

# CHICKEN RUN

**OLD DUTCH  
BANTAM BREEDS  
at  
JAN KRAAN'S**



**Text: Aviculture Europe  
and Jan Kraan.  
Photos: Jan Kraan.**

**Due to circumstances we were in no position to visit Jan Kraan, but in full cooperation with Jan we can offer you an interesting article. It is a "Trilogy of old Dutch Breeds", as phrased by Jan himself. Now, Jan gets the floor.**

**Above: Jan Kraan, critically viewing one of his Isabel Lavender spangled Owlbeard bantam hens.**

In 1975 I started with poultry breeding with ordinary breed-less chickens, after I had been breeding tropical birds for a few years. I soon came in touch with Piet van Nek from Ede, who asked me whether I might be interested in an old Dutch breed, the Breda fowl (the large variety) – still an unknown breed to me at that point. He knew an address from where these birds could be obtained.

Therefore we went to Vinkeveen, where Jan van Egmond lived, in those years an experienced breeder of Breda fowl and Dutch Owlbeard. I was flabbergasted when I saw his birds! I had once seen them, in the fifties at shows in Amersfoort and a Ornithophilia in Utrecht, but in those years I was very young and I was preoccupied with other things. So I forgot the breeds then.

I could buy one black cock and three hens (two Blacks and one Blue). I was proud. The first years I hatched my eggs in Piet van Nek's incubator and the fertility was good. I became a member of smallholder club Nut & Genoegen in Velp. The members were very enthusiastic about having a new young member, so I got all the advice I needed (from Jan Peters, his son Henk Peters, Ben Peters, Coen Aalbers and many others). I asked for a breeder's licence.





I also became a member of the Nederlandsche Hoenderclub (Dutch Breed Association). This club always held his annual meetings in Roosendael Castle in Roosendael, and these meetings were always cosy.

I had my first Breda fowl sent for judging and exhibition to the Ornithophilia Show. They were awarded with a so-called ZG (i.e. very good). For me a big stimulus; go on breeding them!

### **Bantam Breda Fowl**

Soon I wanted some bantam chickens for my daughter, preferably bantam Breda Fowl. But these could not be found, neither in Holland, nor in Belgium or Germany.

In the meantime I had "infected" Albert Jansen with the "chicken virus". Albert was experienced in genetics and breeding of birds, dogs, monkeys and poultry. Together we went to the Achterhoek (East of Holland), visiting a certain Leeferink, who had Breda fowl, in bantam and half-size (not Large or Bantam, but in-between), but all lacking nails and some had crooked and short toes; cause: too close in-breeding....



We took six bantam Breda home and we started breeding with a white cock and one black hen. Apart from this line, Albert Jansen started breeding another strain by crossing Dutch Owlbeard (black) and Booted Bantams (black). Within five years the cross was acceptable. Later La Fleche was crossed to improve the type.

**Left: A cuckoo Breda bantam cockerel.**

At the moment I breed cuckoo Breda fowl in bantam. Also I tried to breed the Columbian

colour (old fashioned: hermelijn) for a few years. However, after 3 years I had two chickens in Columbian, but both of them died soon, probably because of a hereditary liver disease. I do have some whites of this strain, which I use for breeding. These do not have this disease.

A white hen of this strain was awarded with 96 points (Excellent) by judge Ad Boks at the club show in Ede (2005).

In 1985 a specialty club was founded: the BKU club, for Brabanter, Breda Fowl and Dutch Owlbeard, in large and bantam. This was an important milestone for these breeds, since the knowledge of these breeds had only been transferred orally before.

**Right:**

**A silver lavender spangled Owlbeard bantam cock.**

### **Bantam Owlbeards**

In 1991 I started to breed bantam Dutch Owlbeard, in the silver lavender spangled variety.

At a meeting of the BKU-club mister Geelhoed brought some Owlbeards in this colour, but no one was interested. I considered this an interesting colour and an asset to the breed, and I got from mr. Geelhoed a cock and a hen.



According to me, the spangling had



to be improved, therefore I crossed a Hamburg bantam. The spangling of a Hamburg is beautiful, but difficult to achieve for a cross; the eyes of a Hamburg are too dark, also they have wattles and a comb. This all had to be selected out to regain a true Owlbeard bantam.

In 1997 they were ready for recognition, according to the former rules. In three years' time, in 2000, they were recognized with a very positive judging report from the Standard Committee.

**Left: An Owlbeard bantam hen in the unique variety isabel lavender spangled.**

I select on heavy lacing and therefore I also got some full lavender chickens. After I bred these for some years I even achieved to get some Isabel Lavender



spangled in 2005. I like this variety very much and I realize that both colours, silver lavender spangled and Isabel Lavender spangled, do not exist in any other breed.

The latter colour is not yet recognized. Strangely, there is hardly any interest in the Netherlands for these colours, yet the interest is greater abroad. But in my opinion, this colour needs to be recognized in the Netherlands first, because this breed is purely Dutch.

**Left: This breast colour is almost perfect for the isabel lavender spangled variety.**

**Right: The characteristic crest of a (white) Brabanter bantam cock.**

### **Brabanter Bantams**

IN 2005 I started breeding Brabanter bantams. I tried a new colour; columbian. (old fashioned: light). I started with crossing white Brabanter and Columbian Sussex bantams. This cross resulted in "magic balls"; from self white cocks to birchen coloured hens, and everything in-between.



I crossed the birds which fitted best, I crossed brother x sister, taking into account, as much as possible, that the Brabanter has to have a full beard. Furthermore, the comb had to be hatched away; more V-shaped. The wattles had to be bred out, the legs had to be slate, the type had to be improved; a long back with nice sickles. Achieving all of this, I needed to get and preserve the Columbian colour.

**Left + insert: Such crosses result in a double (buttercup) comb.**

As far as type is concerned; what was possible for the Breda fowl, must also

apply here. The breast of the cocks has to be deep, rounded and slightly carried forward; this can be achieved by using Sussex.

I hope that I will succeed in getting recognition for this colour variety in the Brabanter bantam within a few years.



Left: F1 male and female.  
Below right: F2 cock (2007)



Below: F2 white hen from the 2007 breeding pen.



Above and left: F3 male and female.  
The male already (partly) showing columbia markings.

Right:  
 3 photos of chicks from the crossing F3 x F2, son x mother. Still no proper columbia markings; some chicks are white, others are more or less spangled.



Below: This white chick from a F4 x F4 crossing, had the wanted V-shaped comb!



Below: But this one - also F4 x F4 - had a single comb...



Above and right: A chick from the crossing F3 x F2, this marking begins to show signs of the white black columbia marking. Also the comb is very good.

These young birds are all born in 2009. Both breeding pens resulted in the same offspring colours: white, or variations in columbia and spangled.

### General Comments

I prefer to use old cocks and hens in my breeding pen, since they proved to possess vitality and genetic characteristics. My critical view on one of the Isabel Lavender spangled hens, shows that this hen can still do very well in the 2010 breeding pen. She is now 3 years old.

**Below: This young Owlbeard bantam pullet doesn't have the corred V-shaped comb, but I will**



**keep her as a 'reserve' in the Brabanter breeding pen for the columbia variety. (Owlbeards and Brabanters can be bred together; main difference are the crest and beard)**

Each breed has its own pen. Behind the pens I have a small meadow, where I can have each of my strains range free, taking turns.



Important to mention is, that here are many foxes. I live at out 250 meters of the German border; a landscape of wood and arable land. Occasionally I hear a fox around my pens. I have found a solution to the problem; around the pens at 10 cm. (for small predators) and at 40 cm., plus at the upper edge and over the roof top of the chicken houses, I have placed an electric cattle fence. This works perfectly.

**Right: Some of the chicken houses and runs.**



### Promotion of our Hobby

Some details, but not unimportant: for the promotion of poultry keeping, and in particular of these breeds, I lent my chickens for "Living History Bourtange". Some week-ends in April/May, July and August a certain era from the history is played by a group re-enactors (Re-enacting of Living History is a hobby playing a historical happening, mostly a war - situation from a certain period. This varies from the 80-year War and Napoleonic times to the Civil War) See also website of Bourtange [www.bourtange.nl](http://www.bourtange.nl)

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**Above and right: Living History in Bourtange (NL).**

**Right: Pottery Art, theme 'Chicken'.**

At markets in spring I have an exposition with chickens of my breeds and some pottery art, primarily on chickens and eggs, like ceramic drinkers, as were used in the Van Gink era, but also ceramic snail traps.





Left: Ceramic drinker for chickens.  
Below: Various pottery art.



At the shops of the Welkoop & Boerenbond one celebrates the "Day of the Countryside" at September 5. That day I am present at Welkoop in Vlagtwedde: there are stands of the BKU-club, the local club, the Foundation for Rare Husbandry (SZH) and a lot of ceramics, for gardening and art.



**To end with**

It is important to get more fanciers to preoccupied with the old Dutch breeds. So, more colours of these breeds, the better. See popular breeds like Dutch Bantam, Japanese, Wyandotte are, in their various colours.

If you are interested in these breeds, you can me by email;

[jan.kraan@hetnet.nl](mailto:jan.kraan@hetnet.nl)

**Right: Silver lavender spangled Owlbeard bantams.**



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contact

FOR SALE: Old Dutch Poultry breeds: **Breda Fowl bantam** and **Owlbeard bantam** in Isabel/Lavender spangled and Lavender (not recognised colour varieties) Jan Kraan, e-mail: [jan.kraan@hetnet.nl](mailto:jan.kraan@hetnet.nl) (The Netherlands)