

Bassette

'a bantam with an amazing egg-laying capacity'

History

At the start of the past century many small chickens were seen around the farms in Belgian Limburg. Any uniformity in colour and type was hardly to find. Despite their appearance as small chickens, it was very typical that these small chickens produced relative large eggs.

This phenomenon was the reason for W. Collier to try to create a small breed with a large egg-laying capacity. Through very severe selection he succeeded to show his new breed in 1917. He gave his new breed the name Bassette. Translated into 'Waals', the language in the French-speaking part of Belgium, this word means something like 'small appearance'.



Bassette cock partridge

The selection on egg-laying capacity formed the basis of this new breed. This is proved by the fact that her creator took much effort in 1939 to promote the productivity of the Bassette.

He stated that the Bassette only showed one-third of the feed intake of a large chicken, while on the other hand the average weight of an egg is two-third of that of a large chicken.

To emphasize his statement he reported that on French poultry farms the Bassette also was used as broiler breeder.

This means that a Bassette hen was mated to a rooster of a heavy broiler breed. The results of this mating were fast-growing chickens with a low feeding conversion.

After the Second World War the breed almost disappeared. The few remaining animals, found on some farms, were brought together by professor Willems. With these animals he succeeded in a few years to create a collection of a few hundreds of fine Bassettes. These animals were housed on an experimental farm of Gendt University. This action of professor Willems can be considered as the 'rescue' of the Bassette as an individual breed.

Appearance (type and colour)

The Bassette is a large bantam or a small chicken. With this size 'in between' the Bassette is considered as half a bantam. In the poultry standard the Bassette as an original breed is positioned with the bantams. So the Bassette is a very large bantam.

The weight of a cock is about 1000 gram. A hen weights roughly 800 - 900 gram.



Bassette hen partridge

A typical Bassette is showing the features of a laying breed, a rather heavy belly and a deep body carriage together with an elongated type. The back is sloping to the back part of the animal and smoothly passes into a moderate elevated and moderate spread tail. The cock has a well developed neck, saddle and tail. The tail also has nice sickles.

Laying Bassette hens show a heavy developed belly. This is the reason why they seem to stay low on their feet or seem to have short legs, but that is not reality. The Bassette is single combed, but with 5 spikes. The hen we expect to show a comb with the end a little bit falling over, but in the modern poultry standard the lack of this feature is not qualified as a failure.

The colour of the eye is dark brown.

In the Netherlands the Bassette is certified in the following seven colours:

- quail
- silver quail
- silver lavender quail
- black
- white
- buff-columbian
- blue quail

On our shows the colours quail and silver quail are the most common.

These colours are not easy to breed. A cock showing the typical markings is hardly to find. With the hens it is important to have the right balance between having too much and too short edging of the feathers. The ideal situation is to have a back feather with a thin edge which does not round on the tip of the feather.

Charateristics and housing

The Bassettes are very lively. They are best kept in large pens with also a large run. In limited pens they certainly do not behave well.

Bassettes constantly move and are quickly bored. Feather-picking is therefore common and this habit is fatal for their plumage. If it is not possible to provide the animals a large pen, we have to give them enough distraction.

It helps to give them some old dried bread, lots of green feed and fine seeds.

The young roosters have to be separated from the hens very soon. The Basette breed is an early-maturing breed and the young roosters try to mate the hens already at very young age. This behaviour has a negative influence on the growth and development of the plumage of the hens.

The original production capacity has remained in the nowadays Bassettes.

As a laying breed, this bantam deserves the title 'Excellent'.

