



Valencian

Frill

Text: Nico van Benten, photos: Ad van Benten

In Spain this breed has a first name and a family name; the first name *Figurita*, meaning: 'little doll or small statute' and *Valenciana* as Family name, indicating the origin, namely Valencia. According to the Spanish breeders, also a *Figurita Sevilla* must exist, which originated in Sevilla (Andalusia, Spain) but this variety is not found or known to us. In general everyone agrees that the Valencian Frill is the smallest fancy pigeon in the world. The history of this breed must go back a lot of centuries and there are indications that it originated in the North of Africa; an obvious conclusion, in view of the resemblance with the Tunisian Owl. The official Spanish Fancy Pigeon Standard states a first mention of the Valencian Frill in literature as early as the year 1799; a year that falls in the Bourbons era of 1700-1868. It is common knowledge that we think that this breed was introduced in Spain by the Moors during their occupation, which lasted almost 700 years up to 1492. Although, without contradiction, I think that this last admission is correct but there never were any standards in Spain at that time. Occasionally notes were made by historians, but obviously only if they found it necessary. Most up to date pigeon standards in Spain are made after the year that Spain joined the Common Market in 1986, becoming effective in 1993.

Right: Valencian Frills in the aviary of José Antonin I Catrecasas in Mataro (Spain) in 1993.



Left: Two Valencian Frills at Ramon Amenos' in Valls (Spain) 1994.

Right: In Barcelona/Spain, in the atelier of the Spanish pigeon Judge and animal painter Emilio Blasco, we took this photo of a small painting of a Valencian Frill at the beach.



Below: Another painting from Emilio Blasco with a couple of white Valencian Frills.



In the Netherlands, this breed was recognised in the standard in 1997 and on the 19th of November 2000 the Specialty Club was founded in The Hague, called 'Figurita Club Nederland

FCN'. In fact this was a breakaway from the Specialty Club for all Iberian Breeds, the SIS. On the 23rd of February 2001 this specialty club FCN has his first meeting and get together. President was Roy Arbeider, Secretary Ad van Benten and Treasurer Ronald van Dijk. From that moment, this young breed was strongly supported by this fast growing club. The big advantage from the beginning was the availability of good material from several top breeders in Spain, like Ramon Amenos I Cos and José Antonin I Catrecasas, with which a very good relationship was built up by the annual visits at the international Animal Exhibitions in Valls (Tarragona, Spain) and during the Avicultura Shows in The Hague (The Netherlands) in 1994 and 1997, where two (semi-officially) European championships for Iberian Pigeon breeds were held and where not only a wide exchange of animals took place, but also knowledge concerning the breeds was shared between the pigeon judges and breeders.

Right: Valencian Frills at Juan Rossello's. Native from Mallorca (Balearic/Spain), this breeder lives near Lyon in the South of France. In 1991 he showed me the first Valencian Frills of my life. Later in 1993, I arranged the first Valencian Frills to be transported to Holland on request of a breeder in The Hague, but unfortunately there had been a mix up in the couples, so the breeder in the Hague received a white and a coloured one and was not at all amused. It struck in my mind that Juan in Lyon also had white Valencian Frills, and I thought to be smart, jumped in my car and drove to Lyon,



which was 600 kilometres closer as Valls/Spain. I returned with a basket filled with white Valencian Frills that turned out to be almost 50% larger in size than the birds from Valls This was an expensive learning curve and is to illustrate how you can be mistaken if there is no comparison! In the meantime I got stuck with a number of pigeons, which nobody wanted to have.



Left: The president of the Specialty Club for Iberian Pigeon Breeds SIS, Huub Vermeulen, had a blue Valencian Frill hen raised by hand and this pigeon was amazingly tame. Sitting on his shoulder the bird accompanied him everywhere, also to the club reunions; a very positive publicity for the hobby. Photo: Dick Hamer.

At the first club day of the FCN in October 2001, the members brought all the Valencian Frills they could carry, over 150, and the most remarkable event that day was the weighing of the birds, to find out the average weight of the Dutch pigeons.

Reason for this was a remark on the weight of a Valencian Frill in the Spanish Standard, stating this should be between 150 and 170 grams. This was questioned by the Dutch breeders, especially because the best Spanish Valencian Frills did not fit into those guidelines of weight and the breeders didn't want a weight reference in the Dutch standard, but nevertheless they wanted a reference at least for the moment. Most of the present 152 Dutch Valencian Frills had a weighed around 200 grams. The real nicest little birds were 190 grams and only a very few came near the mentioned weight of 150 - 170 grams. This was considered too low in weight because vitality appeared to be neglected. In the mean time the breeders had their first breeders experience and they found out that the smallest females tended to have problems with the egg production; some females lay only one egg, or nothing at all. But the combination of a bigger hen with a smaller cock turned out to give the best results. And after consulting the Spanish breeders and participating in Spanish and other international



shows, it turned out that birds of 200 grams could have the highest results at the show.

Above: An imagination of a couple of Valencian Frills at their nest in the evening red, by the artist Emilio Blasco.

Left: Another Valencian Frill painted by the artist Emilio Blasco, here pictured with some surprising attributes.



Right: A blue chequered Valencian Frill at the nest. It turned out to be a 'tower builder'. This has nothing to do with the character of the Valencian Frill, it is just that some pigeons have this behaviour; they keep building and even take material from the other bird's nests. This blue chequered bird has some bronze in its shields, this trait is not wanted.



Character and reproduction

The Valencian Frill has a calm and confiding character. A pigeon breeder in The Hague, who purchased this breed in 1994 in his loft for the first time in his life, was astonished by the confiding character, which he compared with that of a typical Cropper breed behaviour. According to him, the Valencian Frill flew with conviction and in a way strongly resembling the Cropper character. Or as another fancier called it: "not one wing beat to much".

Left: Two Valencian Frills, only one day old, fed and raised in a perfect way by their own parents.

The Valencian Frill is not aggressive, but they don't let themselves be pushed aside. The breed can be kept together with other couples or breeds without problem. The breeding of Valencian Frills can start from end of March to April, when there is no longer frost at night. Valencian Frills are good parents; sitting tight on the nest and feeding their own youngsters all the way. The cock gets a lot more spirit in the mating-season, following his hen till the eggs are in the nest. The beaks are a problem, they

must not get any smaller, to avoid feeding problems with their young. When the mating is started at the begin of March, there is enough time for three to four breeding rounds; so six to eight youngsters per couple. The Valencian Frill is very sort after and the breed is popular, so there is no pending danger for an overproduction and this offers also a better possibility for selection and still make good material available for new breeders. Try to keep variety in types in your loft, to mate smaller males to somewhat larger females for an easier egg production, also being determinant for the size of the offspring for the exhibitions, but also for the next stock birds. Apparently the breed needs a different size in stock birds and show birds. At the show, the Valencian Frill is easy to judge, they are calm and with only a little attention present themselves in the right and most beautiful position and stand.

Right: Valencian Frill with its own young at the nest, without becoming nervous, they stay tight on the nest even with strangers in the loft.





Left: Young white Valencian Frills after the breeding season in the aviary of Ad van Bente. He still must do his selection, but they already show their quality.

Below right: Ideal pigeon loft, existing of three compartments, so there is room to separate the youngsters and the parents (males and females) after the breeding season. This loft has a hardwood trellis floor for an optimum hygiene and the roofing tiles are part of regulated airflow system.

Below: The cock gets a lot more spirit in the mating-season, following its hen till the eggs are in the nest.



Right: A young Valencian Frill of 10 days old, fed without problem by its own parents.



Left: Eventually all the Valencian Frills are flying around like this adult, in the same self-confident way.

Breed characteristics

At the shows, we still see different types. Globally they are distinguished as the French and the Spanish type. At the French type we see in general more rounded heads and as in the French standard the type is described as slightly elevated, the French Valencian Frills are more horizontal in position. Besides that they are also larger. The Spanish Valencian Frills have an angular, trapezium form head shape, with a beak following the descending front headline. These birds are mostly good positioned in a good upright position, were the vertical line from the eye ends just before the legs. The tail must not reach the ground. These are often the smallest types.

Right: A Valencian Frill, drawing by Ad van Bente in 2001.



In Europe it's a rule, that the land of origin or perfection (in this case both Spain) is responsible for the standard and the other countries have to follow. And since the Valencian Frill is a Spanish breed, we want to see our Valencian Frills conform the Spanish standard and meeting the Spanish requirements, thus with a descending stand (position) and an angular head, with a beak following the forehead line (face).

These characteristics make the Valencian Frills so typical and the only way, to stay on the same level and set is to visit and participate in each others exhibitions. In practice we even see that French, Dutch and German pigeons judges get the chance to judge the Valencian Frills at Spanish shows. With this in mind, the proposal of the Spanish pigeon union to organise a European Championship for Iberian Pigeons in rotation, each year in an other European country, is a splendid idea.

In the Spanish standard, all the colours are admitted if recognisable and defined, this is different to the Dutch standard, being much stricter and only allowing the standard colours on the show bench.

Left: Statue of a Valencian Frill, made by the Dutch artist Marleen Brouwer.

The state of affairs

At the moment, the Valencian Frill Club in the Netherlands has over 70 active members. The club organises a yearly meeting and an open judging with discussion. And in several shows in the country they participate with a nice collection of Valencian Frills.



In December 2007 the clubshow was held at Avicorni at the National Union Championship in Utrecht (The Netherlands).

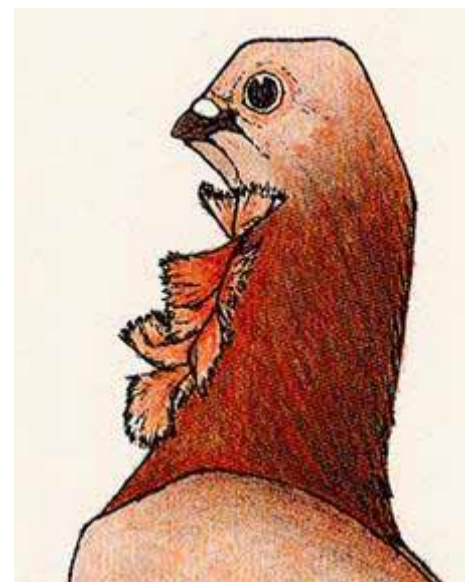
At this show a record number of 134 Valencian Frills was entered, in the colours:

<i>white</i>	56
<i>black</i>	22
<i>blue blackbarred</i>	10
<i>red</i>	8
<i>yellow</i>	6
<i>silver darkbarred</i>	10
<i>ash red barred</i>	14
<i>ash yellow barred</i>	3
<i>white groused</i>	5

The winners were in the whites, but eventually very good birds were found in all colours. The average level is higher than before, there is less variation and real bad types are no longer entered at the show, because the club has worked hard and educated all the new breeders as to what to look for and this has had a positive reaction going forward in style.



Left: Barred ash red Valencian Frills; they still need some improvement in the forehead (face) line with the beak, but the characteristic angular head shape is present.



Left: Beautiful intensive black Valencian Frill, with the typical somewhat broader (white) eyeceres that are typical for a Frill breed, but unfortunately this gives extra contrast in the blacks; this we must simply accept.

Right: Red Valencian Frill; the beak needs to be more in line with the front of the head.

Standard

General appearance

A very little pigeon of very small measurements (it is said to be the smallest pigeon breed), coquettish and extremely vital with a downright confining character.

Type: is extremely small and coquettish. The pigeon is short, that is extra emphasised by the flights, which reach almost up to the end of the tail. Although being a small pigeon, it has a relative broad and round breast, with separate and visible carried wing butts.

Stance: is elevated in a proud attitude, with a straight descending back and tail line. The neck is carried backwards; a drop line from the eyes angles to the floor level right in front of the legs. In action the Valencian Frill stands on its toes.



Left: Yellow Valencian Frill, for this colour a splendid bird.

Head: a flattened skull with angular forms. Seen from the side it's a trapezium form. The beak is almost middle length, the centre of the beak should be on a straight line with the pupil of the eye. The face line (front head line) forms a fluent line with the upper mandible. The beak colour is in accordance with the feather colour.

Eyes: orange/red to red with diluted colours having a lighter eye colour. In brown and khaki birds some pearling is admitted and the whites have a bull-eye.

Eye ceres: not too large and the colour will be in accordance with the feather colour. But it must be taken into consideration that the Valencian Frill is an Owl breed, having by definition a somewhat broader eye cere, and this is extra noticeable at the dark feathered birds, like blacks and blues. In the diluted coloured birds the colour of the eye cere is flesh coloured (light yellow).



Right: Blue blackbarred Valencian Frill, showing itself very well. A good example of a coquettish presentation.

Neck: of middle length and carried a little backwards. Of course this Owl breed has a (not to large) gullet. The neck twist underlined the angularity of the head. The frill must well be developed, large and beginning at the middle of the breast and if possible starting with a rosette (very rare seen), rising upwards and ending in a so-called butterfly or bowtie, formed by some small feathers pointed upwards. In Spain its called the 'floquet' and considered very important. In fact this butterfly is the start of a neck collar as seen in the Chinese Frill.





Left: Blue blackbarred Valencian Frill.

Legs: in proportion, medium length, both clean legged and groused but without hocks. In action the Valencian Frill stands on the foremost toes. The groused have feathered legs and the toes are just covered.

Back: short and covered by the wing shields.

Feathering: soft and tight to the body.

Right: Blue blackbarred Valencian Frill, with a characteristic conspicuous head shape, but this beak must not be any shorter.

Colours:

Selfs in white, black, dun, red, yellow, brown and khaki.

Barred and Chequered in blue, silver dark barred, ash red, ash yellow barred, brown barred, khaki barred and blue with smoky factor *).

Grizzles in blue, silver, red barred, yellow barred, brown barred and khaki barred.

Mottled head, and dark- and light tigered in black, dun, red, yellow, brown and khaki.



*) The Smoky factor with blue gives some light colouring to the beak and the blue feather colour is more dark with the barres less distinguished.



Left: Blue blackbarred Valencian Frill, with a perfect type and stance. Only the chequering could be better.

Faults: Too heavy and too long in type. Round head shape. A narrow breast. A deviate stance. Long and/or heavy beak. Missing frill, too long or too short in neck. Tendency for hocks at groused birds.

After the general appearance, the next mentioned characteristics are important in the following order:

- Type and Stance
- Head shape
- Frill
- Feathering
- Colour and Marking

Ring size is 7 mm and for the groused this is 8 mm



Left and right: Ash red barred Valencian Frills, both show very good breed characteristics.



Rights: Blue Grizzle Valencian Frill.

Left below: Black dark-tigered Valencian Frill; One of the more rare occurring colours.



The Valencian Frill had almost disappeared from the Iberian peninsula after the 2nd WW. It was especially thanks to the commitment of Pere Prat, that the Valencian Frill was saved from extinguishing. This top breeder of pigeons lived on Mallorca (Balears/Spain) during the Spanish civil war and the following period, during the Government of President Franco. In this period it was forbidden to keep

pigeons, with the exception of the Paloma Deportiva (Pica) sport. The control on this law has been less strict on Mallorca, so a number of breed among which the Valencian Frill and other Catalanian pigeon breeds were saved from extinction. The breeding of the Valencian Frills from Pere Prat is succesfully continued by a group of members from the Spanish breeders club 'El Francoli' among those Ramon Amenos i Cos and José Antonin i Catrecasas.

For more information, you can contact the Dutch Specialty Club for the Valencian Frill: Figurita Club Nederland – FCN - , P. van der Lans, J.C.
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