

Creating "new" colours in Komorner Tumblers

By Jan Lombard – Republic of South Africa

I am breeding and showing Komorner Tumblers since 1999. We have the American type in South Africa. Compared to the European type, these birds have larger crests, bigger rosettes and stand more upright – with their eyes in a perpendicular line with the balls of their feet. My foundation stock was imported from Jim Mueller in California, USA. Before Komorners I kept Modenas and was used to a large variety of colours. The birds from Jim were red (recessive) and yellow magpie marked. I loved my new breed, but quickly became bored with one colour only. As there were no black Komorners in South Africa, I decided to introduce black from a cross to a Black Mookie. After a few generations of back crosses to pure Komorner Tumblers, my blacks were getting better to such an extent that I've won a top-7 prize at the Griqualand West Regional show in 2003 with a black magpie marked bird that had a Mookie predecessor – 5 generation back.

I subsequently received a beautiful black Magpie marked cock bird from Canada. The renowned fantail breeder & judge, Ben Ferber, was instrumental in getting this bird to me. He judged fantails at the 2001 National Show in Kimberley.

I presented Ben with a necktie that had a fantail as motive. I was not expecting anything in return and was very surprised and excited to hear from fantail fanciers that Ben sent me a bird. With this bird in my loft, my black stud was suddenly on its way as one of the best Komorner Tumbler studs in the country.



I started looking for another colour challenge

During February 2001 I've imported a number of so-called self KT's from Joe T Powers of Pennsylvania. They are called selfs to distinguish them from magpie marked birds. In fact they were patterned birds as well as spread (solid coloured) birds. At that stage I had the following colour genes at my disposal to play with: recessive red, indigo, faded, reduced, qualmond, brown, dilute, spread, bar pattern and check pattern. I enjoyed breeding combinations of these and exported some qualmond and faded birds to Germany.



I always loved the milky gene – especially when in combination with blue/black pigment and the spread factor.

This specific combination is called lavender. I decided to set out on a route to develop lavender magpie marked Komorner Tumblers.

Since the milky gene is a recessive one, the F1 generation from a blue check KT x milky blue bar Mooker were all supposed to be blue. From my previous experience with a Mooker cross I knew that the neck shaking disappeared by the second or third generation. I also know that the magpie marked pattern reappear after enough back crosses to pure Komorner Tumblers. Was I surprised when the first two babies were both milky – the cock was checked and the hen barred. Both had a few white primaries. When I contacted Joe Powers he told me that the brown check KT hen he send me had a 50% change of carrying milky. Her blue check son inherited it from her and passed it on to his children when mated to the milky blue bar Mooker hen.

The fact that this cock carried milky saved me one generation.



I've mated these two F1 milky birds to two good quality black magpie marked pure KT's. As expected these F2 birds were black. I've raised 3 pairs. I then did inbreeding with them and raised 2 milky blue check cocks – F3 now with 75% KT blood.

These two milky blue check cocks were mated to black magpie marked black pure KT hens again. The F4 (87.5% KT) were black again - due to the recessive nature of the milky gene. With some inbreeding I raised 3 Lavender birds out of these F4's. These F5 birds have the required colour gene combinations – e.g. spread, blue/black pigment and a double dose of the milky gene. They already have more than ten white primary flight feathers with the white already moving up their wing shields. Their white facial marking are already very similar to those of my pure KT's. I believe it will take me at least another 4 generations to breed them up to show quality. This coming spring they will be mated to pure KT's again – this time to the Canadian bloodline developed out of the cock Ben Ferber sent me.

The above breeding program was only possible due to the fact that I breed two generations per year. At the very start of the breeding season (August in South Africa) I mate the milky coloured cross bred to the best pure magpie marked KT's that I have. I use feeders to ensure that I get two to three sets of eggs from each pair in a short period of time. I then break the pairs up. Let them rest for a month before I use the pure KT's in my stud of show birds. By March the August bred young birds (black but carrying milky) are old enough to breed. I usually get two sets of babies out of them before winter sets in. If I am lucky there is normally a few milky coloured ones amongst these – enough to use in the coming August to mate to pure KT's again.

I may even mate some of the Lavender birds to recessive red magpie marked pure KT's to create pink. Pink is the combination of recessive red and milky – both in homozygous form. Since both these genes are recessives, my chance will be one in 16 to raise a pink bird from two blacks that both carry a single dose of recessive red and milky. I may be lucky with a pink in the first nest, or it may take very long to get there. A pink magpie marked Komorner Tumbler may not be very attractive due to the little contrast between pink and white. A lot of pigeon fanciers may not even give it a second glance. But, just talk to a fancier who have succeeded in breeding a pink, and you will find out that it is indeed something to accomplish. I must mention that pink Lahores are not that scarce, but in other breeds the are few and far between. Apart from Lahores I saw only two pink pigeons over the 10 years that I am involved in this wonderful hobby.

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