
FROSTINA



Tilly is an Americana and lays beautiful large green eggs. She has always been somewhat of a free spirit; even more so than her sisters. Americana's are a bit on the wild side to begin with; add Tilly's indomitable will and you have a real go-getter. She was determined to roost in a chicken-yard-tree instead of going in the henhouse at night. She would fly up so high in the tree it was impossible to get her down. I spent the summer worrying that one of our many owls would claim her for a midnight snack.

As the summer waned into fall and fall into winter, Tilly still took to her bed in the high branches of what I fondly call the Chicken Elm. The weather slipped from cool to cold to bitter. Finally one evening at suppertime Tilly went into the hen house to nestle close to her sisters instead of opting for her usual treetop roost.

After a couple days I noticed her legs turning a strange color. Then her toes began to curl on one foot causing a limp. I soaked her feet with herbal infusions and massaged it into her legs. I also gave her herbal tonics to drink. She did not seem to be in any pain but gradually had a great difficulty walking so I separated her from the flock.

One morning at breakfast I saw that one of her feet had fallen completely off; a couple days later it was followed by the other foot. There was no blood or gore. Tilly was walking on stubs. She did a great deal of wing flapping for balance which only called attention to herself when she was free-ranging with the other hens. So, I isolated her both day and night from the flock.

I realized that she had probably frozen her feet while on her perch high above the fray of the chicken yard. Her legs turned back to their normal chicken color; the ends of her little stubs flattened out somewhat giving her a better platform for balance. She no longer flops around but walks with only a slight limp and she goes at a considerably slower pace.

I changed her name from Tilly to Frostina in honor of surviving her ordeal. She free-ranges with the flock but does not go far from the immediate barnyard area. I let her have separate sleeping quarters for her own safety as the rest of the hens are quite boisterous in the hen house.

Last fall a friend of mine brought her "city chicks" out to the country so they would have more elbow room. After several attempts at integrating them into my existing flock, I decided to let them remain separate. My rowdy bunch was just too much for the well-mannered urban dwellers.



It was only logical that I would house them with Frostina; it gave her some camaraderie and companionship. Plus, I reasoned, more bodies would help keep the coop warmer in the winter. They got along marvelously.

We always let some of our hens set on eggs and raise their own chicks. In this process we inevitably get roosters. One lesson we have learned, that like the Highlander, there can ONLY BE ONE.

Multiple roosters will eventually fight regardless of how well they got along growing up. I had given away most of our excess roosters and had one extra left. He was a handsome lad: half Americana, half New Hampshire Red. I thought it would be a good idea to give him to the Pennies (the city chicks) and Frostina. They concurred.

So, I named him Rebel and he responded to my kind generosity by being a charming, caring and gentle husband. I just love to watch a good rooster with his hens. Rebel calls them when he finds food and always lets them eat first. He was half crazy from always being on the lookout from an attack from Rusty (#1 Rooster) when I first put him in with his new family. But, now he is tame as can be and even likes to be petted occasionally.

It's more work to maintain two separate families of chickens, but it is worth it when I hear the Pennies and Frostina singing their little chicken songs and Rebel crowing the sun up each morning. Life is good.