

Courtesy of David Plant (AUS), below is an excerpt from The Pekin Bantam (2012):

## **BREEDING THE PARTRIDGE**

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*NOTE- This article was written with the Partridge Wyandotte in mind. References to the British Standard are replicated in the Australian Standard. Exactly the same breeding principles apply to the Partridge Pekin.*

British Partridge Wyandottes are paler in colour than the American counterparts, whilst other breeds have identical shades. From the fact that high quality Cockerel Bred Partridge Wyandottes have always thrown white sports, and also birds far too red, it would appear possible that the dilution is caused by the presence of the recessive white gene (c) in a single dose.

The dilution in pullet breeders is different in the fact that no white sports are produced, and it appears possible, that in this case, dilution is caused by the substitution of e+ for eb.

It must be kept in mind when reading what follows, that the British Standard calls for a lighter shade of red than the American. For example, in America, we would not want lemon-edged hackle in a cock-bred female. If this is kept in mind, the reader will find this extremely valuable.

When Partridge Wyandottes were first introduced to the people drawing up the Standard, they decided to go for the simple beauty which has since caused Partridges to be called "The Royalty of The Show Pen". It was a relatively easy matter to decide that the colour of the ideal male would be black with a beetle- green sheen, and dark undercolour, except for the hackles, shoulders, backs and bays. The hackles were to be black with beetle- green sheen, uniformly edged with lemon, shading to orange at the top of the head, both hackles to match, shoulders and back to be bright red and the wing bays to be bright bay. Likewise, the ideal female had to be soft, light partridge brown ground colour, uniformly penciled with concentric rings of black. The rings to be fine and starting inside the feather, following the shape of the feather. The tail and wing feathers to be black or penciled where they are hidden, and penciled to match the body wherever they are on view. The hackle to be as penciled as possible.

These are very simply defined and precise requirements, but when the breeders attempted to attain these ideals, they found they had problems. If they had a male with a solid stripe in the neck hackle, his female relations were too strong in the black, and this showed itself in black specks in the ground colour of the female. If however, they had a female of correct ground colour, then the male relations were too red, with center cores in the neck hackle, and very little black in the saddle hackle. It therefore became apparent that two pens were required, one to breed exhibition males, and one to breed exhibition females. The former were called Cockerel Breeders, and the latter Pullet Breeders, C.B. and P.B. for short. From this moment on the Partridges were really two colours, the Cockerel Breeders being a black red, and the Pullet Breeders a gold-penciled.

The colour problem was to find the correct mate for the ideal show bird. The complete solution is still not known, but I think we are very close to the answer. I will try to give the logic behind this problem that may be helpful to breeders of other varieties where double mating is required for colour reasons.

The ideal Partridge Wyandotte of either sex is so precisely marked, that it is inconceivable that the mate for this bird should be anything but equally precisely marked, but this marking may not be so simply described. Since the perfect show bird is unlikely to be available, the mate for a show bird must be chosen to counterbalance the defects in the said show bird.

For this reason, we have to find out which colour patterns in the male correspond with which in the female-We have found several definite results as follows:

- The neck hackle colour of the female is very close to the lightest part of the neck hackle of the male, and the width of edging is related.
- Shaftiness in hackles is related in both sexes.
- Colour inside the hackles of the male, is related to penciling in the female in some way.
- Solid black hackles in the male are associated with black specks in the ground color of the female (called "mossiness")
- The strength of the black and the beetle green sheen in both sexes is related.
- Uniformity of body colour in the female is connected with matching hackles in the male.

From our established results we can see that a Cock Bred female must have:

- Lemon edged neck hackles as bright as possible, and as free from shaft as possible.
- Beetle green sheen wherever it is possible to be seen, for instance, in the neck and tail. Some of the best CB females shine green on the body in the sunlight.

- Very little penciling, with what there is, very coarse and blurred.
- As little shaft on the body as possible, apart from the breast.
- Primaries as dark as possible

Having got the basic requirements for a CB pullet, other minor details probably determine the selection of the mate for a particular male. For instance, it is likely that if a CB female is completely free from body colour, then her sons may fail in the wing bays, but if she has too much body colour then her sons will have shafty hackles. The margin for error is very fine as can be seen from the fact that a completely sound male with perfect wing bays is very rare indeed. Consequently, the amount of body colour on the female to be chosen, depends on her mate.

The Pullet Breeding male is likewise fairly precisely marked according to the above rules. He must have:

- Beetle green sheen wherever he is black.
- Fairly bright neck hackle, the colour of the brightest part of the neck the same as the neck hackle colour of the ideal female. This discovery has led to a virtual disappearance of "foxy" females so predominant a few years ago when the fanciers were frightened that a male with bright neck was partially Cock-bred.
- Hackles with center core of bay, and not a definite light shaft that will lead to shaftiness in the females.
- Some red on the breast, as a completely solid black breast is related to heavy penciling.
- Wing bays of which an exhibition male would be proud.

As in Cockerel Breeders, the male chosen depends on the female selected. If she is too heavy, choose a male with a little black, provided that what there is, is the correct black. If she is weak in the penciling then choose a male with plenty of black.

Your breeding results can be seen from the chickens at "unisex" stage of eight weeks or so. At this stage the sexes are most alike in colour. A Pullet Breeding cockerel will have feathers on the lower breast, and on the wing coverts, that are penciled. The cockerels which are the finest and sharpest in penciling and which have these feathers of soft Partridge brown colour, are the ones which contain the potential to breed good coloured females.

It has often been written that the main point in selecting a PB. Male or a CB. Female is that they are bred from a long line of exhibition birds. This of course, is perfectly true, and if a CB. Female or a PB. Male is as I have described, then it is certain that it's pedigree will be true. However, not all birds with correct plumage are themselves worthy of a place in the breeding pen.

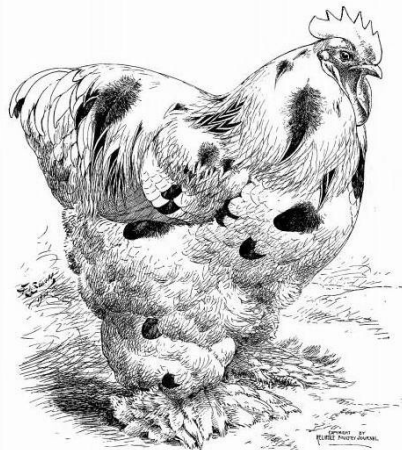


CHART OF IDEAL PARTRIDGE COCHON MALE  
Fig. 4—Illustrating the Shape and Color Required by the American Standard of Perfection.

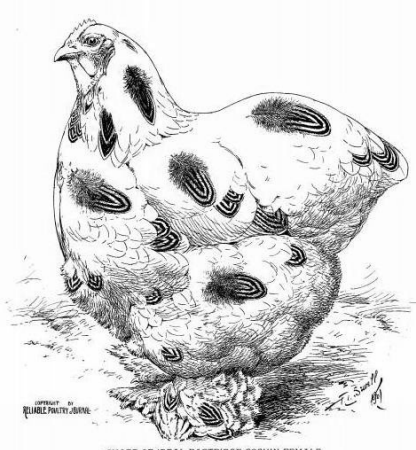


CHART OF IDEAL PARTRIDGE COCHON FEMALE  
Fig. 5—Illustrating the Shape and Distribution of Color Required by the American Standard of Perfection.