

# COCHIN BANTAMS



Photo: AE

Text and photos: Ardjan Warnshuis.

Who is not familiar with them, these little “feathered balls” among our bantams? They are well-known worldwide and are being bred in many colours. According to tradition, the first Cochin bantams originated from the imperial gardens in Beijing, China. English soldiers brought these buff bantams with their docile nature home as a trophy from the war between China and England.

The first birds that came to England were buff coloured, the only ones in Europe at that time. They had only a few characteristics in common with the present birds. Partly they lacked the foot feathering, they had no yellow feet and sometimes even had five toes. Presumably there were also some black birds. One tried to breed them pure, but since their vitality left much to be desired, it was decided to start crossing with light brown Nankin bantams. This improved their vitality. Also white booted bantams were used, which led to the white variety of the Cochin bantams.

From Great Britain these Pekin bantams, as they were first named, came to the European continent and America. Although they had and still have a strong resemblance with the large Cochins, which came to Europe earlier, the Cochin bantam is an original bantam variety.

**Left: Buff pullet.**  
**Owner: R. Bosch (NL)**



In England the emphasis is on breeding smallness and well developed feet feathering. In England they still call them Pekins. On continental Europe and in the USA one breeds the “feathered balls” as we know them today. In

the course of time, their name was turned into Cochin bantams. Actually, this name is wrong, since they are not a bantam variety of the large Cochin. Although Cochin bantams were more than once imported in England to improve the type and introduce new colour varieties, the English stayed true to the original type and we have to consider the Pekin and Cochin bantam as two different breeds. In Australia they also have the Pekin, but these bantams slightly differ from the Pekin as well as from the Cochin bantam.



**Above: Mottled pullet.**  
**Owner: A.Warnshuis.**

**Left: Partridge cockerel.**  
**Below: Partridge pullet.**  
**Owner: A. Warnshuis.**



Next to the buff-coloured and black ones we soon saw the white, blue, partridge and cuckoo birds. The rest of the colours were created in the previous age. The wheaten- and silver wheaten variety, as well as the Columbian, buff and lavender-cuckoo birds were developed in Germany. Also the mille fleur variety was created by a German breeder: Christoph Sicking from Stadtlohn. The lavender-coloured Cochin bantams were created in the Netherlands. The mottled ones - nowadays called 'Spangled' in Holland - were developed in various countries, independently from each other. In Holland the blue spangled Cochin bantams were created out of these. Birchen and buff birchen were developed in various countries, often as not-intended by-products from the crossings which were undertaken. The Asiatic partridge, of which the hens are double laced, was bred this way in many countries. In the 1930's, so, in the last century, German breeders wanted to get rid of the till then common cock- and hen breeding pens, that was thought necessary for breeding this colour. The cock-breeding strain was renamed "*goldhalsig*" and the hen-breeding strain was renamed "*braungebändert*". In this way two new colours were developed; the "*goldhalsige*" with black-red cocks and light-brown partridge hens. The "*braungebänderte*" birds throw almost completely self red

brown cocks, while the hens have a partridge marking on a dark brown ground colour. In Germany and Belgium the Cochin bantam is also recognized in frizzle, in various colours.

In many countries new colours are being created. I know that Silver- and Gold laced birds exist, same as several blue varieties from existing colours; in Holland we have Lemon mottle and Blue partridge birds.



**Right: Frizzle pullet.  
Photo: Dirk de Jong.**

### **TYPICAL SHAPE**

The shape of the Cochin Bantam is being decided by the fullness of the feathers and fairly low stance of the birds. The ideal Cochin bantam has the proportion in such a way, that the bird is equally long, high and broad. One can put a circle around them, from every angle. Ideally, the top of the (single) comb is as high as the tail. It is important, that the tail is carried well and the bird should bent a little bit forward with the breast low, without the feathers touching the ground. The low stance is often a problem with cocks; they tend to carry their breast too upright.



**Above and Left: Millefleur cockerel and pullet.  
Owner: R. Lubbers (NL)**

The full feathering must be broad, and the feathers are made of two thirds of fluff and one third of vane. If the feathers are too small than the fluff can be seen, which should not be the case. The Cochin bantam has a fairly broad leg-stand; the legs seem not to carry them, but

they “hang” more or less between their legs. This takes care for their type and bended attitude.

Cochin bantams have feathered legs with long, soft, outstanding plumage, continuing into the foot feathering, that is to say, the middle and outer toes are completely feathered to the end. The hocks are covered with soft flexible feathers, free from vulture-like feathering. The horizontally carried wings rest on the fluffy feathers of the shanks without any effect on the tail feathers. The birds have a short, broad skull with a small comb with four to five serrations. Also the wattles should be small and nicely rounded, in particular with the cocks. They have red ears and orange-red eyes.



**Above: Lavender cockerel. Owner: K. Sneijers (B)**

### **THE CHARACTER OF THE BREED**

The Cochin bantam is known as a docile breed. This may vary per colouring. Also this is dependant on how they are handled. Among each other, hens can be quiet aggressive; it can be difficult to place birds back in the pen if they have been to a show, for example. In the particular case of the cocks, I suggest placing them apart, if they have been away to a show, to prevent wounds to combs and wattles in particular.

**Right: Wheaten pullet.  
Owner: G.Homeijer (NL)**

### **BREEDING AND HATCHING**

If the chickens of a breeding pen are put together timely, the birds can get used



to each other. I advice keeping together hens that grew up together. Hens that are unfamiliar to each other get used to each other with difficulty and this may lead to unrest in the breeding pen. If you want to breed more hens with the same cock it is better to give unfamiliar hens a separate pen and change the cock every two days. It will benefit peace and fertility.

As a consequence of the abundant feathering the fertility might be low. Therefore some breeders clip the feathers around the cloaca of the cock and hen. However, if the birds are in good shape the fertility will be alright. Providing some wheat germ oil through the feed will also work out positively.



The hatching of chicks is rather uncomplicated. The chicks grow successfully with the normal feed, which can be bought.

In the first selection it is only possible to look at defects to the comb and missing nails. The latter might happen in breeds with strongly feathered legs and toes. The type and colouring can only be witnessed after the final moult.

By its appearance the Cochin bantam is a real sports breed. This requires more work by the breeder than with other breeds. The birds need to be washed and blow-dried before a show. Washing will remove the fat from the feathers which will lead to an even fuller looking bird. Sometimes the main tail feathers of the cock – they DO have them, although they are hardly visible - need to be put properly in the tail (bent down a little), because these feathers might be too high up. In this way the Cochin bantam is a feast for the eye.



**Left: White cockerel and pullet.  
Owner: Comb. Cochinkriel (NL)**

### **SPECIALTY CLUBS**

In Holland the Cochin bantam has been put in different specialty clubs. In the early 1990's they were placed with the club for Asiatic breeds. After that, a Cochin Club existed for a short time.

Then they were placed at the previous club for Brahma, Cochin and Langshans. In 1986 this club was dissolved and the breeders of the three breeds founded their own specialty club.

In Holland both standard and bantam Cochin are in one club; the Cochin Club. This club has about 150 members and organises an Annual Meeting with an interesting programme in the afternoon and a meeting with young birds. The Club publishes two club magazines a year and holds three Club Shows per year.

In some countries there are separate clubs for standard Cochins and Bantams, in some countries they are united in one club. Also many contacts take place between breeders internationally. Most contacts are based on private initiatives,

but also thanks to the International Cochin Day, which yearly takes place in Zeddum, Holland. This is an initiative of the Dutch breeder Gerrit Bosch. At this meeting breeders from all over Europe meet and birds change hands.

Specialty clubs exist in: England, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, France, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, USA and Holland. The contacts are well developed.

**Right: Pencilled cockerel. Owner: N. Anthoni (B)**

**Below: Pencilled pullet.  
Owner: Maik Gallasch (D)**



**Above: A blue pullet.  
Owner: H. Brassler (NL)**

**Right: Buff blue columbian hen. Owner:  
Dieter Aschenbach (D)**



In the next page you will find an overview of the colours

<i>Selfs</i>	<i>Markeds</i>	<i>Wild colour varieties</i>
Black	Spangled	Partridge
White	Blue Spangled	Blue partridge
Blue	Black Mottled	Silver partridge
Buff	Blue Mottled	Black-red/ <i>Goldhalsig</i>
Red	Lemon Mottled	<i>Braungebändert</i>
Lavender	Mille fleur	Blue-red
		Grey
		Crele
		Silver crele
		Wheaten
		Silver wheaten

<i>Cuckoo varieties</i>	<i>Columbia varieties</i>	<i>Other colours</i>
Cuckoo	White black columbian	Silver black laced
Lemon cuckoo	White blue columbian	Gold black laced
Lavender cuckoo	Buff black columbian	Splash ( <i>spaetted</i> )
	Buff blue columbian	Salmon
	Birchen	Bobtail
	Brown red	
	Silver blue	
	Lemon blue	

Not all colours are recognized in all countries, but standardization is no problem if the colour is recognized in one of the (European) Entente countries.

As you can see, a beautiful breed in many colours, so everyone can choose its own!

If you have become enthusiastic after reading this article, the Dutch Cochin Club would be more than happy to help you.

The Dutch Cochin Club can be reached at the following address:

Secretary: P. Verhoef, E-mail: [p.verhoefcochin@hetnet.nl](mailto:p.verhoefcochin@hetnet.nl)

Website [www.cochinclub.nl](http://www.cochinclub.nl)

Finally some pictures of less known colours.



**Left: A silver wheaten hen, winning 'Best of Breed' in 2008 at the Oneto Show, graded 97 points. Owner: Comb. De Cochinkriel.**

**Right: Red pullet. Owner: Günther Schreiber (D)**



**Rights: Blue mottled cockerel.  
Owner: A.Warnshuis**

**Below: Lemon cuckoo pullet.  
Owner: unknown.**



**Below right: A pullet in the latest colour:  
Bobtail.**

**Owner: K.Sneijers (B)**

**Below left: Splash cockerel. (*Spaetet* in  
Denmark, where they are recognised in  
this colour)**

**Owner: A. Warnshuis.**



On the next page some pictures from English birds.

The photos are taken by John Soper.

Each year, on the second Saturday of September, the International Cochin Day takes place in the Village Hall of Zeddum, where many international breeders meet. This is a perfect way to get more acquainted with the breed. See the of the Dutch Cochin Club [www.cochinclub.nl](http://www.cochinclub.nl)



In England we have birds nowadays which clearly show the influence of Cochin bantams. The 'original' Pekin bantam looks different!

**Left: Mottled cockerel.**  
**Right: Lemon cuckoo cockerel.**



**Below: White black columbian cockerel and pullet.**

