



PINTA ASTURIANA

Text and pictures: Wilfried Lombary

In a magazine of Aviculture of 2001 my attention was drawn by an article about a poultry breed that was unknown for me and many others. Cosmopolitan and Dutchman Hans Ringnalda had seen the breed on a great show in Nürnberg and wrote a nice article about it. As usual, he wanted to have this special breed himself. In 2002 I saw the birds at his house in Amerongen. He gave me a trio of this Spanish breed and that is how I started breeding them myself. Later I got eggs from Spanish breeders, too. When I told in Valls (Catalonien) that I was raising the breed myself, I was immediately appointed to judge them on the show. Spanish breeders appreciate that a foreign breeder and judge helps in keeping their local breed. After that I had to take Spanish lessons for a year, which I managed quite well.



The Pinta Asturiana is a Spanish breed that catches the eye because of the unique pattern of colour and markings. It is a very old local breed. In the windy area of Asturia (North of Portugal) people had bred different poultry breeds, on t farms and in villages, for a long time. Most of them do not have a written standard, but still, something written was found, about a breed with special colour and markings. Author and poultry specialist,

"master" Orozco had written something about them in one of his books: "The

black-and-white Pinta Asturiana had white primary and secondary wing feathers, white main sickles and also the tail feathers were white. The rest of the bird's body was black. The Spanish poultry idealist R.A. Eguino Marcos wanted to recreate this breed in order to make it safe for the future, something which was difficult without a written standard. How did the breed look like in the past and how reliable were the old papers mentioning them? Were there still some original



birds left or were there more strains that looked the same? One assumed there would be some original birds still alive, spread all over Asturia. He looked for birds that fulfilled a few minimal conditions. They had to show the special colour and markings as good as possible, they should be hardy and produce the typical smooth, creamy-coloured eggs.

Between 1981 and 1985 every chicken that Marcos saw and had a bit of look-alike with the breed was bought. These ones were crossed and then bred back to the best coloured birds available.



The aim was to get a flock to start with that was homogeneous. Because of inbreeding, the birds got less vital and had problems with fertility. 1985, by accident, two flocks were found in mid-Asturia with the typical black-and-white birds.

The colour of the chicks appeared to be black, mottled and white. To avoid inbreeding also the black and white hens that were among them were used to breed with. They were mated to black-and-

white cocks. From these matings nearly all chicks were born white, with a few brown ones. The mating black-and-white to black never gave white chicks. The percentage black-and-white was about 20%. But there were always black, black-and-white and white chicks. The gene for black-and-white colour seemed to pass on intermediate. The colour of the chicks is said to show what colour they get as adults. The colour is a genetic puzzle that even today scientists have not yet solved. One assumes that the genetic code is: EE CoCo SS blbl (C-) bb. Also the allele Mi might be involved. But as usual the experts do not yet agree on that point. These things are for most of us too complicated anyway. In Asturia also other Spanish breeds were crossed in.



Left: old hen with very good type and ideal colour and feather markings. Unfortunately she shows spurs, which are not wanted in hens.

The colour pattern of the Pinta Asturiana is not mottled or exchequer, but an own black-and-white colour pattern. The white colour should dominate the black or brown (roxa), although it is less as in exchequer. It is a colour I saw many years ago in Japan on the Shamo where it was called Go-Stone meaning dice. I doubt strongly the Japanese birds are genetically similar to the Pinta Asturiana.

In 1995 in Spain some 200 birds were already being used for breeding, and in 2000 this number went up to 400,

divided between approximately 20 breeders. The annual egg production was about 245 smooth creamy eggs. Crossing with another breed makes the smooth eggshell disappear immediately. The breed lays well in winter and seldom gets broody.



Above: Juvenile Pinta Asturiana of both sexes.

Pinta Asturianas don't just have a genetically total different colour as any other breed, also the appearance is totally different. Even today it is quite a job to bring a good bird on the show. In Spain they are mildly judged, otherwise the reintroduction of an old breed like this would be nearly impossible.

Standard of Pita Pinta Asturiana (spanish version of 2004)

Origin and description:

Spain, the Asturian region.

The breed was recreated by the biologist A. Eguino Marcos, starting with birds with the most typical characteristics of the old breed from Asturia. This was between 1980 and 1990. In that time he rebuilt the breed. It is a middle-high breed, strong, with a brick-like type. The body shows harmony and pride, with a

nicely rounded breast. The breed is very tame and does not fly. It is a breed of the Atlantic type, rather heavy with red ears. It is quiet a lively breed with good laying abilities and a good quality meat. Still there are some characteristics that should be improved. The weight of the cock by elderly birds is 4 till 5,4 kg; the hen weigh between 2,5 and 3 kg. The ring size is 22 mm for the male and 20 mm for the female. The eggs weigh 60 to 65 gr. The breed was included in the standard in October 2004.

Description COCK

Body: broad and well developed, not too long, back lightly declining.

Neck: medium long, robust.

Head: large, broad and well rounded.

Comb: single, of medium size, strait upright standing with 5 till 7 not too long spikes. Back of the comb not too long and free from the head, of bright red colour.

Beak: medium sized, strong and well bend, yellow with irregular black spots.

Wattles: medium sized, well rounded, of fine tissue and brightly red coloured.

Earlobes: medium sized, rather long, tight to the head, brightly red.

Face: smooth, of a fine tissue, brightly red.

Eyes: round, orange-coloured, eyelids black or partly black.

Back: broad, nearly horizontal, lightly declining towards the tail.

Breast: broad and deep, well muscled.

Abdomen: broad and well developed.

Wings: more long than broad, well folded and carried tight to the body.

Tail: carried under an angle of 45° to the horizontal, medium sized and well developed, not too long, broad sickles, tightly carried, tail coverts of medium length, well bended.

Thighs: strong and well muscled.

Shanks: of medium length, good proportioned, smooth, bright yellow with black spots.

Toes: four, well spread, strong and straight, yellow with black spots.



Left: young birds. The black spots on shanks and beak are visible.

Description HEN

Besides the differences in sexes similar to the male.

Comb: single, small.

Wattles: small and round.

Back: more horizontal than in the male.

Breast: slightly deeper than in the male.

Tail: not too large, less carried up than in the male (40°). The fluffy tail coverts the main tail feathers, rather tightly carried.

Colours:

- Black (Negra): beak and shanks yellow with black spots, bottom of the feet yellow.
- White (Blanca): beak and shanks yellow with black spots.
- Black-and-white (Pinta en Negra) Pinta: feather-endings white, which gives a mottled impression all over in both sexes. The male brightly shining in the sexfeathers. The white feather-endings should be arrow-shaped and give a good contrast to the ground colour. The black colour should be very intensive, shining greenish. Primaries and secondaries are white, just as the main sickles of the male. Beak and shanks yellow with irregular black spots.

Right: ideal breastmarking of a male.

- Brown-mottled (ochre) (Pinta and Anaranjado) Roxa: Feather-endings white too, but on a rusty-brown ground colour (never red) giving a nice mottled appearance in both sexes. Primaries and secondaries, tail feathers and main sickles of the male white. Beak and shanks yellow with black spots.

Note:

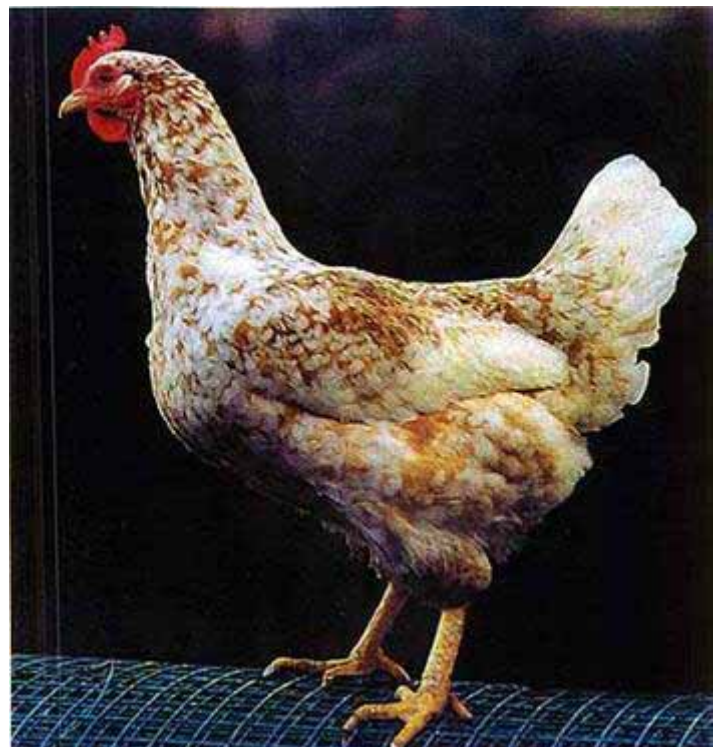
After hatching, chicks have the same colour as those of the blacks, but the pigmented zone is much larger and includes the lower back and two-third of the wings. The central zone is always white. When they grow up they show more and more white.

Right: Brown-mottled (Roxa) hen.

Main faults:

White earlobes, feathers on shanks and toes, red feathers, less than 75% white in primaries and secondaries, in the feathers of the tail, sickles, white or brown eggs, rough eggs and general faults in poultry.

Note: the more white in primaries, secondaries and tail the better. Older birds show more white and must be white in primaries, secondaries and tail feathers. Young birds slightly too dark in the first year show more white and better markings after moulting (as in mille-fleurs). The shape of the tail should be rather narrow (narrow upside-down V-shape), carried slightly open.





Left: ideal white wing feathers, wing bows and wing bars should show some more white.

Right below: close-up of the tail, with white tail feathers.



In Spain, attempts are being made at creating the bantam version of the breed. The birds that are there do not yet have the full type, nor the correct white wing- and tail feathers. The eye colour is still too light.

The present situation in Belgium and the Netherlands

Eight breeders try to improve the breed and bring them to the shows. There is still a lot of work to do. Things that have to improve are: the weight has to improve, comb faults, crooked toes, too high carriage of the tail, inclining back, colour- and marking faults, not enough pigment spots on beak and shafts and too light or unequal eye colour.

Who dares to start breeding a Spanish meat bird (excellent taste) and in the same time a good layer, hardy and resistant to cold, heat and wind?



Right and below: Hen and cock in the Roxa colour.

Bottom right: Cock in pinta negra colour.

Bottom left: Cock in Roxa colour.

