



POLANDS OR CRESTED DUTCH: ALMOST TOO NICE TO BE TRUE

**Text and photos: Luuk Hans (NL)-unless stated differently.
Photo above: White crested buff bantam cockerel. Breeder Luuk Hans.**

General observations

A few comments in advance: in some countries (mostly English-speaking countries) the bearded and non-bearded Polands are considered as one breed. In most non-English-speaking European countries these two are considered as two breeds. The bearded is then often called 'Paduan'. The non-bearded one has often 'Dutch' in its name: previous it was called 'Crested Dutch', in England and America, for example.

We follow the European differentiation; in this article I am going to describe the non-bearded breed. In the next article I will pay attention to the bearded Poland. I use the old English name: Crested Dutch.

The Crested Dutch is a very special breed. This breed has a so-called open skull, so they have an awesome, large crest. The contrast is huge, in particular the White Crested (WC) Blacks are a joy for spectators. This is also the most popular colour.

Is this breed Dutch? Many countries claim the origin. Where do they come from? Chickens originate, before our era, in Asia. The Crested Dutch, it is thought, also came from Asia. Most likely through Russia and Poland. Then, the English name 'Polands' can also be explained.

On the other hand, these birds are featured – already in the 16th and 17th century – in Dutch paintings. Moreover, we speak of Crested Dutch in this article (not of non-bearded Polands).

Although the number of breeders has always been small – do people shy away thinking that the breed is difficult to breed and maintain?- the breed has always caught attention. For instance, of photographers and writers.

See for example this old fashioned Dutch (translated) poetic description below:

'The flower of all poultry and, moreover a Dutch breed is the Dutch Crested. The cocks and their magnificent crests, elegantly bent backwards and hanged over aside with small, vertex snow-white feathers, the crest looks like a Japanese chrysanthemum. The hens have a pure global crest, like a pumpkin, resembling the Dutch guelder rose. This white looks bright in combination with the black, green shining feathers on the body'.

The text goes on this way, but we know enough.



Left: H. and C. Saftleven, 1620, painting (detail) in Castle Gunterstein, Holland.

Below: 'Birds in the park', by d'Hondecoeter, 1686. Rijksmuseum, NL.



Dutch Crested (large): limited number of colours.

Next to the WC Blacks we often see the WC Whites and the WC Blues. Also the WC whites can be seen in paintings of 17th century painters. A White crested White hen can be seen in various paintings of the famous Dutch painter Melchior d'Hondecoeter , famous for his constant interest in chickens-as-muse. This does not apply to the WC Blues. Even rarer are the WC Cuckoo and the WC Mottled. It is not known when these three latter mentioned colours were created. It is a pity that we hardly see these colours at shows.



In total, the Crested Dutch is standardized in the Netherlands in nine colours. Next to the already mentioned colours the BC whites, the Self Blacks, the Self Blues, the Self Cuckoos and the Self Buff Laced are standardized. The last two colours have not been seen for very long at Dutch shows.

Self Laced birds (golden, silver, buff) can be seen frequently at American shows.

Left: WC Black, large, cock.
Breeder: Jan van den Heuvel.

Most often one can see the white crested black, the colour which could already be seen in the 16th century. Most peculiar is the story of the black crested whites, the colour which was re-created in the last century (about 1960). This colour seems to have been there already in the 15th century. There are some exciting stories about this colour. Nevertheless, a colour we hardly see, probably because this colour is very difficult to breed.



Above: A couple White crested Black bantam hens. Breeder: Wim Diepenbroek.



Crested Dutch Bantams

The bantams of this breed were created late 19th century - in England, but also in the Netherlands. The same colours as for the large ones are standardized (in the Netherlands), but in the last few years we witnessed the appearance of some new colours. The WC Buff Bantams (not laced) are standardized, a colour which came originally from Germany. Also the WC Chocolate and WC Khaki Bantams have been standardized. Both colours – both are two sides of the same coin – come from America. Nice colours which can be seen in other breeds as well.

The newest standardized colour in the Netherlands is the WC Chocolate Mottled.

Left: White crested Khaki bantam birds. Breeder: Luuk Hans.



Left: White crest Blue hen. Breeder: Jan van den Heuvel.

Below: White crested Cuckoo male and female. Breeder: Jan van den Heuvel.



Above: Black crested Black hen. Breeder: Henk Geerts. Photo: Klaas van der Hoek.

Right: White crested black mottle bantam hen. Gallinova 2013. Breeders: Team Gahrman. Photo: Jan Schaareman.



Right: White crested white hen. Winner Gallinova 2010. Breeder: Jan v.d. Heuvel.



Left: Black crested White hen. Noordshow 2007. Breeder: Jaap van Asselt. Photo: Ad Taks.



Below: The latest variety, recognised in 2014: White crested Chocolate mottle bantams, male and female. Breeder and creator: D.W. Diepenbroek. Photos: Jan Schaareman.



Frizzle

Very special are the frizzled Crested Dutch. They are standardized in all mentioned colours (in the Netherlands). Large and bantam.

Some years ago a discussion took place on frizzled Crested Dutch. Especially in Germany. One was afraid that a frizzled crest would not offer enough vision to the bird. Fortunately this discussion has gone. Nowadays we see very beautiful frizzled birds. In particular bantams are seen at shows, large ones are very rare.

Photo: Head study of a Frizzled White crested Black hen. Photo: Hans Ringnalda.





Left: Head study of a Frizzled White crested Black bantam cockerel.

Trimming

A show is actually a beauty contest. It is allowed to trim birds. Crested Dutch as well. The legs (toes!) might be dirty, so get rid of the dirt. They might need some cutting and polishing. The same could apply for the wattles. That is to say, some washing and polishing. Last but not least, the crest might need some trimming and washing.

The crest of the Crested Dutch is also influenced by the coloured feathers in front. For a long time these feathers were cut before a show (at least in the Netherlands). However, these small feathers in the front support the crest.

We therefore call them supporting feathers of the crest.

The same applies to the coloured feathers above the eyes.

After cutting these feathers, the crest is not supported anymore and the crest falls apart; the crest bends forward and aside. Consequently the vision of the bird – what this is all about! – will be influenced negatively.

The only reason for cutting these feathers completely (in Holland) was that the crest seemed fully white. Since the last turn of the century these coloured feathers in front of the crest and above the eyes are considered important, although some trimming is allowed. (See illustrative drawings below, by Hendrik Timmer).



Fig. 1: Normally, a hen would look something like this. We will have to do some trimming to make her 'show-worthy'.

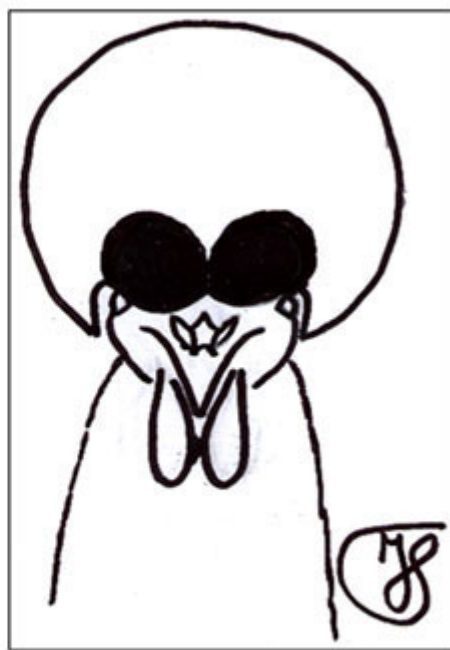


Fig. 2: Here, the coloured feathers have been trimmed in the shape of a heart or butterfly. This is **not** preferred.

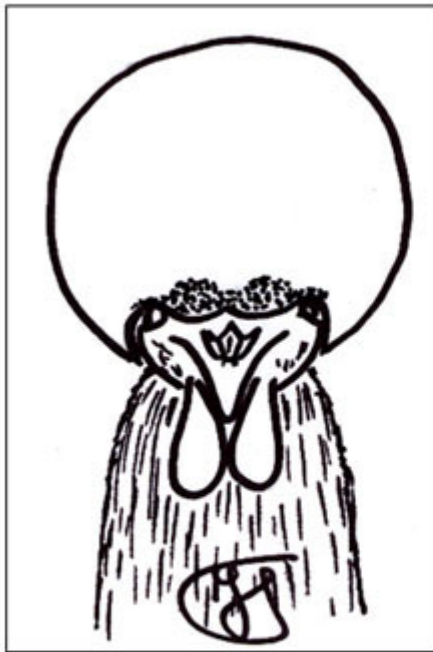


Fig. 3. This is how crests were trimmed in the past. All feathers that support the crest were cut off. (This is not wanted anymore!)



Fig. 4. This is the ideal form of the (coloured) feathers in the front; a half-circle or crown shape.

When trimming the crest we work from back to front. The few black feathers in a white crest – assuming it were a WC Black bird – are cut with scissors close to the skin. If in this way occasional black feathers have been removed we have to trim the black feathers in front and above the eyes. In such a way that a small butterfly at the front of the crest arises.

Caring and maintenance

Crested Dutch feel best at home in a fully covered coop.

In many climates a shower frequently falls down. Crested birds do not always go inside, and as a consequence the crest becomes wet. Too much rain will pollute the crest. This will not only lead to dirty crests but can also lead to crests hanging over the eyes or, even worse, to inflammations of the eyes.

This is not all! It is also important to check the crest for lice. Every chicken has trouble with vermin occasionally. That is why poultry like a dust bath regularly.

Crested birds cannot keep their crest sufficiently clean by themselves. Regular checks are therefore required. There is no reason to get discouraged. Lice can be prevented and treated quite easily. Every breeder has his own solution and can give useful hints.

For these reasons it is best to house crested birds separately, that is not with other breeds in the same coop. Especially when birds moult – at the end of the summer when chickens get new feathers - cocks lose their beauty and hens stop laying eggs. Fortunately this applies only for some weeks. Crested birds have a moulting crest. This is also necessary because the existing feathers are old and done. This requires extra attention from the breeder or fancier since this means trimming of the crest (see above).

Last but not least, a new crest can itch a bird and then crested birds like to be pecked in the (new) crest. In particular other (crestless) breeds can be overly enthusiastic. As a consequence the crest shows bald spots, or even worse.

**Below: Dutch Crested Bantams at a special drinker; the crest stays dry.
Breeder: Luuk Hans.**



Otherwise, crested birds do not require a special treatment. Like any chicken they eat common feedstuff for chickens.

Also daily fresh water is common for any chicken and crested birds. It is suggested to use special drinkers for crested fowl. 'Closed' drinkers are best, otherwise crested chickens might smear themselves.

In conclusion

The Crested Dutch is a special bird. A centuries old Dutch breed! A breed that can use many more breeders. It cannot depend on the breed itself. Docile and gentle by character. Only the crest requires some special attention.

In short, who dares?



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