

QUAIL COLOURED ANTWERP BEARDED BANTAMS



Take a look at my little Antwerps:

**They walk like Tina Turner in a performance
They have the front of Loulou Ferrari
They have the beard from Castro
They have the body of Schwarzenegger
They are as small as Edith Piaf
They can fly just like Superman
And they have the charisma of Madonna**

Poem courtesy of Johan Opsomer from his website (<http://www.kippengrabbelton.be/>)

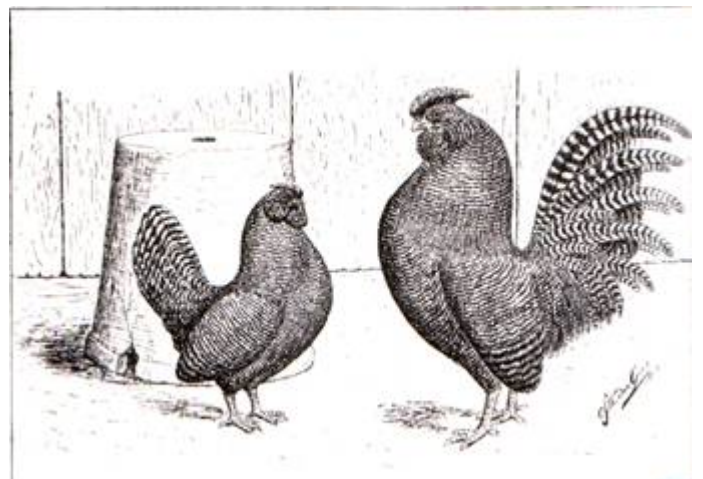
By: Elly Vogelaar

The oldest Belgian bantam

Different from many small breeds, the Antwerp Bearded is a true bantam, it has no large variety, it is and always was a 'Bantam' and one of the oldest known breeds. They are probably related to bantam fowl that existed in the Netherlands in the 17th Century, when the Dutch artist Albert Cuyp is known to have painted a small hen with distinctive quail markings.

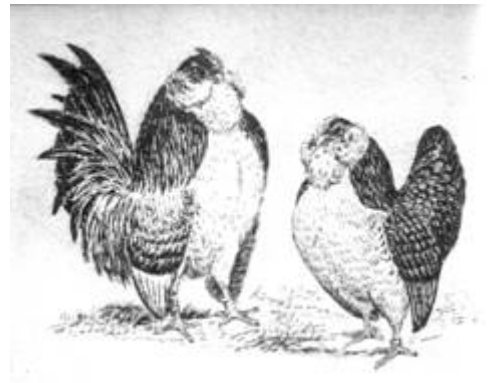
Cuckoo Antwerp Bearded Bantams – v. Gink 1912.

We do not know exactly when the selection process started to produce the distinctive and excellent type, we do know that the black and the cuckoo marked Antwerp Bearded bantam existed before 1900. In show reports occasionally white and yellow ones are mentioned as well, but it is uncertain if this is regarding the 'Antwerps', as show reports of the time were not very specific, often just mentioning 'Bantams' and the colour.



Many interesting details are to be found in "The History of the Antwerp Bearded Bantam from 1884 to 1976" published by 'Kleinveebond Borgerhout', Belgium. Under the guidance of a Mr. Carpentier, the committee and members of the Club traced and recorded a great part of the history of this breed.

**Quail coloured Antwerp Bearded Bantams,
old drawing, not signed.**



It appears from an article published in Chasse & Peche 51, from 1888, that by this time the Antwerp Bearded was already pretty much as we know it today; quoting:

"The characteristic points of the Antwerp are not yet officially pointed out, as far as I know. To us these four points are the most important: stance/posture, the structure of the beard, size and colour.

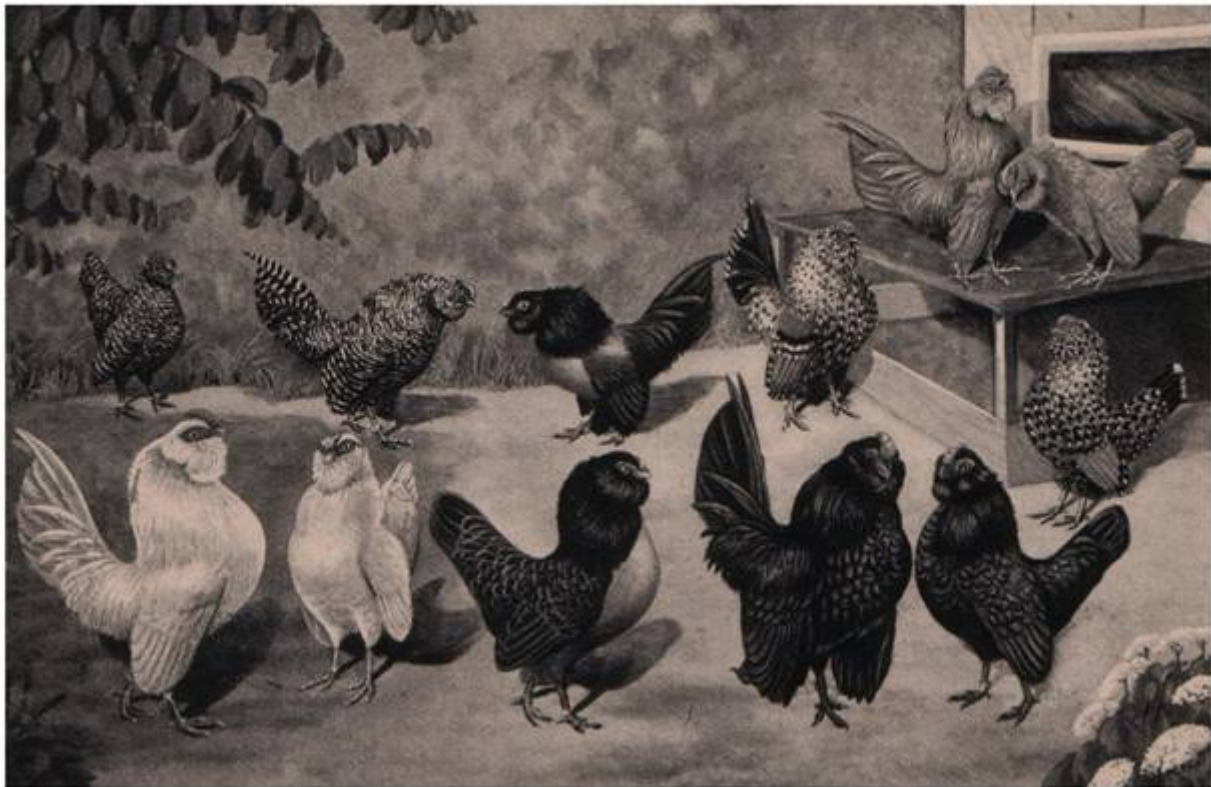
The Stance/Posture is typical to this breed, it should stand proud and erect with the head, neck and body balanced almost perpendicular above the legs, wings steep down before the legs, tail is carried in a parallel line with the neck.

The beard: should be as well developed as possible and is consisting of a beard and muffs (moustache) The muffs blossom from the cheeks and fan outwards under the ears sweeping backwards almost to the back of the head. The beard starts under the lower beak, almost completely covering the rudimentary wattles. From under the beard, sweeping around to the back of the head, is an extremely thick and convexly curved hackle feathering, forming a closely joined 'cape' or crinoline of feathers around the neck, entirely covering the neck and shoulders and giving this part of the body the most substance.

For size: the breed should be as small as possible, the breed is remarkable for its tiny size and posture.

The colour: is cuckoo and also black, other colours have been created in the past two or three years but all show signs of cross-breeding."

This article was not signed but is supposed to be by a Mr. A.Pulinckx, the editor of the magazine.



**Repro from a full-colour print of R. Hoffmann, Deutsche Geflügel-Zeitung 17/1955
In the front/centre a quail hen, the quail cock is right above.**



**1,1 quail coloured, Belgium.
Photo: Kleinveebond
Borgerhout.**



Another article, from the same Magazine (number 34. dated 1890) by another unknown author states:

“This Cuckoo Bantam, with its balloon hackle almost like a Pouter pigeon, and its upright appearance, is one of the most remarkable bantams at a Show. This breed is almost extinct as it did not get a classification amongst the Belgian Breed Classes and breeders will have to do their utmost to produce enough birds for export, without robbing our country of the very ‘type’ of bantam, needed to preserve the little ‘Antwerp Cuckoo’ as it existed 20 years ago”.

From this we can see that the Breed already existed in 1870 and that does fit the facts that were mentioned in the report from the Antwerp Show ‘Acclimation et elevage’ in 1893, signed by L.v.d.S. (Van der Snickt?) saying, “The breed ‘Antwerp Cuckoo Bantam’ (here the word ‘bearded’ is not mentioned!) has been a rarity for a long time, it was even close to extinction 25 years ago (thus 1868. Red.) Mr. Roberti, chief of the Jardin d’Acclimation in Luik, succeeded in finding a few of the rare birds in Limburg and Ukkel; he created the black ones by mutation and/or cross-breeding.

Since 1887 the fanciers from the city of Antwerp specialized in creating all colours, at the beginning with more enthusiasm than successes, never the less they were showing very acceptable specimens at this show, amongst them the quail variety, probably created by using bantams from Holland”.

Special Belgian stamp, issued in 1969 on behalf of the 80^e 'birthday' of the Koninklijke Vereniging Het Neerhof. (Photo Kleinveebond Borgerhout.)



The Unique Quail Variety

This last remark in the preceding article seems strange to me, especially as nowadays the opinion is that the quail colour/pattern is typical for the Belgian breed, some even suggesting the colours resemble the colours of the Belgium Flag! However the origins of this colour are difficult to trace, it must have existed a long time ago as the tiny bird depicted in the painting of Albert Cuyp (17th Century), previously mentioned, was indeed quail coloured and patterned. As yet the genetic composition of this colour and marking has to be unravelled, although as to date there has been little serious research into its make-up. Several genetic factors seem to be involved as it is an unique colour variety, noted by the fact that the 'silver quail' hen must have a silver colour breast, whereas the silver 'partridge' hen has the same colour breast (salmon) as a 'normal' partridge hen.



72. — Le Barbu d'Anvers (variété : Caille)
De Baard van Antwerpen (variété : Kwartel)

Drawing by R. Delin, courtesy of Kleinveebond Borgerhout.

In Belgium the Standard of the quail coloured Antwerp bearded Bantam was recognised in 1910, but they were already being exhibited in 1893. In the old days there was a difference between 'light' and 'dark' quail, but nowadays we just say quail; the present day colour being the equivalent to the 'dark quail' of previous times.

A most poetic description of the quail colour can be read in the 1922 issue of 'Neerhof van Antwerp' written by J. Adinau:

"The dark parts are black, like dark chocolate with a subtle silvery lustre, called by painters, *Terre d'ombre*. In the light parts, the general colour is yellow ochre, that is *Nankin*. Each feather having a distinct clear rib (shaft)".

In describing the wings of the male he states:

"The wing feathers are ochre, each with a black triangular tip, the triangular markings forming two distinct bars across the closed wing."

A. Pulinckx also describes this wing marking in the 'Aviornis' of 1942-1, exactly as the famous painter René Delin had painted them.

These days the quail Antwerp no longer exhibits this marking, although in the last few years fanciers have tried to regain this marking but unsuccessfully, so now the lack of it is not considered a 'fault'.



Beautiful quail hen, England, photo Belgian Bantam Club UK

The de Anvers today

The same as in 1900, the breed type, form, posture and feather ornamentation are still the main points. They should be very small, and stand proud and upright, especially the male as if ready to 'crow' at any moment! With the characteristic luxurious hackle development and profuse

beard, the body of both the male and the female is short and broad, the breast carried in a high and graceful curve. One of the breed points is the very opulent beard, with feathers sweeping horizontally backwards from the beak covering the ears and the ear-lobes and also downwards, the whole forming a trilobe effect (in the males the ends of the 'whiskers' curving around to the rear of the neck). The females head appears broader and more 'owl-like' than the males. The point of the curving rosecomb is following the line of the skull. The eyes are large and dark



(in keeping with the birds colour). The wattles are rudimentary or preferably none. The thick and opulent hackles entirely cover the base of the neck, shoulders and back. It is striking to see the foreparts so luxuriously feathered compared to the rather sparsely attired hind parts. It is said that 2/3rd of the body should be before the legs and 1/3rd behind, together with the upright carriage providing perfect balance to a striking asymmetrical shape! The Male carries his tail almost perpendicular, the two longest sickle feathers not too long and sabre shaped, just slightly curving. The females tail is short and carried upwards with the feathers curving slightly at the ends and slightly open. The wings are carried sloping to the ground, sometimes even just in front of the legs but desired best covering the thighs with the wing tips just clear of the ground. One peculiarity of this breed is, the males often do not have spurs.

In our Breed Standard, the quail variety is described in detail, although sometimes it is a bit difficult to comprehend from the written word, however, once you have seen a quail 'in the flesh' it causes no difficulty. At first sight the bird appears to be a golden colour with a dark cloak, it is not until examined closer you see the fine markings, a pale golden ochre colour breast is most important ('Nankin', the colour of a particularly luxurious and sought after silk from China), each feather is finely laced with yellowish gold, however the feather shafts are pale and distinct, the overall effect is the 'shimmer' of the nankin silk. The beard is desired the same nankin colour, but the male's is often greyish and the female's a darker tone than the breast. The neck hackle is a brilliant black, higher, towards the head, each feather is finely laced with buff, with yellowish/buff feather shafts, with overall a golden lustre or sheen. The back has a ground colour of black with gold lacing that starts in the centre of the feathers, narrowing towards the tips forming lance-like points with golden silky barbs, the feather shafts should be a clear, pale ochre colour.



**Silver quail,
Germany, Niederschöna 2004.
Breeder/photo Cornel Wiedemann.**





The feathering is relatively short and broad under the neck but longer and narrower towards the saddle hackle, where the colour is also more intense. The wing bars are light ochre, the primaries and secondaries are a dull black, except for the lower third of the secondaries which is a cinnamon colour. The sickles are black with a metallic green lustre, the side-hangers black laced with gold.

1,0 Blue quail, Germany. Breeder: Harald Asse. Photo: Holger Schellschmidt.

The plumage colour of the female on the neck and breast are virtually identical to the male but the back, tail, cushion and wings are umber coloured

with a velvety, silvery lustre, each dark brown feather with bright nankin shafts and finely edged with chamois, but only the side edges, not the feather tips.

The overall effect providing a strong contrast to the plain nankin breast and throat. In the Netherlands Antwerp Bearded Bantams ('d' Anvers') are recognised in three quail varieties: quail, blue quail -where the black markings of the males and the umber markings of the females are replaced by blue - and silver quail, where all the gold, nankin and yellowish parts are replaced by white. In other countries blue-silver quail and lavender quail (dark parts replaced by lavender) are recognised also.

Popular variety, but not at all simple and easy

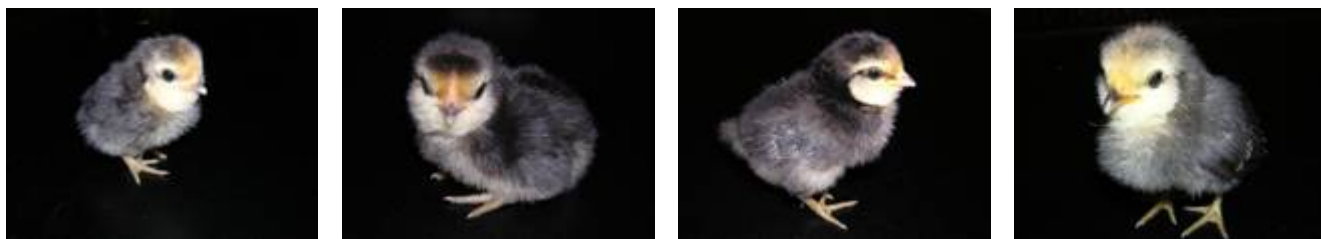
The Quail colour is very popular but probably the most difficult colour to reproduce in this breed! The definite contrast between the light and the dark areas is so highly valued, with so many words used to describe the correct colour breast and throat region: golden, ochre, nankin; it could be confusing!

Quail hen with a too dark breast colour

In Belgium, the breeds country of origin, the word 'shammy' is used (Chamoise, a species of wild goat, who's skin was used to make 'shammy-leather', 'wash-leathers' with a distinctive colour) in no-way should this area ever be pale wheaten, or brownish, just as unacceptable is the reddish-gold colour, common in Germany but not tolerated in Belgium or the Netherlands, Another difficulty is maintaining the correct feather colour in the females, particularly in the wings, sometimes there is so much chamois colour that very little umber(brown) is left to provide the contrast. On the other hand, there are hens that are so dark overall that very little lacing is evident. It is off-course



rare to get two near perfect birds to mate together and often excellent results may be obtained by 'complimentary' matings, balancing the virtues of the birds and never pairing together birds with the same faults. Pairing near perfect colour hens to cockbirds that are a little too dark, with too much black in the hackle, back and saddle. Sharp markings are important though, as well as the desired rich 'shammy' colour.



The colour of the chicks on hatching is a lightish grey with a pale buff face and 'bib', this can be just around the beak, or extend right over the face. If it extends further than this, the bird may be too pale as an adult, however, there can be a variation in colour between some breeding 'lines' so do not be too rigid; keep records of all the progeny your birds produce and you will soon get to know the potential of your particular breeding birds.

In the pen

It is not always looks that make a breed popular; personality and character also play a part, also breeding the Antwerp is hardly ever a problem; the little hens are perfectly capable of brooding and raising their own young. The chicks are very small when hatched and if incubator hatched should always be brooded with chicks from similar sized breeds, this will allow them to compete for food and space on an even basis. It is possible to keep Antwerps in a small pen, preferably with a roof, as they can fly well! However they are normally very tame and where the garden is well fenced, or they can be kept under observation, then they do enjoy an amount of freedom. In the breeding season the cockbirds can become very territorial and will attack any intruder, even their owner! They are also energetic Crowsers! Something that needs careful consideration when obtaining your birds, especially in a heavy populated area, however with some inventiveness, breeding your birds can be a possibility even under those conditions! There follows an interesting story by Marjolein Wagemaker, about how Antwerps were kept and bred in a small backyard of a house in the town of Zoetermeer(Holland):

Fred

"Our youngest son is asthmatic and cannot have pets, except chicken! However, neither of us knew anything about poultry but we are both very fond of animals, so we decided to give it a try and went to visit the local children's farm 'Stadsboerderij Buitenbeest', to learn something about poultry and the different breeds. Lots of them were very large, a bit frightening with their big combs and wattles, but there were also that cute little ones with a beard, looking all soft and cuddly, they were called d'Anvers and the friendly manager gave us an address where we could enquire about purchasing some. So we built a house and pen and some weeks later we were the proud owners of three little d'Anvers pullets. It had been the right choice; the whole family was fond of the chickens and we even bought a few Wyandotte bantam pullets. They all were allowed to run free in the garden; a real pleasure to watch every day. But in the Spring of this year we allowed ourselves to indulge ourselves in 'Flights of fancy'!, how pretty it would be



to have our own baby chicks. We talked it over with the manager of 'Stadsboerderij Buitenbeest' and he suggested that we should 'borrow' the Antwerp cock for a while



Fred, the 'borrowed' little cockbird from Stadsboerderij Buitenbeest.

And so we did, without asking the neighbours. Every evening we covered the pen with some blankets, hoping 'Fred' - as we named the little rooster- would not crow so early, in fact it stopped him till about 7.15 hrs. in the morning. Fred was a charming lover, adored by all our hens, including the much bigger Wyandottes! And Fred did not too discriminating! and spread his love around, every day. I started to preserve the Antwerp's eggs, but came to understand that the one thing had nothing to do with the other...we had a male, but none of the hens got broody. Luckily some friend would lend us his incubator, and on the very day that we intended to put in the 10 eggs, one of my Antwerp hens got broody! So we divided the eggs between the incubator and the hen, and one more in the incubator, which was of the columbian Wyandotte.

Isn't she lovely... Antwerp's are most careful mother hens



**The mix Antwerp x Wyandotte bantam,
with his most impressive little head!**

Fred went back to where he belonged, and not until then the neighbours decided to comment!; the one saying: you had a rooster, didn't you!? Well, glad he is gone now! And others saying that they had not mind at all.

Three weeks later we had 11 chickens; 10 Antwerps and 1 mix. (which later on turned out to be a male, pity!) It was a super experience and we all enjoyed very much watching this happen!

Marjolein Wagemaker



**Curious but safe, under
mother's wings, which
are the right quail colour**



To conclude

The Antwerp bearded Bantam, as said to be the pearl to the crown of the Belgian poultry breeds, is a bantam with international airs. D'Anvers are exhibited on poultry shows all over the world, and in many countries their

breeders are organised in breeding clubs, where you will be welcome as new member and find answers at all your questions about the Antwerp.

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Look for more information at <http://www.antwerpsebaardkriel.nl/> (Dutch language) or at <http://users.pandora.be/jaak.rousseau/> (Belgium, in 4 languages).

Australia has a flourishing breeders club, The Belgian Bantam Club of Australia, and a very valuable website as well: http://www4.tpg.com.au/channan/d_anvers.html (English language)

In the UK they were already exhibited in 1911 at the Crystal Palace Show. You can read the history of the Belgian Bantams overseas at (English language)

<http://www.jatman.co.uk/belgians/index.html>; a very complete website.

And also Germany has a beautiful website www.antwerpener-bartzwerge.de, with possibility of subscribing to a most instructive newsletter, of course in the German language but may be you are able to understand. Subscription right [here](#)