

ISABELLA

ISABELLA OR LAVENDER BROWN IN LEGHORNS (LARGE) and ISABELLA PARTRIDGE IN BRAHMA BANTAMS

By Geri Glastra

This new colour variety was recently recognised in standard Leghorns and Brahma bantams. It is a variety of the Partridge-bred Black-red colour, where the black is replaced by lavender. Due to the lavender gene, the red and golden parts of the plumage are diluted to soft orange or creamy light straw colour. Even the golden grey-brown ground and the salmon breast colours are noticeably diluted in the females.

Except for the salmon breast colour, this description also holds for the Isabella Partridge colour.

**Left: Isabella Leghorn
cockerel.
Photo: Wolters.**



**Right: Isabella partridge
Brahma bantam cockerel.
Photo: J. Albada.**

Both colour varieties originated in Germany. In 1970, the Isabella Leghorns appeared unexpectedly in a pen of Gold Flitter Leghorns at the farm of breeder Willi Maudanz, in Beetendorf.

The Isabella Partridge Brahma bantams came out of a pen of partridge Brahma bantams at fancier Frits Gänzle in Schotten (Hessen, Germany) in the early 1990s.



At first it was assumed that it was the blue variety, descending from a crossing of German Cuckoos, many years previously. Thus, the new variety was called 'blue-cream partridge' and was standardised as such in the DDR in 1979. However, another breeder - Gottfried Hölzel - discovered the 'blue' was a recessive colour, so it had to be lavender and the colour was re-named 'lavender cream partridge'.

After the *Wende* (German reunification) in 1990 this colour variety vanished from the German Poultry Standard - as were many other East-German breeds and colours - and was no longer exhibited.

ISABELLA LEGHORNS

Then in 1996 - among a hotchpotch of chickens - Martin Wirsching (Germany) noticed some Isabella Leghorns. He hatched some eggs and got one Isabella pullet and a Lavender Silver cockerel. The badly feathered shoulders of the cockerel were a problem (typical for lavender) but by selecting for the red and golden parts of the Isabella, Martin has improved the colour considerably.

According to the Standard the colour must be 'lavender brown' and not 'lavender gold flitter', notwithstanding their gold flitter origins. Thus, gold lacing in the breast of the male is faulty. The neck hackle should have lavender striping in the centre of the feathering but this is of less importance in the saddle hackle.



Three Dutch poultry judges (L–R): Lei Cuijpers, Geri Glastra and Frans van Oers, visit German fancier Martin Wirsching.

Colour and marking of the cock:

Isabella is a very delicate colour pattern, with the lavender substituting for black and with the red and golden parts diluted to a creamy light straw colour. The breast, wings and tail are plain lavender. The wing bay is cream.



**Above: Neck hackle feather.
Right: Breast feather.
Below: Back feather.**



**Above: Shoulder feather.
Left: Saddle hackle feather.
Photos: Johan Albada.**

Faults:

- Golden lacing (flitter) in breast. Some golden lacing in the abdomen is allowed.
- Missing lavender hackle striping or striping 'running out'.
- Too light coloured wing coverts; a mousing colour is preferred.
- Black spots in the lavender feathers.
- White in sickles, tail or primary and secondary flights.
- Wing bows in constant pinfeathers.



**Above: Wingbows in constant pinfeathers.
Photo: Wolters.**



Colour and marking of the hen:

Neck hackle: straw colour with lavender striping in the middle. Shoulders, back and cushion: light lavender ground colour (with a cream hue) and a darker lavender 'peppering' and cream shafts. Some straw colour lacing is permitted. Breast: light salmon. Down: (light) lavender.

**Left: Isabella Leghorn pullet.
Photo: Wolters.**



**Above left: Neck hackle feather.
Above right: Breast feather.**

Below: Back/shoulder feather. Photos: Johan Albada.



Faults:

Lack of visible peppering on the back, shoulder and cushion feathers.
Broad, golden lacing like 'gold flitter'.
White in tail or wings.

Breeding advice:

The Standard description (of German origin) is such that no separate breeding pens are required to breed correctly marked males and females.

Isabella can be safely crossed with Brown. The F1 offspring will appear as Brown - because the lavender colour is recessive - but genetically the chicks are actually heterozygous Lavender Brown/Isabella.

The F2 chicks will be 25 per cent Black Red, 25 per cent Isabella and 50 per cent heterozygous Lavender Brown/Isabella, but appearing as Brown.

Below: Isabella Leghorn pullets in Germany. Photo: Geri Glasta.



ISABELLA PARTRIDGE BRAHMA BANTAMS

In this breed, the lavender was most likely introduced via Sabelpoot bantams, which were once used to create Brahma bantams. When these bantams appeared, there was no suitable name for the colour variety, because, as with the Leghorns, nobody realised the presence of the lavender gene. In Germany the variety was recognised in 2004, after they were exhibited at the European Exposition in Prague, by a Swiss breeder.

**Right: Isabella Partridge
Brahma bantam cockerel.
Photo: Klaas van der Hoek.**



Colour and marking of the male:

The Isabella Partridge males are almost identical to the above described Isabella males. Thus breast, wings, tail and foot feathers are plain lavender. (Some marking is allowed in the breast) Lavender striping in the middle of neck and saddle hackle feathers. The wing bay is cream.

Faults:

- Extensive straw coloured marking in breast and foot feathering.
- Lavender wing bay.
- Black spots in the lavender feathers.
- White in sickles, tail or primary and secondary flights.
- Wing bows in constant pinfeathers.

Colour and marking of the female:

Neck hackle: straw colour with lavender striping in the centre.

Shoulders, back, cushion and breast: cream, patterned with a number of concentric lavender rings.

Down: (light) lavender.

Faults:

Indistinct markings.

Too light or too dark ground colour or marking.

White in tail or wings.

**Left: Isabella Partridge pullet.
Photo: Brahma Club NL.**





Photo: Klaas van der Hoek.

Breeding advice:

Isabella partridge can be safely crossed with Partridge. The F1 offspring will look like Partridge, because the lavender only appears when homozygous. Genetically all chicks are heterozygous Lavender Partridge.

The F2 chicks will be 25 per cent partridge, 25 per cent Isabella partridge and 50 per cent heterozygous (Lavender) partridge.

Left: Close-up of the delicate Isabella colour pattern at a Brahma bantam pullet.

Below: Isabella Partridge Brahma bantam chicks.
Photos: Geri Glastra.

