

# THE GELDERSE SLENKE

## Elucidation on the Standard (part I)

By: Pieter Jansma (NL)

Although the Gelderse Slenke already in 1899 was shown – together with the Groningen Slenke - at an exhibition in Nijmegen and in the twenties at the National Avicultura Show, there has never been a written Gelderse Slenke standard, as far as we know. The Groningen Slenke has a standard since 1922, which until to this day has hardly altered. 2010 was a historic year with the recognition of the Gelderse Slenke. Previously an initial draft standard had been prepared by me. This concept-standard has been extensively discussed with four men and has subsequently been shaped. These men of the first hour were Johan Ruys from Doorwerth, Nico Maree from Oosterbeek, Rob Peters from Wijchen and myself, from Nijmegen. The starting point was the already collected historical source material about the breed, without wanting to achieve our own ideals.

**Right: Standard drawing of the Gelderse Slenke in Ash red barred/mealy, the neck could be a bit more S-shaped and curving backwards and the leg setting a bit better. (Drawing: Frindel, 2013).**

In this article I would like to elaborate on all parts of the standard; commenting on choices made and a substantiation based on historical data, which are based on one Slenke breed, which gradually emerged in two varieties around the turn of the 20th century. (Source: Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen, 1893).

### Overall Impression

In de Standard the following is described: "Medium size pigeon (somewhat larger than the field pigeon) with medium high and upright stance. The neck is S-shaped and curving backwards, in action, slight Tremors (shaking).

Being larger than the field pigeon is based on annotation by Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen (1893). Others described the bird as being a bit larger than the Hannover Tumbler. With the field pigeon we do not mean the wood dove or charcoal pigeon; the field pigeon is best compared to a homing or city pigeon.

As said the bird is of medium length with a backwards carried neck. Medium length is a broad concept in pigeon standards. This is about the proper ratios in size and length (neck, leg, tail and body length). In comparison with the Groningen Slenke, the Gelderse Slenke is longer in the back, tail and in front of the legs. Van der Vaart (1964) wrote: "They (= the Groningen Slenke) differed greatly from their Gelderse sisters, which had in particular a much longer back and tail ...". Verheij (1963) states that the Gelderse Slenke are longer in the



front. Van der Hoeven (1981) wrote that they are longer bodied than the Groningen Slenke. In Nijmegen and surroundings one said: "The Groningen Slenke is like a Belgian horse: short and broad." The longer and robust birds are found among the Gelderse Slenke (Van Meteren, 1953).



**Above: Young Gelderse Slenke in Ash yellow barred/mealy and Ash red barred/creamy with beautiful upright stance and perfect S-shaped neck.  
Photo: Pieter Jansma.**

The height is medium height and the body stance is upright. Medium height is also a broad concept in pigeon standards. The Groningen Slenke is also medium high according to its standard description, but it may be clear to everybody that the Groningen Slenke are less high than the Gelderse Slenke; more so because the Groningen Slenke are smaller sized.

An upright stance means that the chest is carried forward and lifted high. This includes a sloping stance, referring to the backline. The back of the Gelderse Slenke is less sloping than in the Groningen Slenke (when in action). That is why we speak of a sloping back in the Gelderse Slenke and a strongly sloping back at the Groningen Slenke. Not in action, the back is just about diagonal (45°). This also has to do with the neck gestation. When the neck of the Groningen Slenke rolls back (the typical action) it pulls the body still (much) more upright than the Gelderse Slenke.

The neck should be very mobile. Supple necks show a slight S-shape and in action we see slight tremors (shaking). The Dutch term for this is '*grollen*'. When the S-form is missing, the neck is stiff and we say the bird has a 'stick in the neck'. *Grollen* is a typical characteristic of the breed. Van der Hoeven (1981) wrote about the Gelderse Slenke: "While sitting the neck made a tremulous motion." As the Gelderse Slenke does not continuously tremble, it is described in the standard that the neck MAY have a slight tremor (in the show cage). That is why this breed typical trait is once more added with a separate note to breed characteristics.

**Right: Groningen Slenke before the 70's.  
Photo: J.H. Wieking.**



Finally, the neck is curving backwards but not as much as backwards as in the Groningen Slenke, according to Verheij (1963). This remark could indicate that the neck was carried more backwards than described in the Standard. However, you should realize that before the 70's the neck of the Groningen Slenke was not carried backwards in such an extreme way. With a correct neck position we should think of 90 to 100° (neck in relation to the backline). A square angle is the maximum. We mostly say: an obtuse angle. Due to the good, backwards curving neck, the bird looks more upright. The very mobile neck carriage is one of the most important characteristics of the Gelderse Slenke. Far too often we see necks that are hardly curved backwards.

### **BREED CHARACTERISTICS**

Under the heading 'breed characteristics' in the standard all parts of the breed are described separately.

#### **Head**

The head is long, with a well filled forehead; the upper scull is somewhat flattened. Already in the oldest (as far as we know) drawing of a Slenke by Vander Snickt (1900) the characteristic head of the Slenke is depicted very clearly. We see a plain head, with a high forehead and somewhat



flattened towards the back of the head.

**Above: Head study of a Slenke pigeon. (Vander Snickt, 1900)**

**Left: A beautiful head, especially for a hen.  
Photo: Pieter Jansma.**



The head of the Groningen Slenke is considerable narrower and also less long to

the back of the head. Also the forehead seems to be less filled than the pigeons from around 1900. In the first standard of the Groningen Slenke in 1922 was written: "Head medium large, with a with a high forehead" but now it states explicitly that the head is narrow. As far as I know, Meelis (1976) was the first to give this description.

### **Eyes**

The eyes are normal with a rather small pupil. The iris around the small pupil at first a clean yellow colour graduating to orange-red at the eye cere. Both the Groningen Slenke as the Gelderse Slenke have a small pupil; this fact was already embodied in the first Standard of the Groningen Slenke in 1922.

In contrast to the Gelderse Slenke, a white colour around the pupil is required in the Groningen Slenke. This, however, has been a choice in the drafting of the first Standard.



In 1900 Vander Snickt gives a very detailed description of the entered Slenke on the Ornithophilia Show. Here we read that most birds had orange-red eyes. However, pearl eyes, white with pink and white with yellow eyes also occurred. Huizinga (1897) spoke of a pearl eye with a light reddish circle around the pupil, Lavalle & Lietze (1905) talk about a light iris (pearl eye). Actually the eye of the Groningen Slenke is a (fake) pearl eye with a visible pink-red colour on the outside of the eye due to of the red veins.

**Left: Eye colour of the Gelderse Slenke. Photo: Pieter Jansma.**



**Left: Outstanding eye colour for a bird in the yellow colour variety. Photo: Pieter Jansma.**

From the first standard of the Groningen Slenke in 1922, yellow red eyes were called 'piss eyes'. Because everything that was 'not good' at the Groningen Slenke was labeled as 'Gelderse Slenke' and the few remaining pigeons of the Gelderse Slenke had a yellow-red eye color, we had this specified in the standard accordingly. Note that the yellow

colour varieties generally have lighter eyes because the dilute feather colour (red) also affects the eye colour. Then the eye can easily somewhat resemble a Groningen Slenke eye.

### **Eye ceres**

The eye ceres are narrow and smooth. They are the same as in the Groningen Slenke. In the first Standaard of 1922 is written: "The eye ceres are narrow and grey coloured". See also the drawing by Vander Snickt (1900) and the photos of the eyes of the Gelderse. The colour is to match the feather colour of the bird but there is only a subtle difference.

## **Beak**

The beak is medium length and rather thin. The colour is in conformity with de feather colour, light to dark horn coloured. The beak colour is the same as in the Groningen Slenke. Yellow birds have a rather pale coloured beak and the beak of the Reds is a dark horn to (almost) black. In the Whites (which are genetically 'grizzle' according to the eye colour) the beak colour depends on the behind feather colour. Red grizzle birds have a darker beak and the Yellow Grizzle have a more pale beak. It is remarkable that in the first Standard of the Groningen Slenke from 1922 the following was stated for the beak colour: "It also occurs in the Reds to have a light coloured beak". Also Logman noted this fact in 1930.

We can only guess which factors are responsible for the light/pale beak colour. We do know that the factor recessief red or pigeon red (e) caused a lighter beak colour and can improve the feather colour, but also effects the marking (up to fully self red, a colour that doesn't occur in Slenke). Also the factor smoky (sy) gives a lighter beak colour, but had little effect on the intensity of the red feather colour. The factor sooty (So) gives more colour intensity, but had no effect on the beak colour. Sooty plays a role anyhow in the colour intensity of the Slenke. This factor causes the colour spots in the wing shield. At the Slenke this is called a 'grizzle' marking – in Dutch: '*spar*' marking). That is why we don't want Slenke en with clean wing shields, but some colour specks. In Red, the factor dirty (V) causes more colour intensity but again this has no influence on the beak colour.

With respect to these factors this could also influence the dark orange yellow dun colour at the Slenke, but other factors may also play a role. For example, we could think of the allele Ash barred (dP) (in Dutch: *Bleekkleur*) that dilutes an intense colour (eg dominant red) less than a dun colour (eg dominant yellow), which creates the so-called golden colour. In the Slenke this is yet barely investigated.

**Right: A young yellow grizzle (in Dutch: *geel bandspar*) hen. Yellow birds have a pale beak. Photo: Pieter Jansma.**

## **Nose wattle**

The beak cere is small and little developed, same as in the Groningen Slenke, which can be seen in the old drawings already from around 1900.

## **Neck**

The neck is one of the most important breed characteristics of the Gelderse Slenke. I would like to say: "No good neck, no Slenke; even if all the other parts are perfect". This is not only about the neck carriage, but also about the S-shape and length. The standard stipulates: "Pretty long, smooth and curved backward (up to 90° with the back line); almost like a swan".

The neck should be fairly long; not as long as in the Groningen Slenke, but with sufficient length to be able to see the slight S-shape. Sufficient length neck is also needed to tremble (in Dutch: *grollen*). Too short necks hardly tremble or do not show the S-shape. The neck carriage has been explained in detail in the part on the breed characteristics.





**Left: Red cock with outstanding type and stance. In the photo, the neck could curve a bit more backwards. This bird was several times awarded the max 97 points. Photo: Pieter Jansma.**

Finally something about the crop (blowing). First we quote Slenke specialist Van der Hoeven (1981): "These (Gelderse. P.J.) Slenke were narrow and long with narrow necks (...) While sitting the necks were slightly shaking. (...) 'Blowing' was not accepted".

Huizinga (1897) spoke of a slightly inflated crop, also in the hen; just enough to make a well curved breast, which gives a vivacious picture.

Lavalle & Lietze (1905) talk about light or strong blowing. When not in action, the Gelderse

Slenke have a narrow neck. The slightly inflated crop may show zest for life, but the term half-cropper goes too far.



**Left: White hen with an outstanding upright stance. This bird was awarded several times with 96 points. Photo: Pieter Jansma.**

### **Breast**

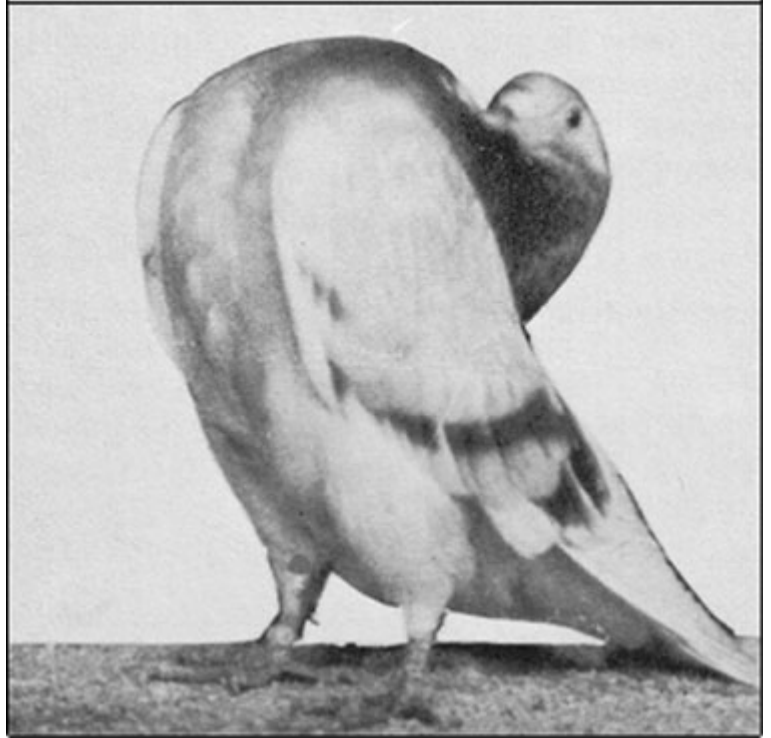
The breast is also an important part of the Gelderse Slenke. On this subject is written in the Standard: "Not too broad, well curved, carried forward and lifted high, smoothly curving up to the front of the neck."

Although we see a rather broad breast, it should (in comparison) not be as broad as the breast Groningen Slenke. Van der Vaart (1964) wrote: "There were indeed two kinds of Slenke en in the Netherlands, namely the Groningen and Gelderse Slenke. The first were broader in breast

with a better s-shaped neck and especially a shorter type. They differed remarkably from their Gelderse sisters, that had in particular a much longer back and tail and a much narrower breast. Because of their characteristics the Groningen Slenke breeders called them the '*Gelderse gepen*' (=garfish) named after the long and slender fishes".

Furthermore, the breast has to be rounded on all sides (horizontally and vertically viewed), in contrast to the Groningen Slenke, in which the breast (horizontally) is to be flat. A rounded breast corresponds to the observation of Huizinga (1897) on a full, well curved breast. Finally, we want a breast carried far forward and lifted high causing the slightly S-shaped neck to flow smoothly into the neck and the well curved breast towards the belly. When depth of breast is completely absent, this could lead to a sharp breast (especially in combination with a flat breast) which is regarded as serious fault.

**Right: Ash yellow barred/creamy (in Dutch: *Geelbleek*) Groningen Slenke male, Winner of the club show of the Groningen Fancy Pigeon Club in 1940. (Breeder: K. Woldijk)**



### **Back**

In the Standard, the following is stated about the back: "Not too broad, sloping and tapering towards the tail". A not too broad back goes well with a not too broad breast. From the first Standaard in 1922, the Groningen Slenke was wanted with a hollow back, needed to provide room for the long neck. A hollow back not wanted in The Gelderse Slenke. So the tail is carried in line with the back, according to the old drawings of the Slenke from around 1900. The back line is diagonal (ca. 45°); see: Overall Impression.

### **Wings**

The wings are described as follows: "Medium length, rather broad with strong, broad feathers. Wing tips not fully reaching the end of the tail. Normal carriage on the sides of the tail. Slightly frayed flights are permitted".



**Left: Broad, frayed flight feathers during the breeding season. After the breeding season the outer flight feathers often break. Photo: Pieter Jansma.**

The flights are broad, suiting the powerful flying style. In contrast to the short wings of the Groningen Slenke, the wings of the Gelderse Slenke are medium length. This corresponds to the longer back and tail (Van der Vaart, 1964). The carriage transfer is normal. In action the wing tips touch the ground and

carried more loosely against the body. Frayed flights are allowed, but during the show season, most birds have already moulted.

The fraying is mainly caused from the 'Springing' , when the wings clap under the body. Vander Snickt (1900) described this as follows: "This 'springing' causes the barbs of the large flights to worn down, till the moment of moulting in August/September when the cockbird is no longer capable of flying, same as also happens in the Speelderke and Ringbeater".

**Right: Ash red barred/mealy (in Dutch: *Roodbleek*) cock with an outstanding neck carriage. In the photo the breast could show a bit fuller and rounder.**

**Photo: Pieter Jansma.**

### ***Tail***

The tail is described as follows: "Medium length and closed, with powerful, broad feathers. Carried normal; tail end not to touch the floor."

Normal tail carriage means in line with the back. The tail end almost reaches to the ground. Leaning on the tail, as we see in the Groningen Slenke, does not occur in the Gelderse Slenke.

### ***Legs***

The legs are of medium length, but longer than those of the Groningen Slenke, which are rather short, although these are described as 'medium' in the standard. Lavalle & Lietze (1905) speak of long legs in the Slenke, but again the accompanying drawings rather show medium length.

### ***Feather***

Full feathered but tight/smooth; the neck feathering permitted to be somewhat loose, as a Gelderse Slenke in action has loose neck feathers. That is why this line is added.

### **TO END WITH**

So far, part 1 on general appearance and characteristics. In Part 2, we will elaborate on colour varieties, colour and marking, extra characteristics, faults and evaluation.



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