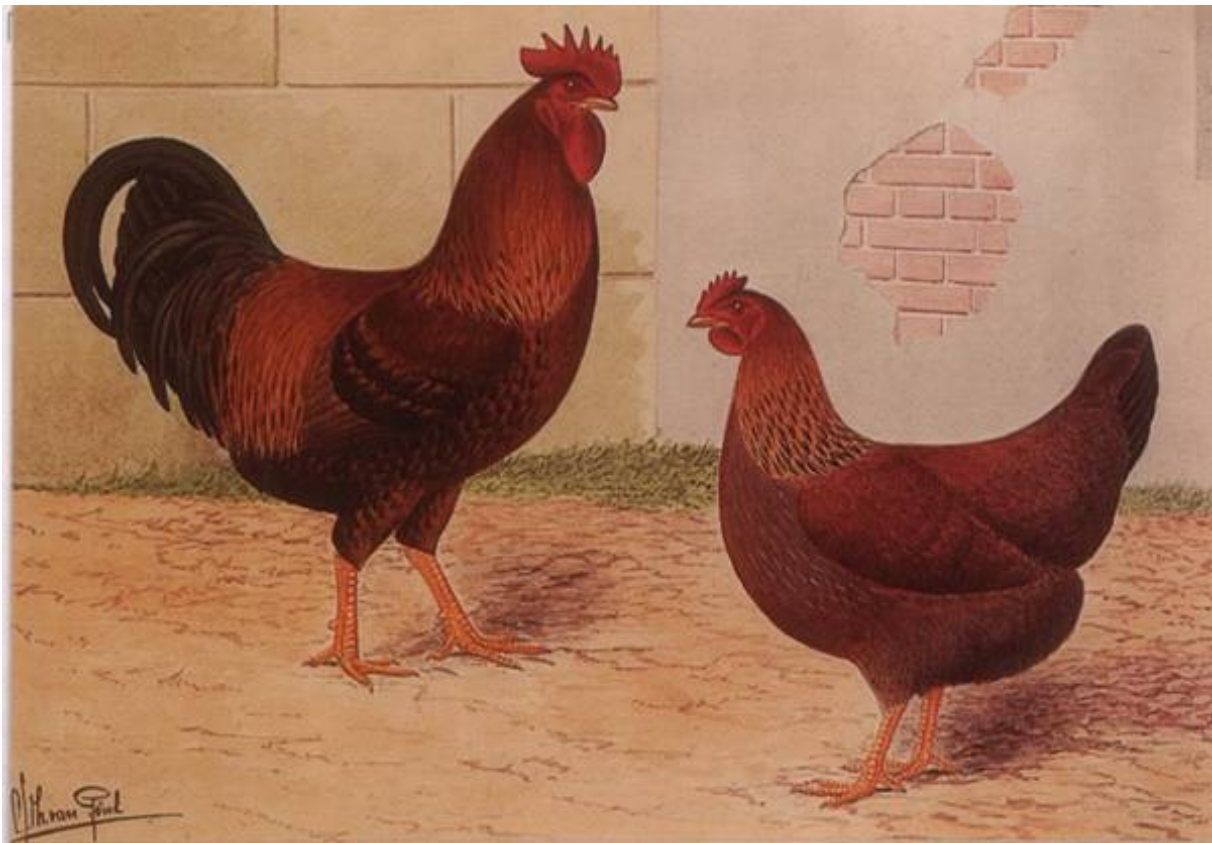


CHICKEN CACKLE AND EGGS IN WELSUM



Text: Welsummer Club of the Netherlands and AE.

Saturday, the 28th of November 2009, the small village of Welsum (NL) was taken over by chicken lovers. Large numbers of Standard Welsummers and Welsummer bantams occupied the Community House. On that day, the Welsummer Club was celebrating their 40th Anniversary by means of a magnificent Jubilee Show of hundreds of Welsummer chickens. Also everybody was welcome to have their Welsummer eggs judged. For the kids they had invited Dirk de Jong with his famous tame pet animals, guaranteeing quality time cuddling rabbits, cavies, chickens and even ducks.



Above: Drawing by Van Gink, archive A.W. van Wulfften Palthe.



Photo: Klaas van der Hoek

40 Years' Jubilee of the Dutch Welsummer Club

The Dutch Welsummer Club was founded in November 1969, thus 40 years ago. It has become a good tradition to celebrate each 5-years anniversary in the small village of Welsum, being the cradle of this chicken breed, known worldwide for its dark brown eggs.

Not just the Large Fowl, but also the Welsummer bantams are very popular, because of the large number of eggs and the large weight of the eggs. The bantams' eggs are not as brown as the eggs of the Large Welsummer, but due to selection even this has been improving lately.

Each year on the Club Day Welsummer eggs are entered at the Egg Contest. To enter Welsummer chickens or eggs for judging you have to be a Club member. This time however, being a Jubilee Club Show, everybody was allowed to bring a collection of their Welsummer eggs – large or bantam - for the egg contest. In the afternoon judge Dirk the Jong discussed the judging and the prizes were awarded for the Best Collections of Eggs.

A large collection of eggs was entered for judging. Photo: Dirk de Jong.



The Chicken

With a certain pride we may say that the Welsummer is a Dutch breed. It was developed in the early 1900's in the village of Welsum and some neighbouring villages along the river IJssel. The breed was famous for its large dark brown eggs that were very wanted in those days. Its exact ancestors are not really known. The breed developed from local breeds crossed with imported foreign breeds. As the exterior of the chickens was not very important in those days, the diversity was very great. In 1924 the official Standard was written.

In the Netherlands the Welsummers are only recognised in one colour variety: red partridge; a colour that doesn't exist in any other breed. Thus when you see a red partridge chicken in the Netherlands, that must be a Welsummer. The other way around: When you see a Welsummer, it must be red partridge coloured. A unique unity!

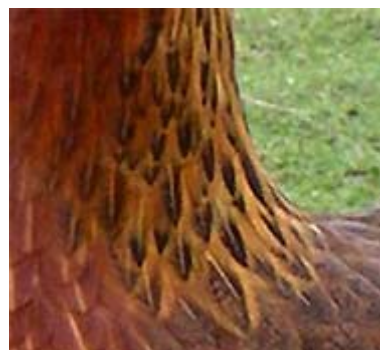


Above: Best LF cockerel.
Left: Best LF pullet.
Owner of both: H.P.M. Pelgrim.
Photos: Klaas van der Hoek.

Unlike other partridge varieties, the red partridge colour variety has the advantage that one can breed both good pullets and good cockerels from one and the same breeding pen. You don't have to keep a separate pen for breeding males and one for breeding females. The main difference to

'normal' partridge can be found in the colour of the male birds. In the red partridge cock all golden parts are a more reddish colour, and neck and saddle hackle should hardly show any markings. Besides that, the black colour of the breast, abdomen and thighs is mingled with some brown. Also the hackle of the hens hardly shows any marking; the neck feathers are not intensely black marked and the ground colour comes through the markings. (See photo on the right).

In the Netherlands we certainly don't want a spangled marking in the cock's breast feathers. The Standard description is not very specific in that, but adapting the Standard is always a radical thing. So lately the Judges were specifically instructed not to prefer a spangled marking, but a mingling of black and brown. The wanted breast colour is black with some red mottling. Also the abdominal and thigh fluff black and red mottled.



Right: Best Bantam cockerel.
Owner: Bart Haverkamp (junior member).
Below: Best Bantam pullet.
Owner: H.P.M. Pelgrim.
Photos: Klaas van der Hoek.



The Egg

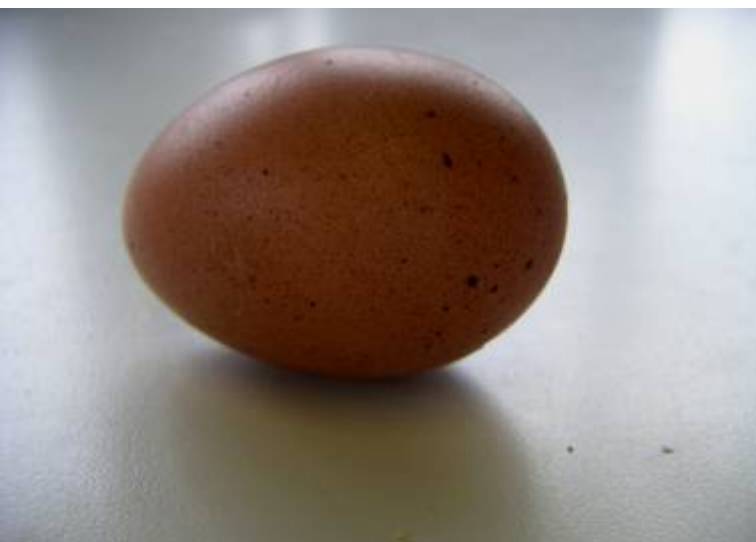
The breed became worldwide famous for its large dark brown eggs. Thus the most important in breeding was aiming for the big,

deep red-brown eggs, speckled with even darker brown spots on them. This undoubtedly still is the most valuable quality of the Welsummer. The eggs of our Welsummer have more brown spots on them than the eggs of the Barnevelder which are often solid brown all over. Also at the Egg Competitions in the past, Welsummer eggs were preferred because of the brown spots and their weight of 65 to 70 grams. The dark brown colour of the eggs is produced by Porphyrin, an organic compound, most well-known as the pigment in red blood cells.

Right: Dirk de Jong (yellow shirt), assisted by Fred Broekhuizen, judging the 15 collections of Large Fowl eggs and 18 collections of Bantam eggs. A collection consists of 6 eggs, making a total of 198 eggs. Each collection is judged on the basis of exterior quality and uniformity; one egg of each collection is also opened and judged on interior egg quality.
Photo: Welsummerclub.



Photo below: Monique de Vrijer.



This pigment is produced in a gland in the last part of the oviduct where the calcium is put on the egg. The spots are places where the concentration of Porphyrin is higher than elsewhere on the egg. Because this gland cannot keep up with a hen producing many eggs, the egg colour gets lighter after she has laid a certain amount of eggs. Remarkably the spots do keep their intensity and after a while you will have lighter eggs still with dark brown spots.

Because the egg colour gets less intensely brown, the breeder must take great care in picking his breeding eggs. In spring light coloured eggs might be of hens that will never produce any dark eggs, or could be the eggs of very good layers that started with dark brown eggs and later on produced these light coloured eggs. The latter are the most valuable ones. It is best to select the birds in autumn when the pullets start laying.



Photo right: Welsummer Club.
Left: Dirk de Jong.



The eggs of the Welsummer bantam are also brown, but unfortunately not as dark as of the large Welsummer. The weight is from 40 to 45 grams; a nice egg for use in the kitchen, for children and elderly people who eat fewer eggs. The bantams do lay very well, some 150 to 200 eggs per year.

Abroad

In other countries more colour varieties are recognised, created by crossing with other breeds. Thus the type of the chickens is often somewhat different. In 1923 in Germany the first chicks hatched from imported eggs. In 1928 the breed was recognised in Germany and one year later the German Welsummer Club was founded.

Right: A yellow partridge bantam cockerel from Germany.

Photo: Dirk de Jong.

The breed is very popular there, and today it is recognised in three colour varieties: rust-brown partridge, silver partridge and yellow partridge.

(Rost-Rebhuhnfarbig, Silberfarbig en Orangefarbig)





It has been very confusing that for a long time the Germans used the same colour name 'red partridge' as in Holland. Due to prevailed selection their chickens had become much darker: a true brown colour instead of red. Today these two colours are even genetically different. Besides that they also wanted a light feather shaft at the hens and the spangled breasts at the cocks; things that definitely were never wanted in Dutch birds and never will be.

Left: A silver partridge pullet from Germany. Photo: Dirk de Jong.



However, in 2009, an interesting discussion took place with the Dutch and German Welsummer Clubs, together with Poultry Section of the Entente Européenne. The proposal of the Dutch Welsummer Club: to consider the red partridge and rust-brown partridge as two separate colour varieties, was agreed. A very good solution! So in the future it can happen that there are 4 different colour varieties entered at an European Show: red partridge, rust-brown partridge, silver partridge and yellow partridge.

Left: The first reprint of the Welsummer Book is presented to Mr. Aarnink by the president of the Welsummer Club, Hilco Ketelaar. Mr. Aarnink played an important role in restoration of the contacts between the German and Dutch Club, bringing them both on one line according the European judging. Photo: Welsummer Club NL.

Right: Club members, Board and participants from the German Welsummer Club, posing at the Statue of the two Welsummer Chickens in the village of Welsum. Photo: Welsummer Club NL.





In 1928 English breeders imported the Welsummer, which was added to the British standard in 1930. In 1935 Welsummers were awarded "Best Utility breed" on the Birmingham show. The silver duck-wing variety was developed and later an auto sexing variety by introducing the barred-factor. This 'Welbar' never really got very popular and never pushed the original Welsummer out. In England there is also a very active Welsummer Club, having HRH The Prince of Wales as Patron. At his country home Highgrove House, Prince Charles is keeping his own Welsummers, which according to his introduction in the 2009 Yearbook are "thriving and continuing to lay well".

Left: There was even a delegation of the English Welsummer Club present at the Jubilee Show: Geoffrey Johnson (Club's Secretary) and Michael Hart (Club member and webmaster)

Denmark also has a Welsummer Club, and the breed is recognised in three colour varieties, same as in Germany: *rustfarverde*, *sølvfarvede* and *orangefarvede*. At the bottom of the article there are links to the websites of the mentioned Clubs.

The Welsummer bantam was first bred in England and later perfected in Germany. The present Welsummer bantam stands on a high level. One tries to breed them as small as possible, but conformity with the large Welsummer is at least as important as size. The difference in type between German and Dutch Welsummer bantams is less than in the case of large Welsummers.

Right: Show Winners: H.P.M. Pelgrim, (l) best of Dutch entrees and O. Ferber (r), Best of German entrees. Photos in this page: Welsummerclub NL.

Jubilee Show

The Welsummerclub had decided to give an open character to this 40th Anniversary. All those who were interested were welcome to visit and admission was free for everyone. The Show was open on Friday night from 7 to 10 pm and on Saturday from 10 am to 3 pm. Saturday at 11 o'clock was the official opening. A total of 260 chickens were entered, of which 91 Large Fowl Welsummer, 138 Welsummer bantams and 31 German entries.





Left: The Symbolic Opening of the Jubilee Show: The youngest club member shakes hands with the oldest Club member, through a (paper) Welsummer egg. Photo: Welsummer Club NL.

The Germans entered Welsummers in all three colour varieties:
Rost-Rebhuhnfarbig, *Silberfarbig* en *Orangefarbig*.



Right: The German Judge Otto Kirsch judged the Welsummers entered by the German Club members. Photo: Welsummer Club NL.



Left and below: The many beautiful prizes, partly donated by the abroad Clubs. Photos: Welsummer Club NL.



Nowhere will you find a larger collection of Welsummer chickens! And this large number of chickens made the show a huge success! There were many visitors and we could welcome several new Club members. It shows once again that a small village can also sometimes and somehow be big!

In the next page you will find some more Welsummer photos by Klaas van der Hoek.



For more information:

The Netherlands: Welsumerclub <http://www.welsumerclub.nl/>

Germany: Sondervereins der Welsumer- und Zwerg-Welsumer - Züchter
Deutschland <http://welsumer.de/>

Denmark: Welsumer klubben <http://www.welsumer.dk/>

England: The Welsummer Club <http://www.welsummerclub.org/>

North America: The Welsummer Club of North America
<http://www.welsummers.org/>

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