

## Barbu de Watermael

*' small but brave with an astonishing crest '*

The most famous breed in the ZOBK-family is the Barbu de Watermael. However, this breed was almost vanished from the Netherlands 20 years ago.

### History

At the south-east border of Brussels you will find the small municipality Watermaal-Bosvoorde. Somewhere in that municipality in the early years of the last century Antoine Dresse had his breeding facility with the name 'Les Fougères'. At this place the Barbu de Watermael originated from cross-breeding with several unknown breeds. Which breeds Dresse used is not known. Antoine Dresse - and later his son Oscar - have never spoken about their breeding activities. Nobody knows the reason for that.



*Barbu de Watermael hen white*

The origin of the Barbu de Watermael is to speculate and this will remain for ever. Several authors have ideas about possible ancestors of the breed. They agree on one thing: the Barbu d'Anvers is one of the used species. The shallow resemblance between the two breeds still indicates that.

Besides that, the cross-breeding between these two breeds are always succesful. An affinity is almost for sure. The (bearded) Polish (the nowadays Dutch Baardkuifhoen'), the Brabançonne bantam and the Silkie are named as possible ancestors.

In 1922 the first specimens of the new breed from father and son Dresse appeared on a local show in Brussels. Since then it was a constant struggle for the breed. They have never been able to equal the popularity of the Barbu d'Anvers.

This is rather strange, because the Barbu de Watermael does not differ much from the more famous cousin with respect to size, character and attractivity.

## Appearance (type and colour)

The Barbu de Watermael is one of the most tiny bantams we know. The weight of the cock has to be about 600 gram.

A hen of this breed weights not more than 450 - 500 gram.

On first sight the breed looks like her cousin the Barbu d'Anvers. If we go in more detail we can see several important differences. A good Barbu de Watermael is a pertly bantam with the wings sloping downwards to the ground (but not so steep as with the Barbu d'Anvers) and a rather pronouncing cest. The tail is also rather elevated and must form a triangle, especially with the hens.

The back is pretty short, but with enough width between the shoulders.



*Barbu de Watermael cock blue*

Although her small size, a hen must be developed well enough to lay a large amount of eggs per season. A well developed neck is also a prominent feature of a good Barbu de Watermael. This neck is not so far developed as the famous 'bull neck' of the Barbu d'Anvers.

One of the most famous features is the very unique rose-comb with at the end of the comb three spikes with the middle one the biggest.

Besides this typical comb the breed has the tripartite beard and the very nice little crest on the head.

The feathers of the crest are pointing backwards. We call this crest also a 'pheasant-crest'. Crests too big, too wide and too loose are serious failures while judging. Sometimes we see a sort of bumps on the skull of these animals. This feature is not allowed and leads to disqualification on poultry shows. Depending on the colour patterns the breed has orange-red up to dark brown eyes.

The Barbu de Watermael is certified in the Netherlands in roughly 30 colour:

- several quail-varieties
- millefleur-varieties
- yellow birchen
- buff-columbian
- white
- black
- blue
- lavender
- cuckoo.

In the year 2000 a new certified colour is white-quail.

*Barbu de watermael  
hen silver millefluer*



At the moment, most of the animals on our shows are quail, buff-columbian, yellow birchen, black, white and cuckoo.

The other colours are very rare. Most of them are in the hands of just one or a few breeders.

### Characteristics and housing

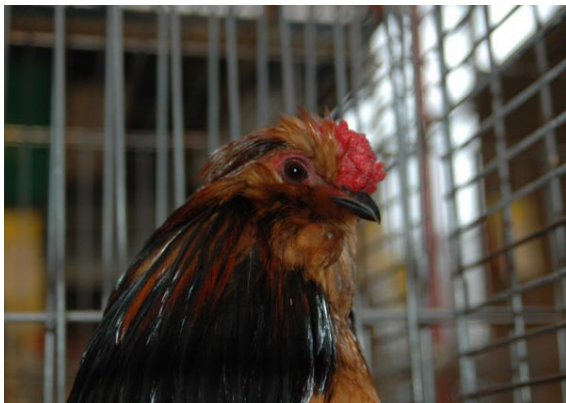
The Barbu de Watermael differs because of his quiet and devoted character. The animals become tame quickly and easy. Still, cocks can react very strongly to defend their territory. They often fight with much larger cocks succesfully.

The breeder also can have some problems with the male bantams of this breed. The pertly character of this breed leads to this fierceness. We have to watch this vicious character. Too much is not good for the breed and has to be controlled. The tendency for this behaviour within the breed is very important.

Within a group the animals are very tolerant and a new hen can be introduced rather easily. This breed does not demand lost of space.

Succesful breeding is therefore possible in very small facilities with pens above each other, like a flat-building. Depending on specific groups the hens produce moderate up to extremely well. Late in the Summer part of the hens become broody. A small nest with 5-7 eggs is managed well and they raise their offspring easily.

The Barbu de Watermael is so small that we have to take that into account with respect to choice of food. The most suitable food pellet has a diameter of 2.5 millimeter at the most.



*Barbu de Watermael cock quail*



*Barbu de Watermael hen black*

