It's an exact copy of a Briggs and Stratton and always starts on the first or second pull."

He bought the front tires new but already had the snow tires. They had the same bolt pattern as the tractor's original tires so they fit right on. Michener painted the wheel hubs red.

"It looks kind of stylish and makes a nice tractor for getting around shows. It's small enough that I can haul it around with my pickup," says Michener.

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FARM SHOW



Tom Shell replaced the engine on his Massey Harris 30 tractor with a McCormick-Deering "hit and miss" engine. It powers a hydraulic pump that runs a hydrostatic motor mounted on the transmission shaft.

Tractor Repowered With "Hit & Miss" Hydrostatic Drive

Tom Shell gets lots of attention with his McCormick-Deering, "hit & miss" hydrostatic drive, Massey Harris 30. It even has an electric start.

"A guy I knew was cleaning out his dad's place and came across the old McCormick," recalls Shell. "The cylinder was stuck, but I got it freed up and running."

Shell's brother had an old Massey 30, and after looking it over, Shell decided to replace the engine with the McCormick. Initially, Shell ran a drive belt from the McCormick to the belt drive on the 30. He connected an idler pulley to the clutch to start and stop the drive. That changed with the addition of a hydraulic pump.

"I got a hydraulic pump and motor from an old tobacco harvester and mounted them on the 30," explains Shell. "The McCormick powers the pump, which runs the hydrostat motor that I mounted on the transmission shaft."

Shell initially ran a flat belt to the pump,

but switched to a V-belt to reduce slippage.

Although he could start the McCormick manually, Shell decided to install an electric starter/generator from an old lawn mower. He used a large pulley on the engine and the smallest pulley he could find on the starter. Once the engine is running, it recharges the starter battery.

"I hold the exhaust valve open on the engine through one compression cycle when using the starter," says Shell. "Once the fly wheels are turning, I release the valve, and the engine fires right up. I can do it all from the tractor seat."

The Massey 30 can go slow or at full speed, pulling itself along in fourth gear. Shell uses it at shows and a local Christmas parade. He notes that firing it up can pull people away from viewing \$100,000 tractors. It's different from anything to be found at most shows.

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Tom Shell's Lister-powered Massey Harris Pony is also one-of-a-kind.

"The Lister is only 1 1/2 hp, but that's enough for the Pony to pull itself around and load itself on the trailer," says Shell. "It's just fine for a show tractor."

Shell originally bought the Pony to convert it to electric drive. The engine was shot. When he found a Lister "hit & miss", he changed his plans. With the aid of a jackshaft and a bracket to mount sprockets and bearings on the transmission driveshaft, he was in business. The pto works, and it drives like a regular tractor.

"The biggest challenge was installing the jackshaft under the engine," says Shell. "I ran a belt from a small pulley on the Lister to a large one on the jackshaft, with a belt to the driveshaft. The belt to the driveshaft slipped, so I changed it to chain drive. It took a lot of trial and error to get pulleys the right size."