



MARANS

more than copper neck

Text: Elly Vogelaar
with thanks to the Marans-Club de France

Photo: Dirk de Jong

In the Netherlands, and many other countries, the Black Copper-neck Marans is the most know colour variety. In France, the country of their origin, many colour varieties are known and standardised. These chickens are very attractive too, and being true Marans, they also lay those impressive dark brown eggs. As is stated on the website of the Marans-Club de France: "*C'est la Marans elle même qui nous a imposé ses lois*" - It is the Marans herself who imposed her laws on us. Thus it is up to us to preserve at least the essential, if not all, of its original genetic background! Still, even in France, more than 80% of the farmers of the Marans-Club de France breed the Black Copper-neck variety.

We thought it would be nice to show you all colour varieties of the Marans that are recognized in France.

Black-copper neck (*Noir à camail cuivré*) LF and Bantam.



Left to right: Cock back, cock hackle, hen hackle.
Photos: Rene van de Kerkhof.

The cock is black with copper-coloured markings. The shoulders and small wings coverts are coppery-red. The feathers of the hackle and saddle are broadly copper-red laced. The breast is black, or lightly reddish-brown spotted - not laced!

The hen's plumage is black, with not too much sheen, with a copper-coloured hackle. The breast is black. (Hens with red marked breast give too red offspring).



Photo above: Freddy Bettink.

There is also a **Blue-copper neck** (*Bleu à camail cuivré*) Large Fowl; same as the former, only the black feather parts are blue.

Right: Blue-copper neck cockerel at the 2017 Affligem (B) show. Owner: Hugo Coorevits. Photo: Dirk de Jong.



Black-silver neck (*Noir à camail argenté*) LF and Bantam.
The same marking as the Black-copper neck, but all copper feather parts are a silver colour.

Left: : Black-silver neck pullet at the 2014 Affligem (B) show. Owner: Anne Wauthier. Photo: Dirk de Jong.



Right: Black-silver neck rooster.

Photo: Courtesy of the [Marans Club Belge](#) (Belgium)

The **Blue-silver neck** (*Bleu à camail argenté*) variety is not yet recognised.



Left: Blue-silver neck pullet at the 2017 show in Affligem (B).

Owner: Anne Wauthier.

Photo: Dirk de Jong.



Golden-cuckoo (*Coucou à camail doré*)

This variety is best imagined as a Black-copper neck with cuckoo marking all over the plumage.

Right: Golden cuckoo cockerel at the 2017 Affligem Show.

Owner: Johan Jacobs.

Below, right: Close-up of the neck hackle.

Photos: Dirk de Jong.



Left: Golden cuckoo hens.
Photo: Courtesy of the Marans Club Belge (Belgium)





Silver-cuckoo (*Coucou à camail argenté*) This variety is best imagined as a Black-silver neck with cuckoo marking all over the plumage.

Left: Silver-cuckoo rooster at the 2017 Affligem Show. Owner: Anne Wauthier. Photo: Dirk de Jong.

Below: Golden-cuckoo and wheaten hen. Photo and owner: Freddy Bettink.

Below: Silver-cuckoo pullet. Owner and photo: Freddy Bettink.



Wheaten (*Froment*)

Cock: Golden-red to brown-red head, lancets and hackles, red wing covers; the large wings covers form a black wing bar. The black primaries are edged with brown. The secondaries have internal black edges and external brown edges, which forms a brown wing bay. The upper breast is black and the abdomen is greyish.

Left: Wheaten pullet at the 2017 Affligem Show. Owner: Germain Deroissart. Photo: Dirk de Jong.



Hen: Head and hackles are golden-red to brown; some black spots are permissible. Back, rump and wing covers

are wheaten coloured. The feathers fluff is light, and the edges may be lighter. The tail feathers and the flights are black, edged with brown. The breast and the abdomen are cream. The under colour is whitish.

Black-tailed buff (*Fauve acajou à queue noire*)

Cock: The whole plumage is a bright strong gold to reddish tone. The head and the hackles are a golden colour. Shoulders and wing covers are darker, and mahogany-red deeply coloured. The tail black, with some brown edges. The leg colour is whitish-pink.



Above and left: Black-tailed buff rooster and hen at the 2017 Affligem show. Owner: Ludo van den Neste. Photos: Dirk de Jong.



Hen: The whole plumage is a plain a bright strong gold, not a pale buff or fawn colour. The head and hackles are golden-fawn coloured with black lacing on the bottom feathers. The tail is black, the main tail feathers are edged with brown.

Black (*Noir*)

Cock and Hen: The plumage is black, green gloss is not required, dusky shank permitted in both sexes.

White (*Blanc*)

Cock and Hen: Pure white plumage, but the neck hackle and saddle feathers of the cock may show some straw colour highlights.

Columbian (*Blanc herminé noir*)

Cock and Hen: White plumage, black laced hackles; flights and main tail feathers are black, blended with white. Down is white.

This old Marans variety which is described and recognized in the breed standard, has become one of the most rare varieties today. Dirk de Jong photographed a trio at the Marans Day 2017 in Cieux (F).



Golden-salmon (Black-Red) (*Saumon doré*) Recognised in 2016. Plumage colour as for the wild type Black-breasted Red/Partridge.

Silver-salmon (*Saumon argenté*) Not yet approved. Plumage colour as for the Silver Duckwing. The breast is invariably russet for these two varieties.

Another not yet approved variety: **Splash** (*Splash*)

But apart from the plumage colours, the Marans are mostly known for their famous egg with the deep dark red-brown egg shell colour. The ideal Marans has both the desired qualities: the proper colour and marking, and the dark brown egg colour. This is not so easily achieved. Many fanciers are less strict on feather colour and markings, but mainly select for egg colour.

The following text is kindly provided by Kermit Blackwood (USA)

Marans-Brown Eggs Breeding

The origin of the dark brown egg is not just the presence of a few Ceylon JF genes in the woodpile, but rather the exhaustive process of a specific form of selective breeding -utilizing the Ceylon JFs unique genes- to produce richly pigmented eggs.

We have the Dutch and later British Colonialists to thank for importing the genetics responsible for very dark eggs into Europe.



17th century watercolour drawing of the Dutch East India Company's Fort Zeelandia on the island of Formosa. From the Eugenius-atlas, or Atlas Blaeu - Van der Hem, commissioned by Laurens van der Hem.

Backcrossing

If you want to increase the egg pigmentation of your Malay (should produce darker redder eggs than it does, due to incorrect breeding) Marans, Welsummer, Barnevelder or Penedesenca, you need to practice backcrossing.

Start with a female line that you know absolutely are full sisters. Save one or two of their full brothers.

Locate an *unrelated* rooster that you have personally hatched from a dark egg. Pair this rooster with the first female from your well represented female line. Select out the darkest eggs from her first clutch.

Hatch them. Select the rooster from this clutch that has hatched from the darkest egg.

Breed him back to his mother.

Repeat the process again and again for 8 consecutive generations.

If for some reason the original matriarch dies, replace her with her closest relative. Her full sister is the best candidate but remember- you are taking two to three steps back every time you outcross to even a related female.

Once you have arrived at the eighth generation, you can now breed the progeny *interse*, that is brother to sister.

Or, better yet, breed them to the close relatives of the mother. You can keep any of the birds not used for breeding but I would send them off to save room and prevent confusion.



You really want to just be as conservative as you can be. This means you set up separate enclosures. Your breeders don't get to run loose.

Yes- each generation of roosters is another generation bred back to the original matriarch. By the 8th generation his mother will also be his great great great idk how many grandmother.

We've experimented with different breeds and it is almost always the same result. We end up with better egg shell colour when we backcross - provided that is in our founders - that's the trait we are isolating and encouraging through selective breeding.

If you are interested in reading more about the history of the dark brown egg, we recommend this:

<https://www.backyardchickens.com/threads/marandaise-origins-of-the-dark-brown-egg.278349/> - also written by Kermit Blackwood, (forum name 'Resolution'. Kermit also explains about the possible influence of food and soil on the egg colour.

However, keep in mind, not all people have the same ideas on this subject! This is written on the Marans – Club de France website:

Mais surtout: La coloration de la coquille ne dépend, en aucun cas, de quelconques facteurs alimentaires ou d'un sol particulier. Elle n'est liée qu'à la présence ou non des facteurs génétiques indispensables.

Translated: But above all, the colouration of the shell does not depend, in any case, any particular food factors or soil. It is only related to the presence or absence of essential genetic factors.

**Right: Marans eggs.
Photo: Dirk de Jong.**





Worth mentioning: There is also the 'English Marans'. This breed also originated in France and was introduced to England around 1929 by Lord Greenway. It is only recognised in the (dark) cuckoo variety and has clean legs. Obviously they have a mutual background, as the English Marans also lay the typical dark brown eggs.

Left: English Marans. Note the clean legs. Owner: R & O James. Photo: Rupert Stephenson, Poultry Club National Show 2015.

Below: Champion eggs of English Marans, by E.C. Boon. The National Poultry Show 2013. Photo: Rupert Stephenson.



Below: Silver-cuckoo Marans at Freddy Bettink's.



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