

THE DUTCH OWL BEARD

by A. Boks, Lierdererf 20, 7364 BG Lieren About four years ago, Mr. C. Aalbers wrote an article in the magazine Avicultura that was entitled 'Dutch Owl Beard, quo vadis?'. This was due to the death of one of the greatest breeders of this breed, Mr. H.J. ter Maten in Apeldoorn. For years, his animals have (partly) determined the image of this breed. As you can see, we have inserted the word (also) in the previous sentence. Anyone who has been involved in our sport for a number of years has certainly not forgotten the animals of the late Mr. Ph. Alberts from Venlo. His animals often won prizes in the fifties and sixties. The differences between the two tribes were easy for the connoisseurs to pick out. Alberts' animals were generally a bit heavier. The cause of this distinction can be explained by the origin of both tribes. The Owl Beards of Ter Maten originated from his Brabanters while Albert's animals came from the tribe of Jac. van Omme, which he had received through the grandmaster in the field of our Dutch breeds, Mr. J.A. Peters in Rozendaal (Gld.). Moreover, Alberts, following Jac. van Omme occasionally crosses a La Flèche to improve the color of his black animals. Unfortunately, the phylum of Ph. Alberts disappeared after his death. Only a few animals that are currently present still carry blood from this line to a limited extent. Most black and blue Dutch Owlbeards of the moment come directly or indirectly from the line of Ter Maten. In the foregoing, the name of the late Jac. van Omme from Arnhem has already been mentioned several times. Already in 1912 he was the exhibitor of golden pelt Dutch Owlbeards during the first exhibition of the Nederlandsche Hoenderclub in Utrecht. During this exhibition, no less than 77 numbers of Dutch Owlbeards, including 11 flocks, in 7 color layers, were submitted, including black, white, gold-black, silver-black and yellow-white, gold and silver pelt. Below are 2 color layers, gold and silver pelt, which we haven't seen in years.

We have to realize that 10 years before that, there was hardly any Dutch Owl Beard left in our country. In the competition with the foreign breeds, they had virtually perished. At the end of the last century, the great propagandist of our Dutch poultry breeds of that time, R. Houwink, started rebuilding what had once been. With the help of 'farmer's chickens' he succeeded, in three years, in bringing Dutch Owlbeards back to the exhibition, we are writing 1900. By over-exposing, we see that also happened then, almost all his roosters died. In 1901 he started again with the basic material, in addition he set up a second line. This was based on a cross between La Flèche Fowl and Thuringian Owlbeards. In the Thuringian Owl Beard, the comb had to be bred away and replaced by the two-horned comb. The pointed beard had to be converted into a round. However, the Thuringian Owl had the desired type. De La Flèche had to provide the two-horned crest, but the long chin lobes and the high stretched posture had to disappear. In five generations, Mr. Houwink succeeded in breeding black Dutch Owlbeards in this way, that was in 1905. The use of the

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so-called 'boerekippen' with crested and bearded roots probably contributed to the fact that in addition to the black ones, such a large number of colour varieties could appear in the cage in 1912. The large number of animals that were exhibited at that time is striking. One thing is clear, once the interest is aroused, the number of exhibited animals of a breed increases rapidly. Now let's look back a little further. Where did these Dutch Owlbeards originally come from? Presumably, our seafaring ancestors brought animals with crests and/or beards from southeastern Europe to our country, either directly or via Italy. In the course of time, a number of breeds have emerged from these animals, whether or not they are directed at breeding methods: the Dutch Crested Fowl, the Dutch Bearded Crested Fowl, the Brabanters, the Lower Tooth Owlbeards and the Crowheads. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Dutch Owlbeards can already be found in paintings. We can say that it is a breed of respectable age. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, these crested and/or bearded breeds were quite popular in our country because they were heavier than our old Dutch land fowl. However, the arrival of Cochins and Brahmas and the production races descended from them ensured that at the end of the last century a situation could arise, which we have already described above, in which these races had almost completely disappeared. Usually the Brahmas and the Cochins are blamed for this 'almost' demise of our old Dutch fowl breeds, but presumably the Mediterranean breeds, such as the Leghorn, also contributed to it. Now back to Mr Aalbers' question 'Dutch Uitebaard, quo vadis?'. We have the impression: the right direction, i.e. the number of entrants in our country is increasing. This was the reason for us to take a closer look at this breed. Despite the increasing number of breeders, the situation for our Dutch Owl Beard is far from optimal, especially if we look at the different color layers. Let's take a look at the color variations in which the breed is recognized. Let's start with the blacks with their glossy green, this is the color we have to worry about the least. Most breeders of the breed are breeders of black Dutch Owlbeards. In terms of the number of breeders, the blue-edged ones follow the blacks closely. The question, however, is whether the animals shown are really hemmed. As the cards are now, we can already be happy with uniformly blue colored animals. Insiders will not make a point of the absence of this zoom when assessing the blue-edged animals, but edged animals clearly have priority. It is striking that the darker the animal is, the sooner there is a kissing. A hemming as one finds in the Andalusian will remain a pious wish for the Dutch Owl beard for the time being. The white Dutch Owlbeards owe their survival to the fact that one of our breeders has started working with animals from the inheritance of Mr. Ter Maten. After a number of years of strict selection and crossing with blue and black Owlbeards, very good white Dutch Owlbeards are present again. However, the number of breeders is very small.

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The cuckoo color, one of the stepchildren in the company for years, is in the hands of one breeder who made it with the help of cuckoo Crowheads. A good cuckoo colored rooster remains difficult to breed, given the occurrence of rust on the back, saddle and in the neck, this also occurs with the cuckoo Crowheads. The number of breeders of silver-black, gold-black and yellow-white Owlbeards is small. A problem with these color variations is that the lover has more the shape of a toep than the prescribed round shape. Crossbreeding with honked Brabanters is partly to blame for this. In order to stimulate the breeding of Lionbeards and to prevent discussion about the lover form, the Nederlandsche Hoenderclub has proposed to the Standard Committee to allow both sovereign and horned animals in these color variations with preference for the Gelovers. This proposal has been adopted by the Standard Committee. Peeled Dutch Owlbeards have disappeared from the scene for years, we are waiting for the man or woman to start rebuilding white. Finally, the moorkop, which is recognized in three color varieties, namely white, yellow or blue with black head and beard. Thanks to the work of a breeder, I may say the specialist in the field of this color pattern, there are still white moor heads. In 1979 we could see these animals at the Ornithophilia exhibition, hopefully we will see them again this year. From the foregoing it appears that despite the fact that the number of breeders is increasing, we are far from there when we look at the judging grades. After describing the colour variations, we would like to give a brief description of the breed, focusing on the most important characteristics. We would also like to point out a number of errors that we often encounter.

The Dutch Owlbeards are quite strongly developed fowl, which are somewhat higher than our old Dutch land fowl such as the Frisian fowl, Dutch fowl etc. In addition, they are somewhat longer in body and neck than these breeds. The thick neck that is created by the very rich neck feathering is striking. This is a trait that we also find in other breeds with a beard. The beard together with the two-horned comb provided the name of the breed. Because of these characteristics, the head of the Dutch Owl beard resembles the head of an owl. As mentioned, the Dutch Owl beard should have a two-horned crest. These comb horns should stand straight on the head at the level of the eyes. Only between wish and reality there are quite a differences. Partly due to crossing with the Brabanters, many Dutch Owlbeards have a crest that is more or less V-shaped. In addition, the prescribed size of 1.5 to 2 cm., especially in the cockerels, is often exceeded, in other cases the comb is completely missing. There should also be no side squalls. The prescribed cone shape of the horns is often absent, especially in the roosters.

Owls should not occur in the Dutch Owl Beard. If any of these are still present, they should disappear completely into the beard. The beard, already mentioned as a breed characteristic, should be fat, round and large, it should form a round feather that covers the cheeks and ears. Constriction at the place where the chin lobes are in a normal chicken

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and which creates a three-part beard is not desirable, but the larger the beard, the greater the chance that a three-part division will occur. In our memory there is still a hen of Mr. Alberts engraved from about fifteen to twenty years ago, where the beard reached halfway up the chest, this beard was not free of a three-way division but great to see. Then the eyes of which the color varies from dark brown-red in the blacks to brown-red in the other grades. In the blacks and blue-edged animals we often find animals whose eye color could be darker. The nostrils of the Dutch Owl beard should be large and raised on the beak. This point does not cause any problems with the large Dutch Owlbeards. In the bantams of this breed we find many animals with a closed nose from the breeds that were used in scooping these bantams. Let us consider the ears as the last part of the head. These are described as quite small, white in color and covered by the beard. On many of these points there are some things to be said about the roosters, but fortunately there are also animals that meet the standard requirements. The already mentioned fully feathered neck can be found in most animals. Since the Dutch Owlbeards have been bred for years, there are no major deviations from the standard in type. However, it is desirable that breeders pay attention to the shoulder and back width, which tends to become too narrow in a number of cases. The prescribed more than medium back often shows the strongly developed neck feathering somewhat shorter than it actually is. Then the tail. It must be richly developed according to the standard, worn backwards but not too low. In the past we saw quite a lot of roosters with the tail perpendicular to the back, this problem has now been reduced considerably. The standard does not require a fairly flat tail, but animals with a tail that is at an angle of 90 degrees on the body should not be included in the breeding flock because this characteristic is strongly inherited. Finally, the legs of our Dutch Owlbeard. In this breed, as in other old Dutch poultry breeds, the phenomenon of 'duck foot' is found. This means a hind toe that is implanted too high and is directed forward. This toe is usually shorter than a normal hind toe. Animals with this defect do not belong in the exhibition cage or in the breeding flock. If you would like more information about the Dutch Owl Beard, our Dutch Grouse

This standard gives you the full variety description. In addition to the large Dutch Owlbeards, there are the Dutch Owlbearded bantams. The number of breeders of these bantams could also be larger. Fortunately, there are good to very good animals in various color ranges, including black, blue-edged, white and also cuckoo. Considering the whole of the remarks, you might get the impression that there is not much good about our current Dutch Owlbeards. Fortunately, this is not the case, there are currently many animals present, which are of a very good quality. The intention of the above was only to point out a number of points that require attention to the breeders. When assessing the Dutch Owlbeards, the judge will have to keep in mind that the number of breeders is increasing,

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but that the breed unfortunately still falls into the category 'rare'. Only through a constructive inspection will the breed be maintained and hopefully the number of breeders will increase significantly. To the breeder who wants to have a typical Dutch breed in his cage, the Dutch Owl Beard is definitely recommended. The breed is hardly found abroad. Recently, it has been recognized in West Germany. England is the next country to be targeted. Presumably, the Dutch Owlbeards will also appear at the exhibitions there this year. Let us as Dutch people make sure that this breed is not missing from any Dutch exhibition. In a limited space but especially running loose around the house, this breed, in its many shades of color, is a jewel that one looks at with pleasure.