

CHICKEN RUN

ROSECOMB
BANTAMS

at

ADRI HERMSEN'S

Text: Elly Vogelaar
Photos:
Adri Hermesen &
Gerrie Goorden.

When Adri Hermesen went to the European Show 2012 in Leipzig, Germany, she promised to take some photos for us. Among the photos we saw one of their own Rosecomb bantams which was awarded 97 points there. At the Noord Show, another one of their bantams was awarded 97 points. All the more reason to ask Adri for some of her 'breeding secrets' ...

The start of the hobby

Adri Hermesen and her boyfriend Gerrie Goorden started in 2000 with some bantams: partridge Dutch Bantams. At first, they had been looking around at various shows and eventually got in contact with Mr. Benning, at the show in the town of Varsseveld. Mr. Benning is a breeder of Dutch Bantams. They could purchase some hens from him, followed by the acquisition of two more hens and a nice cock from Marius Waanders, a breeder in a small town called Haaksbergen. This way, the hobby started: together they became members of the GPKV-club in the village of Goor and later on they started showing their bantams under the name of 'Team Goorden-Hermesen'.

The breeding of Rosecomb Bantams started in a completely different fashion. "Through the Avian Influenza, a stubborn hen that laid her eggs in another one's nest, and a judge who taught us a lot", explains Adri with a big smile. Of course she readily told us the whole story.

It was shortly after the couple had moved to the province of Gelderland, out of the province of Overijssel. Before they started to redo the house, they first built a chicken coop and runs, at the same time they became a member of the local club KDS Twello. At that time, The Netherlands was being struck by an outbreak of AI and all chickens had to stay indoors. Many breeders in their region feared that the chickens had to be culled by Government law. Out of precaution, they

decided to bring their strain of Dutch Bantams to friends in another part of the country. Also, one of her colleagues was willing to give shelter to some bantams and promised to collect the eggs, so that they could be hatched later.

Right: The Dutch bantams.

This colleague herself had a trio of Rosecomb bantams. Later that year, when Adri incubated some of the eggs she got from this colleague, she was very surprised to see two black chicks hatching, certainly no Dutch Bantams! Apparently one of the Rosecomb hens had laid her eggs in the nest of the Dutch Bantams. The black chicks turned out to be two pullets: one returned to the original owner, one was kept by Adri and Gerrie since this one was so very tame and had stolen Adri's heart. However, a single pullet does not give other Rosecomb bantams.



Later that summer, in search of ducklings at the market in Bruges, Belgium, they saw a Rosecomb cock by accident, hidden in a basket. No cock to show since its comb lacked the spike. "But", was the thought, "the Rosecomb pullet would not be alone anymore, a bad comb would not make any difference to the pullet". So the Rosecomb cock went to Gelderland.

Now Adri and Gerrie had Dutch Bantams for the shows and a pair of Rosecomb Bantams for fun.

Right: Gerrie with the very first Rosecomb Bantams; the hen and the cock without comb spike, 'the old mom and dad' as they call them.



They never considered exhibiting the Rosecomb Bantams; they knew no other breeder of this breed and they had no experience and knowledge of this breed. Apart for a few hens, all chicks they reared were sold, especially the mis-coloured young birds with white feathers, which seemed to be wrong. Until one day a known Dutch poultry judge, the late Wienus van Dommelen, came to their house to check on some sick chicks. He was surprised by the quality of the black Rosecomb Bantams and told them to show the birds at the local show of KDS. He advised them to keep the youngsters with the white feathers; these often turned out to become the best black birds.

Adri on her Bantams

Both breeds are very docile and easy to keep. They are acquainted to Adri and Gerrie since they were chicks, they like to come to them and potter around their legs when they are busy in the coops.

However, there are some differences between the Dutch Bantams and the Rosecomb Bantams. For example, Dutch Bantam chicks can be very aggressive towards Rosecomb chicks. Therefore they are reared separately.

Dutch Bantams cockerels can be kept together for a long time, even after a show; there is no problem if you put them back in the chicken house when it is dark and give all birds a spray of the same odour, tells Adri. They thought the Rosecomb cockerels to behave the same, but alas. After a show the Rosecomb cockerels got the same treatment as the Dutch Bantam cockerels. The show ended Sunday night, both went to work on early the following Monday. When they returned home it was a massacre all over; two cockerels had not survived.

For this reason they do not attend early shows (in autumn) with the Rosecomb cockerels. In the meantime Gerrie has made some nice pens for cockerels, so now the Rosecomb cockerels can be put apart after the show.

Coops

In summer the birds are housed in large runs and a coop which has an open front. Free roaming is not possible; there are too many birds of prey around.

When Adri returns from her job, she starts immediately with cleaning of the drinkers and feeding the birds. Every once and a while a chicken escapes, but that is no problem as long as somebody is around.

The birds have large runs where they can roam around. There is always something in the run to investigate, like branches of pine trees and bundles of wild plants like docks and sorrels, which are totally stripped by them.



The runs are subdivided in a number of smaller runs, for example for youngsters and for 'oldies'. In the latter run house their first bantams and birds of the last few years, which they like to keep. In this run Dutch Bantams and Rosecomb Bantams live together.

Their very first Rosecomb hen and cock (with the wrong comb) have their own coop and run. Last year the hen still laid some eggs, which have been used for hatching.





Caring

Before going to work, early in the morning, the coops are checked and the manure boxes are cleaned. The birds get some feed, and some healthy green stuff as well. In the summer this might be lettuce, which the chicken breeders grown by themselves, and sorrel, dandelion and the like, from the meadow. In winter the birds get kail, carrots and apples. The chicken feed (pellets) is being mixed with various seeds and minerals.

Each day, when Adri and Gerrie return home, fresh water is provided and the runs are cleaned (getting rid of manure and old feed stuff). Also the chickens get tasty feedstuff and seeds. Especially in

summer this takes quite some time, in particular when there are many youngsters around.

At weekends, when the weather is good, the birds get a bath with pigeon bath salts in a large bucket. This is good for the structure of the feathers and helps also against mite and lice. In fighting the red mite the birds are sprayed (twice in summer) with ®Frontline.



Nicely arranged

When they are away from home for a week or so, Adri and Gerrie have a good 'nanny' for the chickens. A caretaker who knows how to handle the birds (and goats). Apart from the chickens they have some (white) ducks, which roam the whole premises and are only locked in at night, and two (female) goats, named Saar and Roos. Their two cats go, in that case, to a pension.

It is Mr. Harrie Pelgrim who takes up the job to care for the animals. Otherwise, if Harrie and his wife are away for a few days, Adri and Gerrie look after his birds. Nicely arranged!



Breeding

Each spring, after the showing season, a fierce discussion takes place about the birds, which ones will be used for breeding? Which cock will be placed with which hens? Furthermore, what will be the focus in coming breeding period!?

Choosing of the birds for the breeding pens is done together. Special attention is being paid to type and general characteristics of the birds. For the Rosecomb Bantams these are the earlobes, the comb, broad feathers, broad back, full breast, dark legs and eye-colour. "It is very important to breed with a good breeding stock, but also the housing and caring is very important. Clean coops, daily fresh water, good feed are equally important." emphasizes Adri.

The breeding lines are registered in a programme of ®Zooeasy; in this way can be monitored which are the offspring, and which results these have. This is hard work, but in this way you can see the development of a certain line.



Above and right: The first 3 weeks the chicks are housed in the living room in a foldable bassinet.



Depending on the number of fertile eggs and hatched chicks, breeding takes place 2 or 3 times a year. Adri and Gerrie have an incubator themselves,

but it almost looks like a jigsaw-puzzle with all those separate boxes! They breed one-to-one (one cock, one hen); a cock mostly has 2 to 3 hens but in the breeding season every hen has its own pen and laying nest, so the eggs can be kept apart. The eggs are marked and all chicks of the same mother get a (temporary) small leg band of the same colour. This job is done by Adri as it is a rather delicate job to ring the tiny day-old chicks.



Above and right:
Adri ringling the day-old chicks.



Showing

The showing season (for young animals) starts in September with the club show of the local club KDS Twello and the Dutch Rosecomb Club. A lot of work has to be done before the birds can go to a show. First the selection, which brings a lot of discussion which birds goes to a show and why. A bird could be good-looking in the run, but it also has to be willing to pose in the show pen. If the bird is not prepared to do so, Adri does not enter this bird in a show. No matter how nice and white the ear lobes are, or how broad the feathers. Nevertheless, the birds are every now and then put at home in a show pen, so they can get used to it.

Adri: "Ample time before a show we wash and clean the birds; feathers nicely done and comb and wattles nicely shining. Being well prepared and healthy, a bird has already earned half of its awarded points. We do not take a bird too often to a show; not more than twice. Otherwise the bird loses its condition! The pullet that won the Champion Show in 2010 was an early chick, which had participated in a show twice in 2009. After that she moulted. At the end of January 2010 she was fully recovered.



**Right: The winning pullet at the
Champion Show.
Photo: AE/Dirk de Jong.**

Birds need to recover after a show. Last year three hens had the highest award due to an excellent maintenance and good feed. They all went to a show only once. Sometimes it is tempting to participate again in another show, but it is better to have such a nice bird to recover at home".

Important shows for Adri and Gerrie are the shows of their local club and shows of the speciality clubs: Dutch Bantam Club and Dutch Rosecomb Club. Also the Midden Veluwe Show; at this show Adri always assists in the show board. Gerrie often assist as a clerck of a judge, writing the remarks on the judging carts.

Right: Adri winning the trophy for Best Bantam in Show, at the Clubshow KDS Twello.

They both help taking the show down – which I think is very important, because it is always difficult to find helpers to do this.



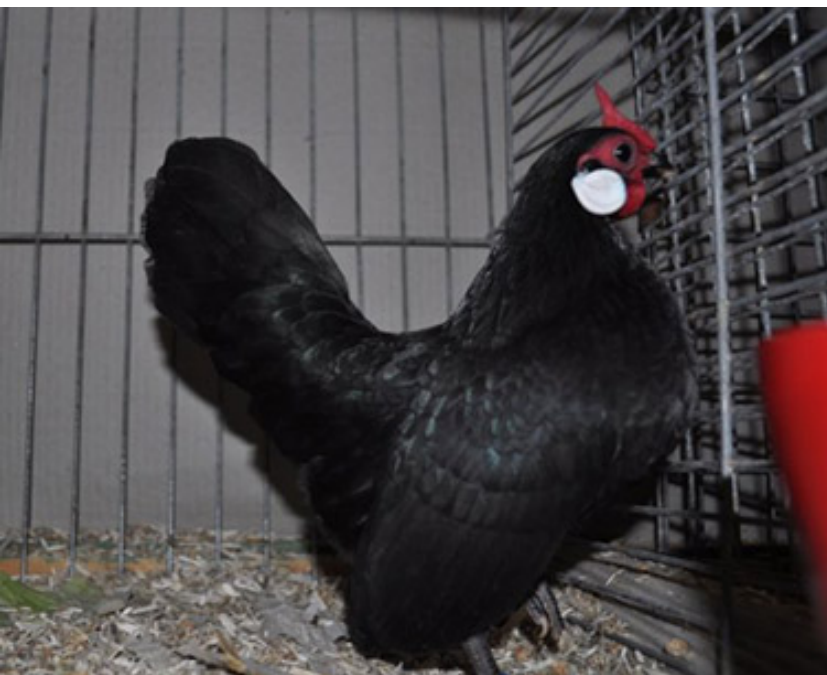
Furthermore they exhibit at shows in the neighbourhood and often the Noordshow.

Left: Gerrie with their winning Rosecomb bantam cockerel at the Noordshow, January 2013.



In 2011 they went to a special Rosecomb Bantam Show in Meeuwen in Belgium. Their Rosecomb cock became Best Bantam in Show. Last year (2012) they participated in European Show in Leipzig, Germany. A pullet was awarded the highest marks.

Left: The pullet that was awarded 97 points at the Europa Show in Leipzig, Germany.



The most coveted prize is winning Best Rosecomb Bantam at the annual Club show of the Dutch Rosecomb Club. This prize was achieved several times. Also the Winning at the Champion Show was a real satisfying experience; one of their Rosecomb pullets won Best Bantam in Show and she won the Big Prize of Holland and the Giesbers trophy!

Right: Team Goorden - Hermesen winning the Giesbers Prize at the Champion Show, Januari 2010 in Utrecht (NL). Photo: AE.



Above: Perpetual trophy for Best Rosecomb won at the Veluwe Show in 2012.



The Dutch Bantam Club and Rosecomb Club are specialty clubs; exchange of views and helping each other are important elements in improving the breeds. The Dutch Rosecomb Club has its own show for young animals and a independent own club show, where about 180 Rosecomb bantams are shown. KDS Twello is a local club. Adri: "We are active members and attend all meetings, which take place monthly. A very nice club. I am a board Member at KDS and the Dutch Rosecomb Club. I enjoy that. I do hope that more women will join our nice hobby. I happened to join this hobby because both of us, Gerrie and myself, are fond of animals and love to do this together".



Left: Adri holding 'Old Mom and Dad' - below is one of their beautiful sons.



To end with

A long story, but I like to add one more quote by Adri: "It feels great to come home after a day's work, put on my wooden shoes and to go outside. If I have to choose between cleaning up the manure in the goats stable, cleaning up the chicken coop or doing the dishes, I know my choice!".



Thank you again, Adri and Gerrie, for allowing us to have a look at your breeding activities, and we hope to see your beautiful birds at many shows to come!

When they became member of the Dutch Rosecomb Club, Dick Oostlander, secretary of this club, surprised them by creating a website for them, which he also keeps up to date. Adri provides photos and articles, which are put online by Dick, next to other interesting topics from the club. The website: <http://goorden-hermsen.webklik.nl>

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