

# JAPANESE BANTAMS

By: Ardjan Warnshuis (D)



**Photo: Udo Ahrens.**

The Japanese Bantam—also known as Chabo—is an original bantam breed which has spread across the world from Japan. Its short legs, large comb and high and upright carried tail gives the breed an almost clownish look. So many features all in one breed! Many Dutch poultry fanciers—and even non-poultry people—are familiar with the image of the Black-tailed White rooster in the logo of the Dutch specialty club.

This very old breed—some hundreds of years—found its way to the rest of the world toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of

the first people to import Japanese Bantams to Europe, was German, Landgrave von Welczeck. His first birds arrived in 1890—whites and greys—with importations of different colours coming later. After that further stock was imported into Europe, in particular to France. Dutch breeders got their birds from Germany.



**Left: Black-tailed White cock.**

The Japanese Bantam has very short, thick legs which is important in the show pen. A percentage of the chicks (when breeding) will have legs of 'normal' length.

They have a very full, round breast, slightly carried forward. The wings are large and long, the points should be

drooping and touch the ground (Japanese Bantams can fly reasonably well). The tail is very large and is carried erect, whereby the cocks show long, slightly backwards carried main sickles. The breed has a very large comb, which on the hens sometimes is slightly lopped at the rear.

The body of the Japanese Bantam should be broad, deep and compact.

**Right: Black-tailed White hen.**



**Left: Black Mottled hen.**

**Below, right: Silver ducking hen.**

You might think that there are so many features for such a little chicken, but there are even more. Japanese Bantams are recognised in many colours—25 in total in the Netherlands.

The so-called tail-coloured birds—white or buff coloured birds with black or blue tails are very special and these varieties are unique to Japanese Bantams.

In addition to the many colours with normal feathering, Japanese Bantams are also available with frizzled and silky feathering—two more special traits of this breed.





Above: A blue hen.

Right: A frizzle hen.

In order to make the listing complete: there are also black birds with black comb, face, wattles, legs and nails: the Shinguro Chabo. (Photo below).



The Japanese Bantam also exists in a hen-feathered variety. Roosters with this henny feathered trait have no pointed

hackle, saddle or sickle feathers but the same feather shape as the hen. Hen-feathered Japanese Bantams exist in spangled varieties only, like black-white spangled, red-white spangled and black-red-white spangled (not to be confused with millefleur).

Another variety of Japanese Bantams has a very large comb and is known as Higo-Chabo. There are two varieties of Higo-Chabo: the Taikan and the Daruma.

**Right:**  
**Black Daruma Chabo cock.**

Both varieties have combs and wattles comparable to (English-type) Leghorns. The Taikan variety has the normal Japanese Bantam-style tail. They exist in Self White and Black-tailed White.

**Below:**  
**A pair of white Daruma.**



The Daruma has a short tail that just reaches as high as the head. The main sickles are only slightly longer than the rest of the tail and hardly curved. The tail of the hen is so short that it barely reaches the head. This variety comes in Black and White.

Finally, there is a bearded Japanese Bantam variety from Japan called the Okina. The comb is, in general, a little bit smaller and the wattles are absent or small and covered by the beard. This variety is only recognised in Self White.



**Left: Okina Chabo (bearded).**

In Europe, a rumpless Japanese Bantam has been created—a variety not known in Japan. The lack of the typical high, upright tail, however, is not always appreciated.

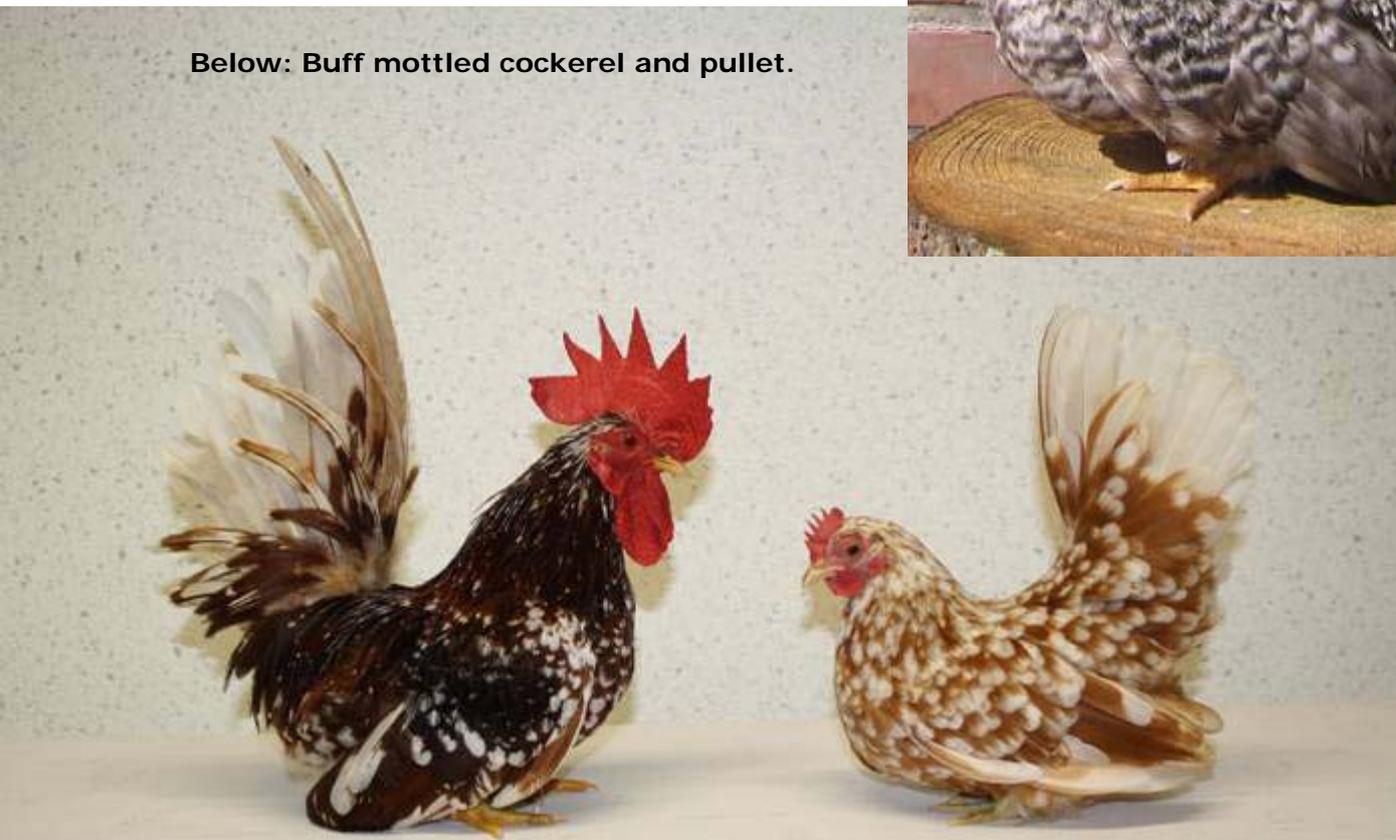
Well known colours (in the Netherlands) are: Black-tailed White, Blue-tailed White, Black-tailed Buff, Blue-tailed Buff, Wheaten, Silver Wheaten and Partridge, White, Black, Blue, Lavender, Cuckoo, Gold and Silver Duckwing, Birchen, Grey, Black-red, Blue-red, Brown-red, Black Mottled, Lavender Mottled, Buff Mottled, Red Mottled, Millefleur, Pyle and Black Headed.

All in all some 25 colours are possible in three varieties which adds up to almost 80 possibilities—not taking into account the Higo, Okina and the hen-feathered varieties. You see, all tastes are catered for!

**Right: Cuckoo cockerel.**



**Below: Buff mottled cockerel and pullet.**



The Japanese Bantam is quite docile. The hens go broody easily and make good mothers. The fertility can be low if you use a short legged cock. The weight of a cock is about 750 grams/ 26 oz., a hen weighs 600 grams/22 oz.



**Above: Trio black Japanese Bantams in the snow.**

The (Dutch) fanciers of this breed are united in the "Chabo Liefhebbers Club" Dutch Chabo (Japanese bantam) Breeders Association This club organises a "Young Bird Day" every year and houses its club show at one of the National shows. The club has its own club magazine which is published on a frequent and regular basis. If you are interested in the breed: There are Chabo / Japanese Bantam breeders associations in many countries. They promote the true Japanese Bantam and often establish a breeders list.



**Left:  
Black Daruma cock.**

*The photos in this article are kindly provided by: Henk van der Wilk, Udo Ahrens, Karl Schlüter and Ardjan Warnshuis. Photos of Daruma and Taikan: Manfred Bartl.*



Above: Black tailed white Taikan Chabo.

## SHORT LEGS EXPLAINED

By: Greg Davies, Australia.

It is well known that Japanese bantams carry a lethal gene related to leg length. This article explains the genetics of this condition.

There are a number of lethal genes in poultry, however in Japanese bantams, the Creeper (Cp) gene is the offender. This is a skeletal shortening mutation which is also found in other short-legged breeds such as Scots Dumpies.

When present in the homozygous condition, this creeper gene is lethal, causing the embryos to die around day 4.

All Japanese bantams with proper leg length are heterozygous, however the embryos can have one of three possible genetic combinations for leg length; two being homozygous and one heterozygous. Of these three possibilities, only two can survive to hatching. To illustrate the combinations, I shall (quite unscientifically) label the two alleles as thus: long leg length (L or l) and the short leg length (S). So the possible combinations can be shown as follows:

(Ll) = These do not have the creeper gene. They will all have long legs and when mated together cannot breed short legged chicks.

(Sl) = Proper Japanese bantams. Chicks with this combination will have short legs as demanded by the standard. When mated together, they will (theoretically) give 50 per cent short-legged chicks (Sl), 25 per cent long-legged chicks (Ll) and 25 per cent lethal (SS).

(SS) = The lethal combination. Embryos with this combination are homozygous and will always die before they can hatch.

Photo: Udo Ahrens.



Breeders of Japanese bantams all strive to breed birds with the short legs required, however they may use different strategies to get them. Some will mate short-legged birds with long-legged birds. This removes the chance of any embryos having the lethal (SS) combination and all fertile eggs will hatch. The main drawback of this strategy is that it increases the number of long-legged chicks to 50 per cent. Therefore, the incidence of "wasters" is greatly increased. Most serious breeders however, will mate two short-legged birds together. The advantages of this strategy are: the number of correct short-legged birds is maintained at 50 per cent, and the eggs containing chicks with the lethal (SS) genes do not hatch anyway. The percentage of "wasters" is therefore reduced naturally.

Notwithstanding the genetics (which always work perfectly in the text books, but never so well in practice) there seems to be an increase in Japanese bantams with, what I would term, intermediate length legs. Genetically, they must carry the creeper gene, however one can only surmise that the gene in these birds is not as strong, or also another gene may be involved. There are two more genes that influence the length of the legs.

Chabo Club Netherlands: <http://www.chaboclub.nl/>

Chabo Club Belgium: <http://vlaamsechaboclub.franksite.be/>

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