

Don Wilson's farm

Home of prize-winning birds

By Jennifer Barr
Haltom is the home of fine chickens.

Many premier poultry breeders live in our neighborhood, among them Don Wilson who lives on Five Sideroad just north of Milton. Don has shown poultry since 1948, he thinks, (he's had poultry as long as he can remember, so dates sometimes escape him). At the 1978 Royal Winter Fair, Don showed 12 birds, walked off with two breed championships, 10 first places and two fourths. In past years he had best standard bird of show at the Royal, and best bantam. He's also won the same awards at the Canadian National Exhibition.

Chickens with hats
After experimenting with a variety of types, Don now breeds white crested Poland bantams, black rosecomb bantams, modern game bantams and old English standard games in various colours.

He also breeds a few magpie pigeons for fun. The polands are plump, friendly birds with a massive circular ruff of feathers covering their tiny heads. Black rosecombs look like blackbirds with peonies on their topknots. The game fowl resemble everyone's image of an old fashioned chicken and are the descendants of famous fighting cocks. The birds themselves are long-legged, colorful and quite highly strung.

With these multi-charmed birds Don Wilson adds to his vast trophy display every year.

It takes quite a bit of know-how to breed superior chickens, it isn't just a hit-and-miss project. Don started before he went to school, he says, when an uncle with a fancy for fowl started him off with a few birds.

At that time, Don lived in Milton and "always had chickens."

He spent time with Alf Waldie, the local blacksmith, who's been a fancier for a very long time. With advice and help from these adult sources, the young Don learned most of what there is to know about poultry.

He is now a registered poultry judge, having taken examinations at the Ontario

Agricultural College some years ago.

Still buys eggs
Wilson now has roughly 80 birds on his quiet treed two-acre property north of town where he lives with his wife, Willy. He has worked with P.L. Robertson as toolmaker for 29 years to support his hobby.

In January, eggs are collected from laying hens and Don starts incubating. The resulting chicks number 200 in an average year.

Young birds are fed a special mixture of wheat, oats, corn and barley. They also receive greens, hamburger and dog food. In the laying season, birds are fed laying crumbles, a high protein grain mixture, but Don takes them off this when he has enough eggs for the chicks he wants. Most of the year Willy buys eggs from the store, which may seem odd for someone who has 80 chickens in the back yard.

Birds are wormed once a month and inoculated yearly as well as receiving medicated feed in the early months.

So any Wilson-raised birds have a healthy start.

The best birds are shown at

two American shows and six Canadian shows including the Royal, C.N.E., breed shows and two local fairs, Milton and Brampton.

Don takes about 60 birds to the Ex each year but limits his Royal entries because of the length of the show. Birds are at the Ex four days but stay at the Royal nearly two weeks, which makes the risk of disease higher, he says.

Raising and showing exhibition poultry is the one hobby where an enthusiast can make enough money to support his interest, Don says.

"You'll never get rich but you can make money at it if you stay small," he explains.

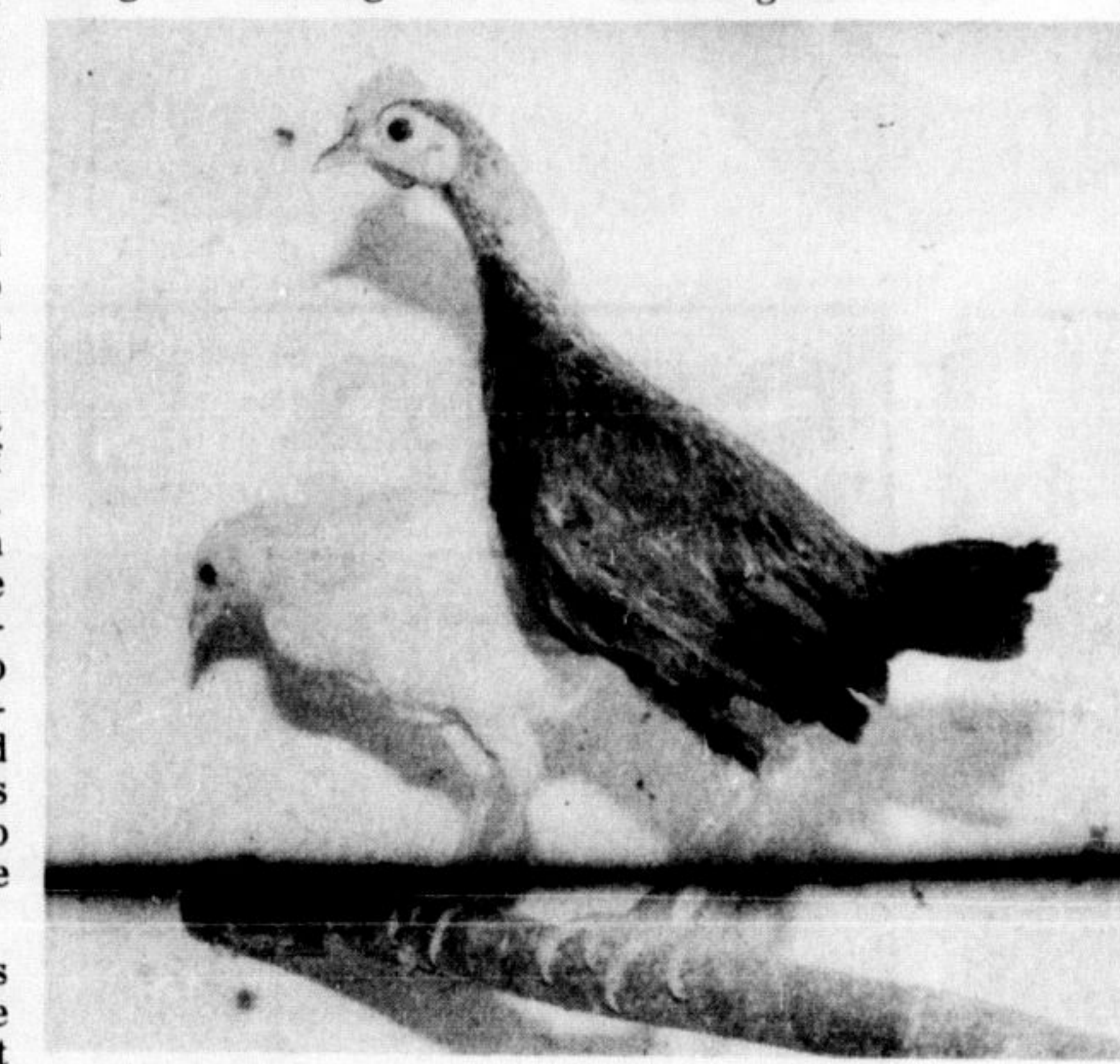
As well as money from show prizes, Don has income from sales of birds. A pure-bred chicken will sell for \$5 to \$150, according to Don, depending on its quality and show record. Most good birds sell for \$10 to \$25, he adds, so are usually within the range of most fanciers.

He keeps his top birds, sells his second best at handsome prices and consigns the rest to various breed sales of livestock barns so he keeps his winter stock at a manageable size.

True to the tradition of poultry breeders country wide, Don Wilson likes to help a youngster interested in birds. He doesn't give his birds away to a youngster, but will sell quite cheaply to get him started. He feels a young lad receiving something for nothing will not

appreciate his birds as well as some he paid for.

He's long on advice and assistance because, "We have to keep the fancy going." And the fancy is in good hands with Don Wilson, one of the people who still appreciates a good chicken.



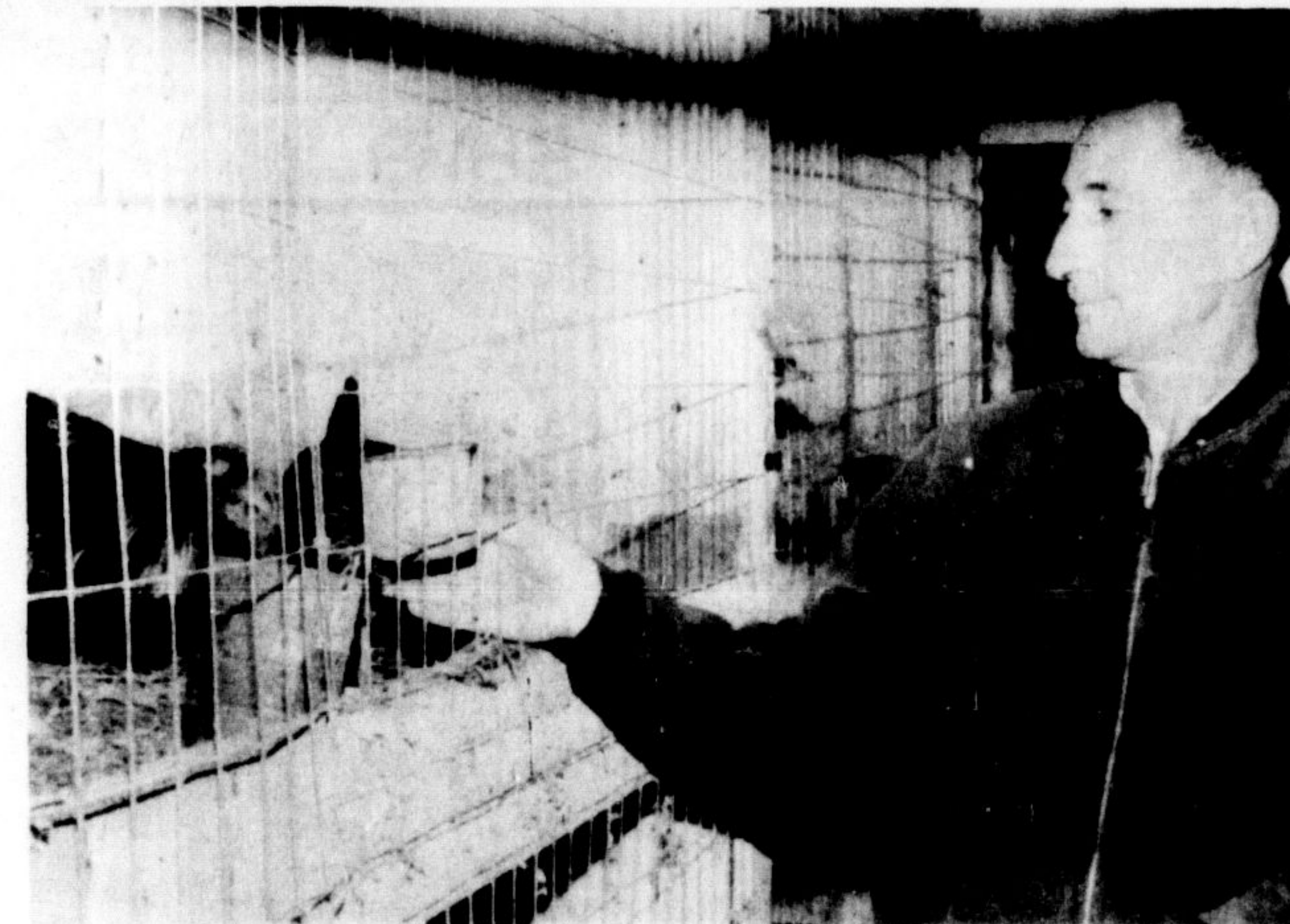
CHICKS ON TIPTOE, these Old English bantam babies pose for the camera at Don Wilson's poultry farm. In another year they may be winning prizes like the rest of the establishment.



DON WILSON adjusts "Charlie's" tail as the proud white crested Poland rooster struts in front of some of the ribbons and trophies won by the Wilson chickens over the years. At the Royal this year, Don won two breed championships, 10 firsts and two fourth places.



CHICKENS WITH HATS, white crested Polands wait their feed from Don Wilson, who raises these interesting birds. One of Wilson's Poland males won a championship at the Royal last week.



FEEDING TIME for Don Wilson's English game birds, part of his prize winning poultry farm north of Milton. Featuring Old English, crested Polands and Black Rosecombs, the Wilson birds win trophies all over the country.

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