

Tournaisis

' the captain's little chicken '

History

From the bantams seen in the French-Belgian border area, where the river Schelde enters Belgium, a local breed originated at the end of the 19th century and received the name mille fleurs du Tournaisis. The centre of this area was Bleharies and surroundings. This bantam was also called the Naine du Tournaisis. The breed has kept this name. In Dutch this name means Doornik bantam. In English the name of this breed is Tournaisis.

The local people used still another name for this bantam: the captain's little chicken.

Picture: Tournaisis cock three-coloured spotted. © W.Hoekstra / www.willemhoekstra.com

The breed received this surname, because this peaceful and quite animal was kept on deck of the many freight ships on the river Schelde.



Tournaisis cock mille fleurs or three-coloured spotted

Nothing is known about the ancestors of this breed. The presumption exist that the old French breed Mantes (a black and white chicken) has cooperated on the origination. This is possible because the Mantes was kept in the same border area as the breed for commercial production.

The first registration of the Tournaisis was in Chasse et Pêche in the year 1923.

R. du Manoir reports that he has known the breed since 1883 with the name Tiquetée (read 'spotted').

Tournaisis hen mille fleurs or three-coloured spotted

Long before World War I people started to breed pure Tournaisis. Unfortunately almost all the animals were lost during the war.

After the Second World War the rebuilding of the breed was done seriously.

To do so they used the remaining Tournaisis and partridge Old English Game.

The Old English Game was at that time bred with a type that strongly varies of the nowadays 'modern' type.



The final result of this breeding is our modern Tournaisis. We have to remember that this modern Tournaisis genetically varies with the original Tournaisis. We have to accept this or else the Tournaisis would have been extinct.

Appearance (type and colour)

The Tournaisis is a rather small animal. The weight of a cock is roughly 800 gram. A hen weights 650 gram. Typical of these small chickens is that they have well developed and wide shoulders.

Close up of the colour mille fleurs or three-coloured spotted

The original Tournaisis probably was bred in different colours. Our modern Tournaisis only exists in one colour: three-coloured spotted with irregular markings.

An important feature of this colour is that the marking of the colour fields is not constant but varies at every individual.

The typical colour shows a mix of three colours: chesnut brown down colour with irregular black and white areas on the feathers.



We see these black and white areas separated from one another, but the white area can also be found within the black area.

Some of the animals show pencilled on the ground colour of the hens, others don't. To have or not to have this pencilled feature is not very important according to the Standard Committee of the Dutch Poultry, Bantam, Game and Waterfowl Breeders clubs (NHDB).

Characteristics and housing

The Tournaisis is perfect to be kept in a spacious run. Because of her peaceful character the Tournaisis can also be kept in a poultry house. Of old the hens of this breed are famous as good and reliable brooders. They raise their chickens perfectly. The amount of eggs they produce is also very good. It's just a lovely chicken.

