

JAVANESE BANTAM



**THE BREED THAT COMBINES WILD FOWL TEMPERAMENT WITH
PERFECTION OF EXHIBITION POULTRY**

Above: A flock of yellow partridge Javanese bantams. Photo: Michael Kruppert.

Text: Hristo Lukanov.

Photos: Hristo Lukanov, Michael Kruppert.

The Javanese bantam is a rare and beautiful small breed that was created and standardised in Germany and France. It is the only true bantam breed that lay eggs with blue-green shells and has a fifth toe. Javanese bantams are characterised by their small, elegant, slim bodies and long tails. They have a pea comb and white earlobes. This breed is well suited for garden rearing, with a lively temperament and excellent laying capacity.

History

Although the name of the breed and its origin are described in the standard as Southeast Asia, these birds were actually created in Germany during the second half of the 20th century.

Javanese bantams originate from an heterogeneous chicken group known as the German bush chicken (*Deutsches Buschhuhn*), created in the early 20th century by Alfred Muntau in East Prussia (Reßmann, 1993). He had a different approach to keeping ornamental chickens. It was important that the birds took care of themselves, living in half-wild conditions. The only role for people in his system was to enjoy watching the birds wander in his spacious garden or in the meadows around the settlements. This was a reminder of a long-lost relationship between people and nature, returning us to the privacy and serenity of our roots and inner peace. Perhaps this is why the creator of these birds has lived to 94-years-of-age.

To create a fowl that could survive without human influence, Mr. Muntau crossed local bantam chickens with wild jungle fowls, possibly using Red and Grey Jungle Fowl. He may have used birds from the Rapanui / Olmec group—also known as “jungle fowls”—that were imported into Europe at that time. The resulting birds had wild colour plumage, were elegant, robust, and able to live without needing to be tended by humans. These birds were called Eastern Prussian bush chickens (*Muntausches Buschhuhn*) and later German bush chickens (*Deutsches Buschhuhn*). Despite two World Wars that halted his breeding activities, Mr Muntau returned to breeding his free-living, semi-wild chickens.

There are several types with different phenotypic traits in this chicken group, what unites them is that the birds are very independent and have a plumage colour similar to that of wild chickens. However, the only standardized and consolidated breed from this group is the Javanese bantam. These birds were shown for the first time in Strasbourg by Charles Keller, Alsace, France. In France they were recognised as a breed in 1998 under the name Javanese Bantam. Charles Keller's birds come from a flock reared in Bergisches Land, a low mountain range region within the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, in the early 1980s and he says they have some blood of green egg layers from America. These birds had characteristics the same as the modern Javanese bantams—elegant physique, pea comb, white earlobes, fifth toe and turquoise green eggs.



A number of Javanese hens and pullets in different plumage colours: wild, partridge, yellow partridge. Photo: Michael Kruppert.

In 2006, the Javanese bantam was recognised by the German National Poultry Association (BDRG), but they are still rare in Germany and France. The breeders who have done this not easy job were Georg Kruppert from Schlitz, Norwed Gärtner from Steinau a. d. Straße and Harald Hamann from Schwalmthal. Because of their dedication the Javanese Bantam and the German Bush chickens became more popular and they are still kept alive.

Features of the breed

Javanese bantam hens lay extremely well—about 160-180 greenish, 35-40 gram eggs per year. They also make good broodies. Fertility is high in general, due to the vitality and activity of these birds, and the hatch rate is also high—both by broody hens and by artificial incubation. The recommended male/female ratio is up to 1:10, but in the exhibition flock it is usually much less: (1:3 to 1:6). The hens have a strong broody instinct, like most true bantam and miniature breeds. The choice of breeding birds should follow the guidelines set down in the breed standard. When it is impossible to select the best representatives of the breed, it is necessary to compensatory mate. If both male and female have the same faults, they will breed those faults into most of their offspring.



Eggs from Javanese bantams with average weights of 35 grams. These were laid by six-month-old pullets, so they will get bigger over time. The brown eggs are in comparison and their average egg mass is 50 grams. Photo: H. Lukanov.

The chicks need higher levels of crude protein and sulfur-containing amino acids in the feed. Enough activity has to be provided for the chicks. The addition of egg powder or cooked and crushed eggs to the starter feed, as well as live or dried Mealworms has a very good effect. The provision of permanent access to a spacious garden, green food, insects, molluscs and seeds will ensure the growth of healthy and beautiful birds, especially after 1 ½ - 2 months of age.



Javanese bantam chicks at day old; one week and two weeks old. Photo: Hristo Lukanov.

Mature birds need a varied diet, and they do best when allowed to forage naturally for greens, insects, worms and other good sources of protein. A good feed for breeding birds contains a variety of seeds, but is also rich in vitamins and minerals. The addition of sprouted seeds and dried or live mealworms is desirable and a ready supply of grit should always be provided. Provision of a shallow container with dry sand and ash, in which the birds can take a "bath" is also a good idea.



A good quality Javanese bantam male, showing good lustre of the plumage and typical features of the breed. Photo: H. Lukanov.

Javanese bantams are naturally timid, so the contact with the breeder must be made early and remain permanent, so the birds become familiar with human presence. The next step is to separate the birds into special training cages that simulate exhibition conditions, so the birds get used to being in confinement. This also helps prevent plumage damage and breakage that naturally occurs in the free-range flock environment. The preparation of the birds should start no later than six to eight weeks before the first show and if they already have some damaged feathers it is advisable to remove these feathers completely to allow time for the growth of new ones.

When selecting birds for breeding or exhibition, particular attention must be paid to the distinctive breed features of Javanese bantams, including: the small pea comb, white or yellowish-white earlobes; the fifth toe; and the elegant, long flowing tail. Special attention should also be given to the size and location of the fifth toe. It must be well-separated from and longer than the hind toe and directed upwards and backwards.

This breed reaches sexual maturity at about five-months-of-age but for exhibition purposes the birds are at their best between the ages of 10-12 months.

The partridge variety is the most common, but recently, wild and orange-black colours are becoming popular. There are also black and white varieties, but these are still not well developed.



Javanese bantams in wild colour. (Photos: H. Lukanov and Michael Kruppert)



Standard (EE, 2010)

Javanese Bantam, partridge

Origin: Southeast Asia.

Overall impression: fifth-toed, elegant bantam breed with elongated, proudly kept conical body. The tail is very rich, long, carried horizontal.

Breed characteristic of the rooster:

Body: elongated, cone-shaped, slightly upright carriage.

Neck: medium long, well feathered.

Back: medium length, straight.

Shoulders: broad, slightly prominent.

Wings: long and strong, carried close to the body.

Saddle: wide and well covered with long feathers.

Tail: long, carried horizontally, with long, well sprung sickle feathers.
Chest: wide and full, slightly rounded.
Abdomen: poorly developed.
Head: small, well-rounded.
Face: clean faced, red.
Comb: pea shaped , small, well-set.
Wattles: relatively small.
Earlobes: well developed, yellow-white.
Eyes: large, orange-red.
Beak: short and strong; slightly curved, brownish.
Thighs: strong, of medium length.
Shanks: medium length, strong, finely scaly, dark green with yellowish foot.
Toes: five; fifth toe is well separated from the hind toe, longer and directed upwards and backward.
Plumage: rich, long and flexible, well-fitting, shiny.



**Shanks of the Javanese bantams: left- hen (with poor separation and length of the 5th toe); right- cock (with good formed 5th toe, shank colour and spur).
 Photo: H. Lukanov.**

Breed characteristic of the hen:

Similar to the male allowing for usual sexual differences. Earlobes less developed than the male.



**Head study of the Javanese rooster wild colour and the Javanese partridge hen.
 Photos: H. Lukanov.**

Serious faults:

Body, too short and stocky; shoulders too narrow; underdeveloped plumage; carriage too high or too low; carriage overly tilted, especially in females; tail carried too low or too high; too rough or too large comb and wattles; red earlobes and earlobes too small; poor separation of the rear toes.



This rooster is a cross between wild and partridge colour. Photo: H. Lukanov.

Plumage colour:**Partridge:**

Male: The head is a dark golden colour. The neck and saddle plumage is dark golden with black axes, slightly enlighten down. Back, shoulders and wing covers are dark golden-red coloured. Wing bands are black with a greenish tinge. The primary feathers are black with brown outer edge. The secondary feathers are black on the inside and brown on the outside, so that when the wing is closed golden-brown wing triangle is visible. Breasts are black with light brown inclusions. Abdomen is black. The tail is black with a green sheen.

Female: The head is golden coloured. The neck plumage is golden with black axial colour. The body plumage is brownish gray with fine black splashes and the feathers axes are lighter. The breasts are with salmon colour that lightens towards the abdomen, single black inclusions are allowed. The back is ashy-gray. The primary feathers are black, sometimes with a thin brown coloured outer edge. The secondaries are mainly with black inner part and corresponding to the colour of the body outer edge. The tail feathers are black, the cover tail feathers are brownish towards the end.

Serious faults:

Male: too light or dark neck and saddle feathers, strong markings in the neck plumage; too much brown in the chest; irregular or too light back feathers or wings coverts; lack of green luster.

Female: strongly expressed neck marking; too bright or dark breast; too bright or grey base colour; too rusty in the wing coverts.

Weight cock / hen: 1200 g / 900 g

Minimum mass of the hatching eggs: 35 g

Eggshell colour: bluish-green

Rings size: 15/13

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Photo: Michael Kruppert.



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