

## Uriah Cheep, The Insomniac Rooster

2:31 Saturday night/Sunday morning I have several big events in the week ahead, two of which may significantly mold my financial future. After just a few hours of sleep, I'm awake, wide awake. Another case of insomnia.

In my wide-eyed mental twisting and turning, I wonder: Do animals get insomnia? Chickens go to bed and get up with the sun. Even during the day they find shady places, nestle in and take naps. Our dogs and cats never seem to have any problems sleeping. They seem to sleep much of their lives away.

Now that I think of it, maybe we did have a rooster with insomnia. Uriah Cheep was a beautiful, lustrous black rooster with flowing black tail feathers, proof of this black Sumatran bloodline. He had just one flaw, he crowed seemingly all night long!! Being the night stalker that I am (in our home, only), I'd hear him in the chicken yard crowing at 2 AM, 2:37 AM, 3:03 AM, 3:14 AM, etc. And it seemed to be nearly every night that I was awake, so was he. Then half an hour before sunrise, he'd move from the chicken house in the far corner of the acreage up to the fence by the back porch and start crowing there, loud and in person.



His mom, Velima Sulima, Black Sumatra hen, hatched Uriah and his seven siblings not in the chicken house as most hens, but in the goat yard. She raised her brood out in the tall grasses. Uriah never learned or never chose, whichever the case, to sleep in the chicken house. Instead he slept on the outside of the coop on a high ledge. He even slept there through hurricane Rita's fierce winds. It was clearly his chosen spot and he was not going to conform to "typical chicken night life."

From his high ledge over the chicken house door, he crowed off and on throughout the night. I always thought it was because he perceived possible dangers to the flock, but tonight in my insomniacal mental meanderings, I think Uriah Cheep was a fellow insomniac. Maybe in his insomnia he just did not know that insomnia is not something you loquaciously share with others all night long!

We thought we would train him to go in the chicken house and sleep through the night like all the other quiet chickens. So, one night Ron caught him and put him in the chicken house and closed the door as we always do. He had to stay in with the others all night long. Such conformity was just too much for his spirit for after one night in the chicken house, Uriah decided he was NOT sleeping in there again! After that night, whenever he saw Ron heading toward the chicken house at dusk, Uriah would protest and squawk quite loudly and fly off into the tall grasses. He eventually returned and perched on his elevated ten foot high ledge, crowing at will under the starry Texas skies.

Uriah Cheep was still young. I liked him. He was friendly, kept a good flock of hens, and treated them well. He was protective of young chicks. He was ever so handsome, too. All of these were qualities in his favor. Maybe the crowing was a puberty thing. I waited a couple months hoping he would outgrow it. But alas, puberty passed and he kept up his steady nocturnal banter.

Uriah's seemingly 24 hour crowing was clearly socially unacceptable and apparently unstoppable. Just as a neighbor would find a dog that barked through the night to be a menace, I knew the same was true of a rooster that crowed through the night. I strongly promote responsible "animal management" and peaceful neighborly relations. Offending my neighbors with nocturnal crowing could not be. It was too great an offense to be pardoned. Something had to be done with this noisy insomniac rooster. He had to go. Like in the Dr. Seuss book with Marvin K Mooney, he had to go, NOW!

So, we voted Uriah Cheep off the farm. We took him, along with a few of his fellow roosters who also possessed other incorrigible social habits, to the Rooster Rescue at the Houston Humane Society. There Uriah lives and crows away his natural insomniac life.

The nights are quiet again.

And still I can't sleep, but I can't sleep in silence.

July 30, 2006 sk