

THE GELDERSE SLENKE

Remarks on the Standard (part 2 of 2)

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Above: Gelderse Slenke (T. van de Griendt de Jong, 2012)

The previous article in the August issue (part I) was about the general impression and breed characteristics. In this second part we will talk about the colour and marking, particular breed characteristics, serious faults and the (overall) assessment. The Dutch standard of the Gelderse Slenke can be found on www.groningereengelderseslenkenclub.nl. For our foreign readers, these two articles will provide you with a standard description in English.

Colours

The Slenke does not come in a great many colour varieties or markings. Spruijt already noted this fact in his 1935 book. The authentic Slenke colours are the intense Red colour and the Yellow, being the dun variety of the red. The markings are (dark) chequer and barred. Based on this we have 4 colour varieties: (dominant) Red, (dominant) Yellow, Ash Red Barred (in Dutch, and only in the Slenke: *roodbleek*) and Ash Yellow Barred (*geelbleek*).

Apart from that, the Slenke is also recognized in Grizzle (G) varieties. Grizzle comes in barred and barless. Based on this, we can add 4 more colour varieties to the Slenke: Ash Red Grizzle Barred, Ash Yellow Grizzle Barred, Ash Red Grizzle Barless and Ash Yellow Grizzle Barless. The specific Dutch term for Barred Grizzle in the Slenke is '*bandspar*' and for Barless Grizzle it is '*spikkelspar*'. Bandspar is white with yellow or red feathers in the neck and light coloured wing bars. Spikkelspar is mainly white with yellow or red feathers in the neck and wings. In

old pigeon books it is described as 'stippled' or 'sprenckle'. (Source: Gockinga, 1882 and De Veldpost dated 19 april 1899.)

The Grizzle factor from a genetic point of view is part of the so-called colour modifiers. Grizzle in his most extreme appearance can bring entirely white animals (with coloured eyes) as 9th and last colour variety.

This brings us to the standard description of each colour variety.

(Dominant) red: head, back and front of the neck, wing shield and shoulders are red; getting lighter toward the breast.

(Dominant) yellow: same as in Red, but now in Yellow.

Ash Red Barred (*roodbleek*): head, back and front of the neck are red; two red wing bars. Wingshields are pale to light rose with some colour nuances.

Ash Yellow Barred (*geelbleek*): same as with Ash Red Barred, but now yellow (the light rose colour is now cream).

Ash Red Grizzle Barred (*rood bandspar*): mainly white with red feathers on the chest back and front of the neck, wing shield. Two light red wing bars.

Ash Yellow Grizzle Barred (*geel bandspar*): as in the Ash Red Grizzle Barred , but now in Yellow.

Ash Red Grizzle Barless (*rood spikkelspar*): white with a few to quite a number of small red feathers on the breast, neck and wingshields (called "gestippeld" or "gesprenkeld" in Dutch). No noticeable bars on the shield.

Ash Yellow Grizzle Barless (*geel spikkelspar*): same as in the Ash Red Grizzle Barless, but of course with yellow feathers instead of red.

White: self white.



Above: Standard Gelderse Slenke, in various colours (De Jong, 2009)

In the following pages we will elaborate on these definitions, and they shall be further explained.

Colour and marking

Now that colours have been discussed: What are the demands regarding colour and marking? Firstly, the colours must be intense and pure, respectively. Although the standard of the Gelderse Slenke does not mention the so-called burgundy and vetgele ("fatty yellow") colour of the Groninger Slenke, we prefer seeing the colours as intense and pure as possible. The dull red or yellow colours in all varieties with a clearly visible (dark) chequer marking, or lighter heads in the pale colour varieties (called mealy heads or ice heads) are certainly not wrong, but we appreciate more the birds that are coloured throughout.

Thus wrote Spruijt (1935) about the Red of the Groningen Slenke: *"A typically fiery red colour, burgundy, with almost a purple tint; the most intense in the head, neck and shoulders, weaker coloured in the chest"*. About the Yellow he wrote: *"Dark orange colour, full and warm, in particular in the head, neck and shoulders"*.

When Moezelaar (1976) talks about 'bad red' in the Groningen Slenke, he writes: *"The red colour of the Slenke is a special red colour that, same as the eye colour, does not occur in any other pigeon breed. It is a deep purple red, described by earlier writers as Burgundy red and most comparative to the red of the blue-winged rosefinch, although less glossy. However, today in the show pen we see Slenke with racing-homer-red or even less colour intensity. Together with their red veined white eyes, it is clear that these are just the old fashioned Gelderse Slenke."* The same also holds for the Yellow, of course.

Below: Old hen with an outstanding body type (could be a bit more slender in the neck); the red colour could be more intense. Photo: Pieter Jansma.



The remark by Van Sluijs, about the red veined white eyes points at a (reasonable) more intense eye colour. (*Editor's note: White or pearl eye graduating to red at the eye cere, is the standard eye colour of the Groningen Slenke.*) This is also according to the description in Part 1. The fact that the Gelderse Slenke sometimes tends to have (false) pearl eyes, is mostly noticeable in the Yellow (Dun) colour varieties.



Left: Outstanding yellow cock with intensive colour, although the colour reaches a bit too far down to the belly and in the flights. The neck could be bent more backwards. Photo: Pieter Jansma.

The quote by Moezelaar in the former page about the 'bad red' colour, is referring to the Gelderse Slenke. Still intensively coloured Gelderse Slenke have been around in those days. In 1930, Sanders wrote: "*The Gelderse obviously has had to pay the piper. Birds like in the old days are no longer around. You won't find a fine dark red or fine*

barred or barless grizzle anymore". From this we can conclude that once there have been fine intensive red birds! With the Gelderse Slenke we don't have to demand for the same qualities as with the Groninger Slenke, which has been bred for show qualities since 1922, still we should strive for intensive colours.

The colour of the flights is described in the Standard as follows: "*In all colour varieties when the wing is closed, the visible part of the flights (the outer vanes) has to be a very light to white colour; the inner vanes can be coloured. In case of some entirely white flights, they must be the first primaries.*" We often see fully white first primaries, but also a full set of coloured primaries. In the latter case, at least the colour in the outer vane has to be very light to white.

Although the breeders of old preferred the first primaries to be white, we don't have this fact recorded in the Standard, since the birds with coloured first primaries happen to be the birds with the most intense colour. One should not go at the expense of the other. In the past, the Standard of the Groningen Slenke has also been adapted for this point, thus in this point they are similar. Having a coloured feather within the white primaries is not tolerated (a common rule, unless it concerns a unnoticeable feather with birds in the so called cropper-pied marking (with bavette).

Next in the Standard: "Back and belly colour as light as possible. The breast colour gradually fading into the belly colour. Some colour in the lower support feathers of the tail and the fluff is permitted. The tail is fully white or light coloured". These demands are according to the colour descriptions of the Dutch National Pigeon Union NBS.



Above: A red cock bird with a very good cropper-pied marking ('bib' marking). Photo: Pieter Jansma.

In practice, the breast and belly colour could be a problem. We sometimes see birds in which the white increases towards the breast. In other birds the two colours are perfectly defined. Both are usually caused by the so-called cropper-pied marking (bib marking). Birds with this bib should not be marked as a fault; it is typical for the pied factor, as we for instance see in the (related) Norwich Cropper and Holle Cropper.



Right: A young ash yellow grizzle barred cock with outstanding S-shaped neckline and well rounded breast. Photo: Pieter Jansma.

The cropper-pied marking is typical for the Gelderse Slenke. We are aiming for this marking in all colour varieties. This is what Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen (1893) wrote about the Slenke: "There are two varieties: the Groningen and the Gelderse Slenke, which only slightly differ in marking". No doubt with this remark he referred to the white bib-marking of the Gelderse Slenke. Beekman (1898) wrote that the throat of the Gelderse Slenke should be marked with a round white bib. Van Gink & Spruijt (1930) describe this marking as a more or less heart-shaped spot at the front side of the neck. That is why we describe in the Standard the bib as a round to heart-shaped white spot. The often appearing white wing rosettes in the Cropper-pieds are permitted. However, the wing rosettes and the bib may not expand too much. As mentioned before, a coloured flight in the white wing is permitted, if not too much noticed. (common rule). This is permitted because the outwards primaries of the pied marked birds are almost always white. In intense coloured birds it is often the other way around; they might have white primaries between the coloured ones.

In closing some words on the so called "spar" marking. This typical feature is visible in both Ash Red bar (roodbleek) and Ash Yellow bar (geelbleek) but also in their grizzle counterparts roodspar and geelspar.

We first translate for you a few lines written in 1946 by the Dutch pigeon Grand Master, Van der Vaart. Concerning the dun varieties, he wrote the following: "*Geelbleek*: neck and head dark orange-yellow, wings yellow barred. The little feathers on the wing shield are cream-yellow. The feather shaft is matt orange-yellow, this colour is smoothly flowing out over the feather barbules. *Roodbleek*: as *geelbleek* but now in red". On the '*spar*' (Grizzle) marking he wrote as follows: "*Geelspar*: The feather is white with a yellow mirror, meaning, from the quill as far as where the downy barbs reach is white, the other barbs and the shaft are yellow with white tips. The typical '*spar*' marking appears because the feathers are tile-wise overlapping. (...) *Roodspar*: as *geelspar* but now in red".



Speaking in genetic terms, we are of course talking about the effect of the factor Sooty (So). Contrary to the chequer pattern, the pigmentation in the fathers emerges from the feather quill, which is why we get a marking with a remote resemblance to a fir branch ("sparrentak" in Dutch), hence the name. Since the spar marking is typical of the Slenke, we prefer not having a clean colour of the wing shield but see a good presence of sooty.

**Left: Outstanding ash yellow barred young hen; still the breast could be rounder and deeper.
Photo: Pieter Jansma.**

Additional Breed Characteristics

The additional breed characteristics concern features that are not judged at a show, but nevertheless are very important. In the first place this is the flying capacity. The Gelderse Slenke is above all a pigeon with the so characteristic flying style which already has been described extensively (see <http://www.aviculture-europe.nl/nummers/10E04A02.pdf>); all other characteristics are of minor importance.

Also the courting behaviour of this breed is typical. The cock bird approaches the hen bird cooing and walking on tip toes, the head thrown back, wings dropped, tail well spread. The approach is performed in a series of jumps or leaps in the air. The hen may show similar but less exaggerated behaviour.



Left: A very good ash yellow grizzle barred young hen; the head could be thrown back a bit more.

Photo: Pieter Jansma.

Finally, the slightly shaking neck should not remain unnoticed (in Dutch, with the Slenke, this neck shaking is called *grollen*). Van der Hoeven (1981) wrote about the Gelderse Slenke: "While sitting, the neck of the bird was shaking". During the shaking the head is not thrown backwards up to the back, as in the Groninger Slenke. If the neck is too stiff, the bird will not show a supple, S-shape shaking neck.

Faults

Listed as serious are the most eye-catching faults, being: too short in body, too broad or too narrow chest, neck either too short or too stiff, too broad back, too long legs, too horizontal stance, too horizontal tail carriage, neck not enough carried backwards and too much crop or globe forming.

Most faults concern the overall impression, and in particular the body type and stance. The most essential is the slightly S-shape neck carriage and the shaking (*grollen*). Although this is not written in the Standard, the neck must have suppleness. In fact, the stance and overall impression are formed by the neck action, similar as in the Mooker, the Stargard shaker, some Tumbler breeds and the Groninger Slenke. Without some shaking the Gelderse Slenke will never show the correct elevated stance.



Left: Adult ash yellow barred cock with very good bib marking and nicely rounded breast, but a bit too short body. Photo: Pieter Jansma.

The body type is medium length and width, but compared to the Groningen Slenke, they are narrow and long. A too short body type, a too broad breast and a broad back are seen as serious faults. Too long body also occurs, but then we are dealing with the so called 'trek-en-drijvers'- the real 'Flying Gelderse Slenke'. The neck is slightly bent backwards and should be

supple and long enough to show the slight S-shape. A good rounded breast and sufficient depth of keel is needed to make the S-shaped neck blend in fluently to the back line. That is why a pointed breast is a serious fault.

Right: Adult cock with an excellent burgundy colour. Photo: Pieter Jansma.

These are the major faults, as stated in the Standard. The other faults concerning the overall body type have been discussed in Part I, therefore we will not further discuss them here.

Order of importance

Next to the overall impression, the following features in their order of importance:

- Breed Type
- Body form and Posture
- Neck carriage
- Eye colour
- Colour and Marking



The Standard describes the Flying Type. With the Gelderse Slenke there is no separate flying and showing type. The Standard has been drafted very carefully based on historical information on the old fashioned Gelderse Flying Slenke. It has never been a matter of achievement of own ideals. I hope this has been adequately demonstrated in these two articles.

Below: A very good Young hen with a flowing gradient colour towards the belly. The breast is wanted a bit deeper. Photo: Pieter Jansma.



In closing

With the drafting of a Standard and the recognition of the Gelderse Slenke in 2010 we have tried to safeguard this piece of living heritage.

In part I (Overall impression and breed characteristics) and part II (colour varieties, colour and marking, additional features, faults and order of importance) I tried to match the historical breed information with the Standard and the common rules for additional explanation on all parts. I hope to have succeeded in this structure.

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