

RED COCHIN BANTAMS

by Matt McCammon, originally published in the April, 2011 Poultry Press

The reds are being bred by a few breeders like Annamay Carlson and Ken and Bernita Miller of Missouri. The bantam standard lists reds and black tailed reds as accepted varieties and I am sometimes asked the difference. The black tailed reds are more along the lines of the color of Rhode Island Reds. They are darker mahogany with black tail and wing feathers. They are darker in the undercolor. The reds are lighter more like New Hampshires. They are to have red wing and tail feathers and have red undercolor. I don't know of any black tailed reds being raised today. In fact, the last communication I had with anyone raising them was a long time ago. A gentleman in Mississippi named William Kornhaus listed them in his ad. I am afraid they are nearly extinct. I am not sure why early breeders chose to have both separate varieties of reds standardized, but it is a shame that we went from having enough for two varieties to not even knowing if they exist today. What variety is next to face extinction?

I have in front of me an article by George McCarley who created a strain of red Cochin bantams. He, of course, cautions the breeder to never sacrifice type for color, and I know that is the downfall of many a red today. They are small and lack abundance of feather and width. He suggests that a good red can only come from a black-buff combination. He says that some breeders have added partridge blood, but he claims that these birds will often have faint tracings of barring on the back and breast from their partridge ancestors. He feels the ideal shade of red is close to a Rhode Island Red, meaning a clear red and not a reddish brown. Undercolor must be red down to the skin. The quill of the feather must be red also and not orange or buff. He feels perhaps a few black feathers in wing or tail would be permissible. Some breeders of his day felt black in the tail was necessary, but he disagreed. perhaps this is where the two separate accepted varieties came in to being? He used a black Cochin cock crossed over a deep buff Cochin hen. From this, he crossed back to the best over "many years". He says the larger percentage comes red now, but every year some still hatch black or golden buff. He feels a large number of birds needs to be raised as there is a broad range of shades that must be culled through.

A friend of mine had some nice little reds back in the early 90's. They had nice brick red color and only an occasional black wing or tail feather. She sold them to an "interested" breeder and they have never been seen again. What a shame!

I have discussed the breeding of reds with other interested fanciers, and they agree that the black to buff combination is a good direction to take, but the number of off-colored birds is large. I imagine that is the reason few are undertaking this project.

In the latest ABA Quarterly, outgoing Cochin International President Tom Roebuck made a statement I agree with completely. He suggests tackling one or two of the already accepted varieties as your improvement project instead of trying to create a new variety from scratch. It

would be every bit as rewarding as making your own. Saving a color from extinction would stamp your name in breed history for sure. The reds, golden laced, silver laced, silver penciled, lemon blue, buff columbians, and columbians are just a few of the varieties in need of caring and committed breeders. Large fowl breeders are needed in brown, partridge, and the golden and silver laced. Sometimes one will have to just buy stock from hatcheries and literally start from scratch. Club members and officers will be happy to point you in the direction we feel is best and help you get in contact with the necessary breeders. To all of you who are taking a variety under your wings, thanks on behalf of Cochin lovers everywhere.

