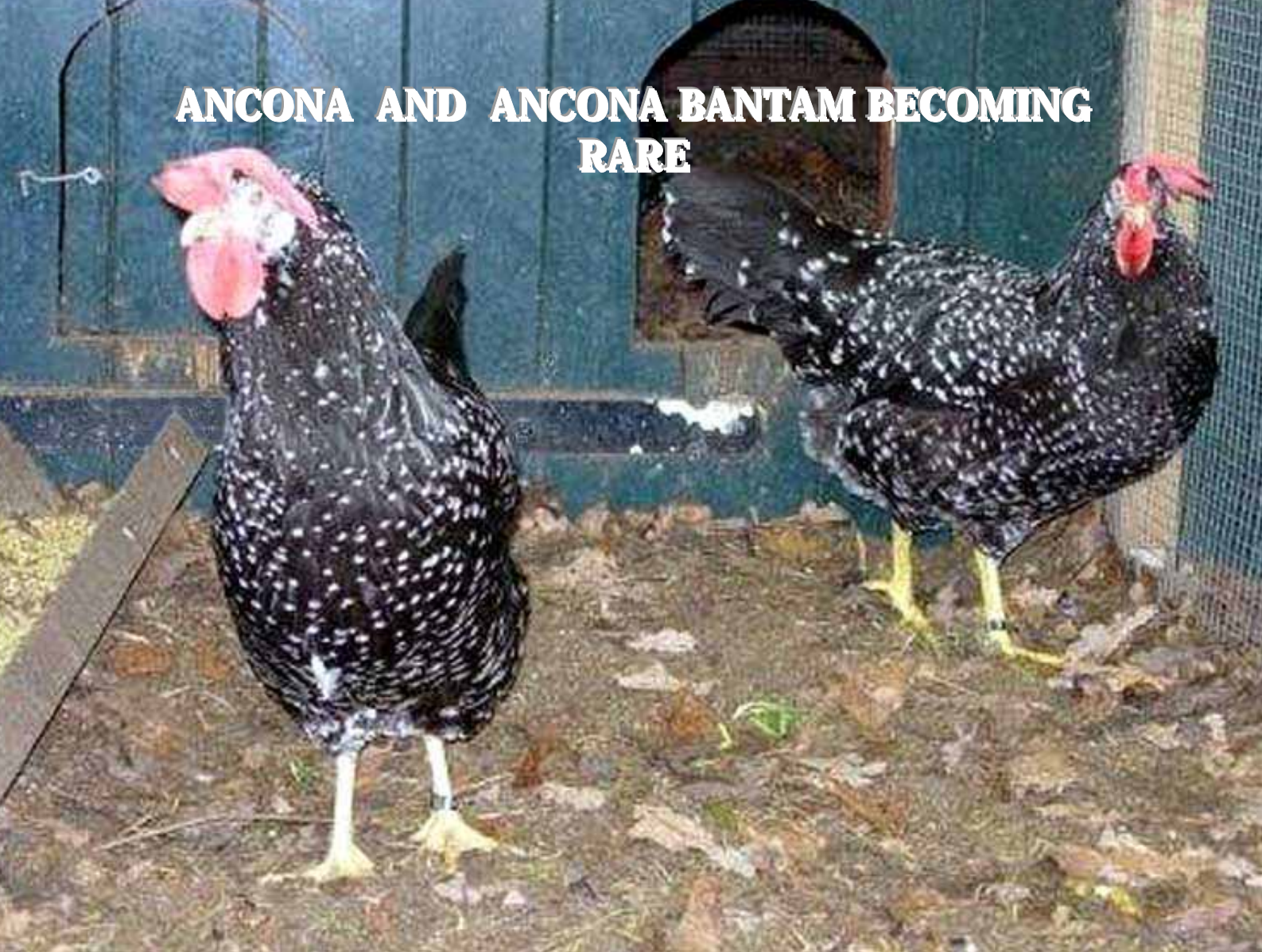


# ANCONA AND ANCONA BANTAM BECOMING RARE



**By: Bernhard Hanskamp (NL)**

**The Ancona is a so called Mediterranean Breed. Just as the Minorca, Valdarno, Leghorn and Andalusian; all breeds with a long, rich history. I used to find these breeds in many countries all over the world, but now they are becoming rare. We'd better be careful with this European heritage!**

## **State of affairs**

At the moment, there are less than 10 breeders of the Ancona in the Netherlands. So here this legendary breed has already become rare. Also the bantams have less than 10 breeders. The Ancona can only be admired in a few exhibitions; at most shows they are absent, and if they ARE present, the judge may not be that much skilled for the breed, misjudge and thus (unwillingly) get the breed in an even more downwards spiral.





Fortunately there are still different bloodlines in the Large Fowl and Bantams, although the level of inbreeding is increasing. Still, the quality of the breed is at its best if more unrelated strains continue to exist, and this would also be beneficial for newcomers who are willing to start with this historical breed.



**Left: An old hen with still outstanding white mottles.**

### **An Ancient Club**

The Dutch Ancona Breeders' Club is one of the oldest specialty clubs in our country, running up to her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday! Same as most of her members though... Whilst striving for a milky white pearly pitch-black colour at the Ancona, the average 'colour' of the Club members seems to turn to grey!

In spite of the long, rich history of the Breed and the Club, now the future vitality is at stake, in particular when the 'go-getters' from

the Club's beginnings have to quit the hobby because of changes in their living environment or simply 'old age'.

**Right: These are the wanted tail markings. Black tails without white mottles are not conform the standard.**



**Left: Fine white 'pearls' instead of (not wanted!) lacing.**

### **Other countries**

In other countries, the situation is even worse!

In Belgium only a few breeders are left. Yet, a blood-line developed locally, with consequent preservation of quality was never there; all the birds were coming from the Netherlands.

There are two Ancona breeders in Switzerland, also with birds from Holland, but they often feel inclined to stop with this breed.



Germany, followed by Austria, sort of abolished the breed after the Second World War....

In their Standard of Perfection the Ancona breed no longer exists. It is classified as a colour variety of the Leghorn, with all corresponding problems, such as leg colour. (Yellow with black spots in Ancona.)



**Above: Perfect wing marking.**

**Left: The wanted white mottles under the wings.**

Denmark still has several breeders. The quality of their birds could be improved. In Sweden there are a few breeders at the moment.

Italy, the homeland of the breed, has some enthusiastic breeders, with help from our country. However, the overall situation of the breed is not at a high level.

France even 'achieved' striking out the picture of the Ancona in the latest Poultry Standard! Maybe the image was no longer available? This is certainly NO boost for the breed!

In the USA, the real 'cradle' of refining and upgrading of the Ancona breed during 1910-1930, things have become deplorably quiet...

**Right: Ancona cockerel.**

**English proves to be the vehicle**

Fortunately more birds of this old breed are present in the English-speaking countries, particularly in Australia, New Zealand and in the United Kingdom. But in these countries, type and marking generally deviate from what we pursue in Holland.





The marking is much more obvious. From a distance, the birds look more mottled, while we prefer the image of a bird at a distance to be closer to black. The tails are often tighter, some birds look plump and we often see a 'double fold' in the comb.

### Comb and colour

Since its beginnings as a distinct breed, the Ancona has been present in two comb varieties, namely the single comb and the rose comb. Ancona's with rosecomb are very rare. Since the very recognition of the rosecomb variety, the number of rosecombed birds has been going down.



**Left and below: Blue mottled; the colour variety that is re-created 10 years ago.**

For almost 40 years, next to the black mottled also the blue mottled variety has been recognised in the Netherlands, both in Large Fowl as in Bantam. However, these blues disappeared at some point, but were created again 10 years ago. Still this variety gives many extra difficulties.



### Call

Who will support this breed that is becoming more and more rare? Who has additional information? Who knows about the situation in other countries, not mentioned here? Who can supply other data concerning this old breed, such as articles or photographs of shows, breeders and clubs? Please contact the Club! (Or [redactie@aviculture-europe.nl](mailto:redactie@aviculture-europe.nl)) The Ancona deserves it.

*Dutch website: [www.anconclub.nl](http://www.anconclub.nl)*