

ANDALUSIANS



The Blue Andalusian is one of the oldest Spanish native breeds. It is classified as a Mediterranean breed; tall, graceful and slender. Its most prominent feature is the blue-gray plumage. In fact, the blue Andalusian of today are offspring of a group of chickens that were exported to England from Jerez, Spain in the mid-nineteenth century. There they were subjected to crossings that led to the current type, with plumage of a more intense blue, laced with black, which the British named 'Blue Andalusian' and they were subsequently re-imported to their homeland Spain.

*Free from: Razas de gallinas españolas. 1989.
Fernando Orozco Piñán.*

The Blue Andalusian

By: Debby Roorda (Belgium)

In the spring of 2009 we had no eggs again and we had to go to a supermarket. This, and the fact that I had lots of weeds and litter from the kitchen, made us decide spontaneously that we wanted poultry again after some years without any birds in our back yard. In our previous house we had kept all kind of bantams for years, true breed as well, but especially bantams we liked for their looks.

But now, in a new house, new garden, new environment, we wanted to do it differently. So, my husband Bert and I agreed directly that we wanted large fowl, and a pure breed, that we would join a poultry club and so on. So we looked around in our area. As it happened, one Sunday, we passed by a real breeder of several breeds. On a placard it stated (in French) which breeds he had, but it was closed on Sundays. We were not familiar with the French names, so I wrote them down and searched on the Internet at home. The breed we liked best was the blue laced Andalusian. Wow, what a nice, vigorous and elegant breed! Since we both said it, it was clear that we wanted this breed. For fresh blood we searched further on the Internet, but in vain. However we were determined that we wanted the blue Andalusian, in its elegance. Full stop!

The following day we visited the breeder. He had hens and cocks, but all were rather pale-coloured; not nicely blue with slate black lacing. Unfamiliar with the breed, I asked why they were so ashen, since the ones I had seen on internet were better coloured. We were told that these Andalusians were still young, but the colour would improve as they got older and they would look better in their

second year. It happens more often that birds get the right colour in the second year so why should we doubt what the breeder told us?

We bought seven hens. Since we did not like the cocks we decided to buy an unrelated cock elsewhere.

We were very proud to have “real Andalusians” and we could hardly wait for the real colour to come.

Right: The hens I started with, and my first two Andalusian cockerels. It is clear to see that the hens are hardly laced, also the combs are nothing like the large, lopped combs of a true Andalusian hen, and moreover they don't have white ear lobes.



In the meantime we started to look for a cock, on several websites in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France. At last we found someone in the Pyrenees who offered a cock for sale for 100 Euros.

We were nearly that crazy to go for this one and to drive all the way from Belgium to the Pyrenees, but we didn't.

We intensified our search on several other websites in France, Belgium and The Netherlands. But in vain. Then out of nowhere we suddenly found someone in French speaking Belgian who bred Andalusians! We called the guy immediately, and bingo! We were very glad that we could buy a cock from this man, named Paul. We even became friends with Paul and one day he came to us to admire our hens.

He had difficulty in telling us, he was too polite; the hens looked healthy, he said, they looked nice. Very friendly meant, but the hens only had the Andalusian colour vaguely there. No white earlobes, not the right type, nothing right! We were sold 'rubbish' by a 'well respected' breeder.



Left: Here you can see the difference, when I had 3 'real' hens. Especially the one in the front has a better blue ground colour, sharp lacing and white ear lobes.

Through perseverance we finally got a better hen and a better cock from a breeder in The Netherlands.



In November 2009 we spontaneously joined our Belgian friend Paul to a poultry show in Wittenburg, in the northern part of Germany. That weekend we saw the 'real' Andalusians. We liked them very much. Besides, the German breeders were very open and friendly and told us everything on Andalusians.

With a hen or cock in the hand they showed us the good and bad aspects of the fowls. This was an useful practical lesson on how Andalusians should be.

Left: Two Andalusian cocks with nice colour and lacing. The lacing is wanted sharp down the keel, even up to the thighs.

over Germany. From that can be concluded that there are not many breeders and also not too many Andalusian fowl. We were very welcome as starting

Andalusian breeders. In December that year we became a member of the local breeders' Club in Weywertz, Belgium, where Paul is also a member. After all he needs some competition!



Left: A hen with perfect comb and very good colour and lacing, although the thigh plumage should preferably be laced too.

had a number of considerable faults in their combs. Advice: Do not breed with birds with these faults. The hen from Holland was reasonable. And the mix-breed hens? We do not talk about them anymore!

To get us started, as beginners, we got a hen and a cock at the German show. Two nicely laced ones, acquired from our new German friends. We were the very proud owners of these Andalusians.

Thus we were able to start the next spring with the cock and two hens. As it happens even with seasoned breeders, we had bad luck and our best cock died

before breeding season. Reviving did not work. We were very sad to have lost our beautiful cock. However, as all hens had been in the same pen with him, we would probably have had some fertile eggs of the grey mongrel hens since these hens also laid in winter. The true Andalusians had stopped laying when winter started. So, after many thoughts we decided to put these eggs in the incubator. Then at least we would have some offspring of the good cock. Later that year we decided that the two cocks with faults in their comb could join the two pure hens. Also these eggs were bred in the incubator. Better something than nothing at all, we thought. In the photo you can easily tell which chicks are not pure breed!



We ended up with some properly blue laced chicks as offspring of the Andalusian hens and cocks. These scored well at shows. We kept a cockerel and three hens. Later we got another two old hens from a Dutch breeder, who quitted the hobby, It was time to do a proper selection. The wrongly-coloured hens went to people who wanted some backyard chickens and the two cocks with faults in their combs were eaten as advised by the German breeders: the meat is flavorful and delicious!

Right: The eggs are of a good size. White, shiny and smooth. The eggs from our hens are all between 65 and 75 grams. When they just start laying maybe somewhat less, and later even a bit more. And we are very content with that.



Andalusians come in three colours: blue laced, splash and black. Only the blue laced are recognized for showing. Even if you mate two blue laced fowl than you get chicks with all three colours.

Right: Splash Andalusian cockerel.

I myself have all chicks grow up, irrespective of their colour. However, I have no room for all of them. They stroll around nearby in a meadow, together with some turkeys and some guinea fowl. In summer with a lot of natural feed stuff it is all right, but in winter it is different. So I try to make people happy with nice egg-laying chickens of splash or black colour.



At the end of the breeding season I decimate my flock of Andalusians. I only keep what I like (nice colour etc.) or what I need for breeding, so that I put my money in these birds to take care of them in winter etc.

Left: A black Andalusian cockerel. The pullet is a mixed breed.

Also we have slaughtered and eaten several hens and cocks. After all, the meat is delicious and you cannot keep them all. We are fanciers of our breed in every aspect; enjoying them, looking at them, breeding them, for the delicious eggs and for the meat. The ones we do not want or are difficult to sell end up on the BBQ or on our plate.

Last summer we bought, via an advert in France, two hens and a cock. Old ones, since the breeder had stopped. Unfortunately the chickens were ill. It took me 270 euro including transport and lots of time to get these chickens to recover.

Now they are lively, vigorous and healthy. They have good combs and good lacing, well up to their thighs. The latter is difficult to achieve and to maintain. I intend to breed with these unrelated hens and cock this spring. I will mate our self-bred cock with the French hens and the French cock with all our own hens, young and old. My expectations are high since I have good unrelated qualifications together.

Right: A very good hen with ideal lobbed comb.



Breeding hints

Qualifications to look at (when selecting) are, i.e. the basic blue colour, the lacing and broad feathers, nicely rounded.

Also a nice red face, bright orange-red eyes, straight single comb; in the hens nicely upright in the beginning and then elegantly dropping to one side without limiting vision; the comb of the cock medium in size, straight and upright, the blade following the curve of the neck. Not too many serrations and certainly no double serrations.

The wattles hanging loosely from each other, firm without wrinkling, and preferably not joined together at the beak.

The earlobes should be white, almond-shaped and smooth.

Right: This cockerel has the blade free from the neck and fairly smooth ear lobes, although the comb has only a few serrations.



Left: The blade of this cockerel is hanging down on the neck and the earlobes are very well folded.

I prefer the cockerel in the photo above for my breeding pen.

Right and below: In the hens the comb should be upright in the beginning and then elegantly lopping to one side without limiting the vision. However, my hens have a second lobe, a zig-zag, which is not wanted. My sire has a very strong and upright comb and I hope that will help improving the combs of the female offspring. The ear lobes of this hen are perfect.



Also the legs must be nicely slate blue, not too pale and certainly not flesh coloured. It is difficult to breed the lacing high up under the throat, and even more difficult to breed the lacing down the keel, up to the legs, in transition to the shanks.



Even the type of the Andalusian is characteristic. Elegant, upright attitude, for the hen, but certainly for the cock. The hen needs to carry the tail closed, as if your hands are with the palms together, the direction of your fingers are in the same direction as the tail feathers. Thus not open or spread.

The cock needs to have a nice dark coloured saddle, blue with very broad dark lacing and also neck and back must have a dark appearance. Long dark saddle feathers which hang in front of the blue tail are a very nice feature. If all these characteristics can be achieved, you may be proud.

Left: The lacing is preferred down the keel, up to the legs, in transition to the shanks. This cockerel has a rather light ground colour and lacing.

Breeding hints for colour and lacing

I got my information from books and internet, although not much is written on Andalusians. Also I have the information acquired on shows and at meetings of the Andalusian Club. The best chance of having good offspring is mating two blue laced animals with excellent qualifications. The cock and hen should complement each other, so that what one has less is compensated by the other. For example, when the cock is somewhat dark but has good broad lacing the hen may have a somewhat lighter ground colour. As far as I know neither the cock nor the hen have dominant qualifications. This even applies if the birds have a too light ground



colour and lacing; then a black bird can be used to improve the basic blue colour. The genetic lacing will be preserved in the black bird. Even if you have dark blue birds with broad, black lacing you could use splash birds.

So, if you preserve some black and splash birds from your own breeding line, you have the possibility to improve your birds, especially the basic colour and lacing, with help of your own blood line, thus keeping all other improvements you have put in.

Above and right: In this photo you can see the lacing and ground colour differ in the various hens.

As to the combination of splash and black – it makes no difference which colour the cock is - you get most offspring with blue colour, in theory.

I do not yet know in practice. At present I do not have enough space to try this myself, but I hope to have an extra pen next year.

It is said that in this combination the main colour of the offspring is blue, but that the blue colour loses its intensity, and that the lacing, which is optically absent in the parents, will be less intense and less sharp.

However, genetics tells us that the parents pass on part of the lacing and passing on that you should get 'ideal' birds. If so, you wonder why very experienced breeders- i.e. the ones I know have much experience for many years – do not use this mating. They prefer mating the most complementary blues. So it must be true what is stated in the old books (see below): that the colour and especially the lacing of the offspring and their offspring do fade away.



This year I did not keep any black or splash birds since I have an excellent cock, and I also bought a very nice new one. Moreover I have limited space this spring and it is a bad idea to have your spare cock and your 'chosen' cock together in one pen with all the hens. Suppose the spare cock is the dominant one and mates with all hens.....

Below: One of my older cocks.



To end with

Even if you start with "rubbish" you will learn and you will achieve what you want.

I would like to get in touch with (beginner) breeders of this elegant breed, the Andalusians. They are so pretty in all three colours; no matter if they have black feathers, are splash or – in the only recognized colour – blue laced. The colour mentioned last exceeds my imagination, even though there are more breeds with this colour, but never so perfect as the Andalusians!

You can contact me through my website

<http://users.skynet.be/lesclouris/>

Tip: In december 2011 'the largest Andalusian Show ever' will take place in Germany; one will try to collect a record number of Andalusians LF and bantams.

A bit of history

By: Elly Vogelaar

As you have read in the intro, this breed is only partly Spanish. Truly it is an English creation. The Spanish fanciers have acknowledged that and split the Andalusian chickens (GALLINAS DE LA RAZA ANDALUZA SUREÑAS) into two separate breeds: the *Gallina andaluza azul británica* and de *Gallina andaluza española*; the latter coming in various colours, amongst them also a blue variety, but these don't have the delicate laced edges of the feathers.



The Asociación de Criadores d'Aus El Francolí, states – according to During - the first Andalusian chickens were exported in 1851 from Gibraltar to England. Other sources mention Jerez de la Frontera (near Cadiz).



Left: Illustrated drawing by Christian Förster (NL) from the 'Geïllustreerd Hoenderboek' 1888. The blue plumage is hardly laced and the (high carried) tail of the cock is blue.

Later the tail was wanted black, and today again blue and carried only medium high.

Below: Illustrated drawing by Ludlow, 1912, with blue laced Andalusians, the cockerel with a black, high carried tail.

ANDALUSIERS.



The following history of the *Gallina andaluza azul británica* is published on the website of the official Spanish Breed Club:
<http://www.andaluzaazul.es>

History of the Blue Andalusian

The blue Andalusian is the oldest (Spanish) chicken breed described in the books. First we will analyze the historical data found in foreign literature.

In 1854, Martin Doyle wrote in his book a complete and extensive description of the breed and origin. Referring to the "primitive" Andalusian, Mr. Doyle said that the face of these birds was more or less colored. (*Note: Thus not completely white, as in the Spanish Fowl.*)

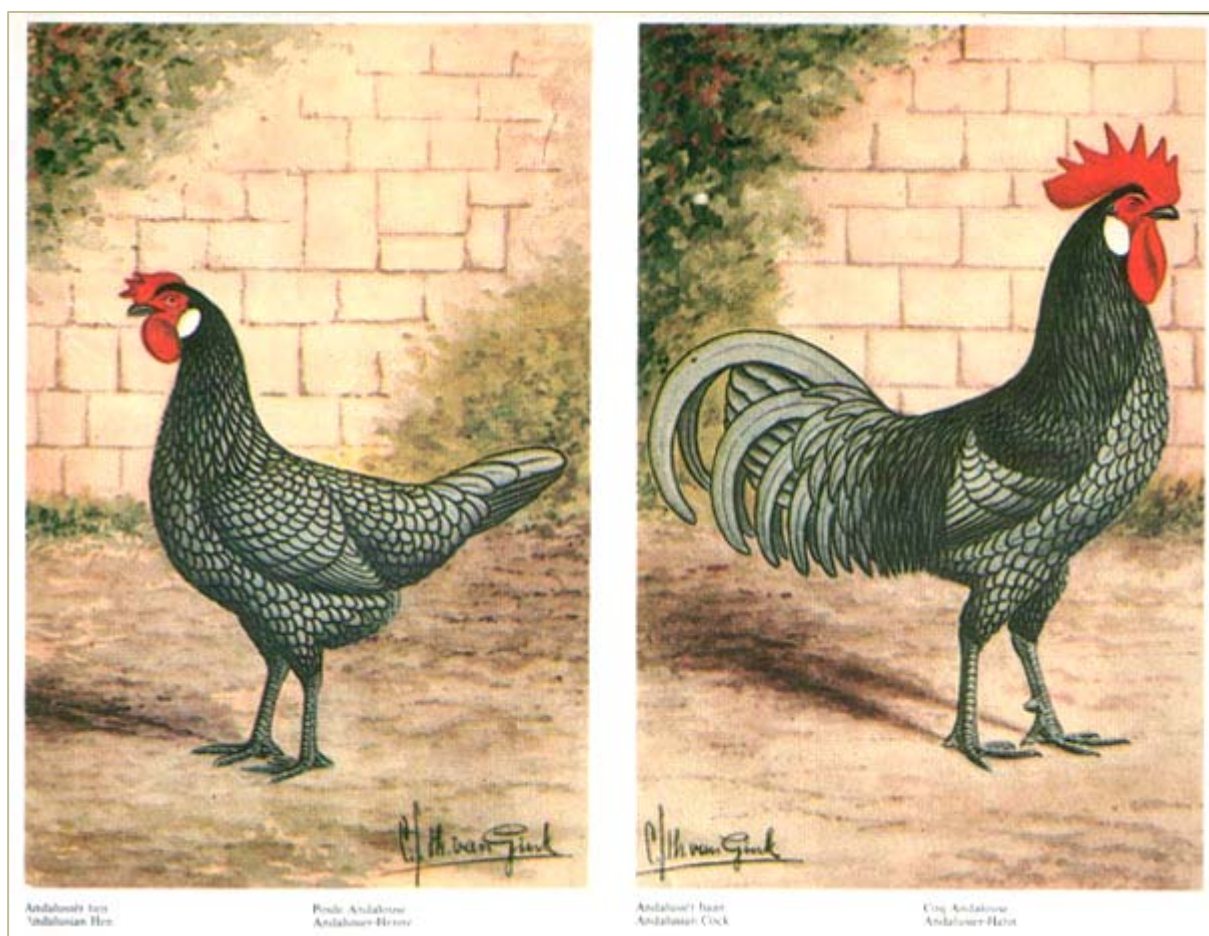
Before being imported to England, blue coloured chickens were very rare in Spain. Of the twelve that were imported by Mr. Taylor, only three had the true colour, together with some other indications of purity of blood. Mr Taylor described this breed saying it has a large comb, straight and equally serrated, a white face, blue legs, blue or gray plumage with the colour of lead, while each of the feathers is laced with a lighter tint.

As described by Mr Taylor, the Andalusians were exported in Andalusia and had a very thin lacing. He also refers to white faces, which must have been very

common in the early Andalusian chickens, but the modern Andalusian rarely has a white face and the lacing is always dark blue-black instead of a shade lighter than the feather, as stated above. Taylor also states that they were highly valued as table birds.

In 1902, in his 'New Book of Poultry' Lewis Wright says the Blue Andalusian of his day were more or less different from those known by this name for many years.

Mr Weir, referring to the early Spanish chickens introduced in England, mentions Leonard Barber, who imported Andalusian chickens in 1846-47, coming from Jerez de la Frontera. He also mentions the import of Mr. Taylor. They were presented for the first time in 1853 in London, along with the Cornish and Devon Blue.



Above: Illustrated drawing by Van Gink; this is the Blue Andalusian, as described today in the Poultry Standard, with a laced blue tail, at an angle of 45 degrees.

As for the Spanish poultry literature there are only few data. Fernando Orozco, one of the major drivers of conservation poultry in Spain talks about their history and description in his book 'Razas de gallinas españolas'.

Based on extensive literature studies, Fernando Orozco gives us a detailed explanation of what he 'thinks' of their origin. He added 'British' to the name of laced Blue Andalusian. Thus today in Spain the true Blue Andalusian is called *Gallina andaluza azul británica*.

In conclusion, after having read the story of the Blue Andalusian and especially after having seen the historic photo (*see the above mentioned website*), we can say that the original chickens did not have the laced feathers that they currently have. This may explain the presence in Andalusia and other Spanish regions of

blue Andalusian chickens that meet the breed standard but do not have the lacing. These chickens are the original or 'mothers' of the current Blue Andalusian. Of course, much less selected for exhibition than the current Blue Andalusian. From this we can deduce that Fernando Orozco named them 'British' to differentiate them from the 'Spanish' ones.

History according to the English

The English and Spanish versions of the Blue Andalusian history are very much alike. In every ancient poultry book that can be found on the Internet we read the same story, stating that the imported common blue fowl were right from the start crossed with the - already present - Spanish fowl (White Face Black Spanish and Black Minorcas) to make the foundation for the Blue Andalusians. The *Cornish and Devon Blue*, as mentioned on the Spanish website, were probably blue pit game strains and according to Harrison Weir, it was almost certain that the first Andalusians were also crossed with these breeds. Many fanciers have added Black Minorcas for size into Blue Andalusians. The lacing shows up better on a larger bird with a wider feather.



Around 1900 the first 'laced' Andalusians were exhibited, but they were not yet 'ideal'. The genetic basis for the difference between the Andalusian type of blue-black distribution and the self-coloured blues has received little attention from the researchers. Dan Honour, a known American fancier who investigated the history of many (Mediterranean) chicken breeds, wrote me the following: "When the Columbian gene was added, the beautiful dark lacing developed on the lighter slate gray ground colour, making a very nice contrast". Several strains of Blue Andalusian indeed have this *Co*-gene.

Plumage colour

The ground colour of a perfect Blue Andalusian should be of a distinctly blue cast, not simply grey or slate, but of a silvery blue colour — almost pigeon blue, in fact. Each feather on the breast, shoulders, and thighs must be

laced with a distinct and well defined and not too narrow lacing of a - preferably shining - dark blue or almost black colour. The feathers being as large and broad as possible, the more distinct the lacing the better.

The neck hackles, back, and saddle hackles of the cock should be dark blue or almost black and with a brilliant sheen. In fact these feathers are of the same silvery blue ground colour, but the dark lacing is so wide that the feathers look completely black. The tail feathers are laced blue, even the sickles of the cock birds and the contrast between this and a black saddle hackle is an extra point of beauty.

Also the hackles of the hen are much darker than the general body colour, showing black on



the head and top of the neck, the lower hackles showing some of the blue ground colour upon the shoulder and back.



Breeding pen for colour/lacing

The pieces of advice for choosing the birds for the breeding pen, as presented in the old books, still hold today and are perfectly explained by Debby. The only point of doubt is the crossing of black x splash Andalusians. According to most ancient books, all chicks will be entirely blue, but such blue chickens do not develop much in the way of lacing.

For a long time it was thought that one day the Blue colour would be 'stabilised' without throwing the black and splash sports. That was before Bateson and Punnett published their documents on the heredity of the blue

colour (1906), so not enough was known about genetics in those years.

They did know that in order to maintain the real silver blue ground colour, together with rich, deep lacing, it was much better to mate together the light and dark blues than to run male and female together of the medium shade, the progeny of these latter being prone to running off thin and washy in the lacing, whereas sharp, deep, and well-defined lacing is what is wanted.

It was advised to see to it that there wouldn't be the slightest cast of brown in the hackles as none of their offspring would have a clear blue ground colour.

Wing lacing was rather important here, and every hen should, if possible, have the wing secondaries distinctly margined with black.

If not many blue pullets were available, one could try and mate the best of his black pullets to a very light blue cockerel or a splash pullet to a darkish cockerel, to build up the breeding flock.

Only in more recent books it is advised to mate black x splash birds, but according to Debby this is not common practice.



SOURCES:

The Illustrated Book of Poultry, 1857, Martin Doyle; *The blue Andalusian*, 1897, Silver Dun; *Asociación de Criadores d'Aus El Francolí*; *Arte Avicola*; *Razas de gallinas españolas*, 1989, Fernando Orozco Piñán; <http://www.andaluzazul.es>; <http://www.granjaonline.es/>