

WHITE HEAD FLECKS IN RINGNECK DOVES

White feathers can grow among pigmented feathers after injury (from scar tissue) to the feather follicle on any bird. Some dove breeders are finding a white flecked head on some of their birds which is genetically transmitted (as a dominant?).

Those who have pied doves usually have some carriers, that is heterozygotes (as +/-pi) that will transmit the gene for pied. Pied is generally a genetic recessive. It takes two doses of it, as pi pi, to show pied. But some carriers may show the effects of one pied gene. Of 86 known (heterozygous) pied carriers, 8 had head flecks (a few scattered white feathers), and one had a white stripe on top of his bill. 9/86 = about 10% showing some phenotypic effects of one pied gene. At least three other blond or dark doves that could, but need not necessarily, carry pied had white head flecks. So it is not always fully recessive!

About 1952 in Wisconsin I raised a blond silky male that had a few white flecks on his head. It had not been injured. I thought it was a mosaic as in Dr. Hollander's pigeons. None of its progeny showed the flecks. Currently one of my birds, a backcross species hybrid with dwarf turtle dove, shows white head flecks. Yet no known pied is in its ancestry, and my pedigree control is pretty good. Nor was it injured to my knowledge. Are there two phenomena concerning white head flecks? What kind do you have?

by Wilmer J. Miller

American Dove Association Newsletter p.1 Feb 1977
ADAN Jan-Feb '81: 10 (repeat)