

RE-ESTABLISHING OF EXTINCT BREEDS: THE HORSEMAN POUTER

By: Axel Sell (Germany)

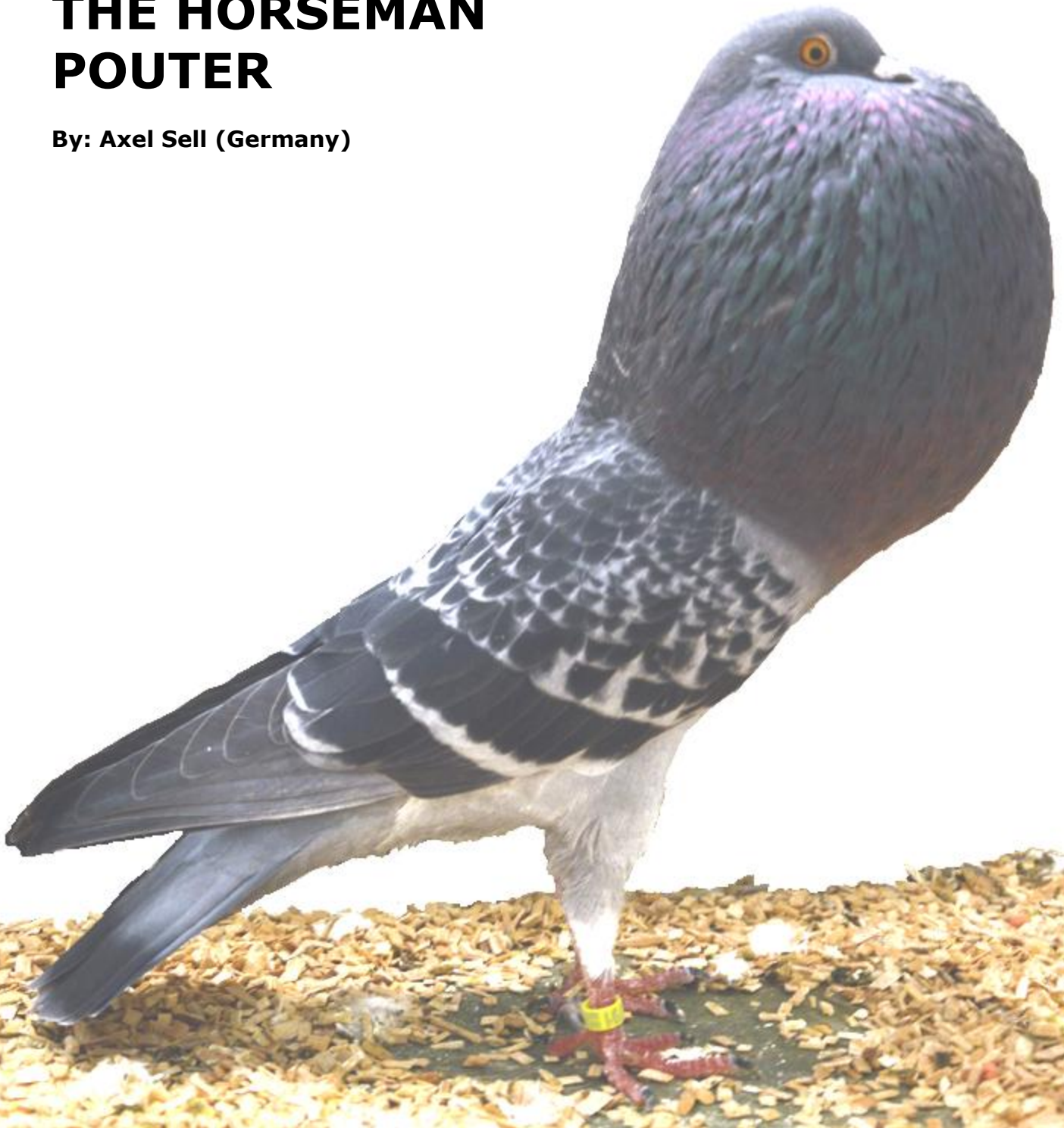


Photo: Sytze de Bruine

In the last decades some pigeon breeds that were extinct and only known from literature got a great revival. One of these breeds is the Pouting Horseman. The breed was still mentioned by WILLUGHBY 1676 as light horseman and as a cross-breed of the carrier and a pouter. The carrier was described as a medium sized pigeon with wattles at beak and eye ceres and may be considered a variant of the Turkish pigeon. This information is also given by ALBIN 1731-1738. MOORE 1735 preferred the idea of a cross between a carrier-like bird and a pouter. Both praise the ability "to pitch stray Pigeon that are at a Loss to find their own Home" (MOORE, p. 38).

The Carrier-like pigeon from MOORE was describes as a second and different 'horseman'. This horseman resembles the carrier but is smaller in all its properties. According to MOORE it was a matter of dispute at his time whether it was an original breed or a bastard between a carrier and a tumbler or even a carrier and a pouter. For LEVI (1969, §74) with reference to other historical sources it was more probable that the horseman was nothing else than the ancestor of an improved carrier. In modern language we could say that the horseman was the old-fashioned carrier and Moore's highly esteemed carrier the modern carrier of the 1730s. For the author of these line it seems presumably that MOORE and his friends were so convinced that the carrier was of such an outstanding character that they could not believe in such a poor ancestry. To quote Moore: "This bird is esteem'd, by the Gentlemen of the fancy, as the King of the Pigeons, on the Account of its Beauty and great Sagacity" (p. 26). I remember a similar case from own experience that a fancier of another breed wanted to forbid me to use the same breed's name for the forerunners of his highly esteemed race. Since quality was remarkably improved (at least in the eyes of this fancier) he believed that the same name should not be used because that would irritate the today fanciers and could discredit the breed. Be it as it was, this horseman, probably crossed with tumblers to improve the flying ability, for a long time became the preferred homing pigeon in England.



Left: Horseman-Taube bei Albin 1731-1738.

There is a third horseman mentioned by ALBIN, namely the cross-breed of a carrier and a runt. The work of ALBIN contains an often quoted picture of a horseman-pigeon. In some sources it is interpreted as homing horseman, in others as pouting horseman. Perhaps it is neither of them. With the distinct beak and eye wattle it is for sure a carrier cross, however, since there is no indication of a pouting behaviour and ALBIN did not discuss the homing horseman the pigeon might be the carrier-runt cross, the third type of horseman he mentioned. The picture is interesting also in respect to the colorations. MOEBES (1945, p. 14)

considered the pigeon as a blue-pied. However, the white in the under parts of the primaries are untypical and unrealistic for any pied-marking, and also the white at the breast has not the shape of a typical white bavette. Thus the whitish parts might not indicate pied marking but artificial reflecting light.

In the French literature the horseman is called Pigeon Cavalier. BOITARD AND CORBIÉ in 1824 discussed the common cavalier and presented the plate of a pigeon cavalier faraud, a smaller and more elegant cropper with a small crest. At the time FULTON (1876) and LYELL (1881) wrote their famous books the horseman cropper still seems to have got extinct and are not listed as an existing breed. Now the breed got a revival, and both at a show bird and as a Horseman Thief Pouter. For the Show Horseman-Pouter a standard was set up. The breed is



told to be one part homer and three parts pouter, that could be understood as a cross of homer and pouter and a backcross upon a pouter with succeeding selection. The phenotype is similar if not identical with the Silesian Pouter. The Horseman Thief Pouter shall only be bred for the behavior and in the genetic pool anything is supposed to exist from a homer to a tumbler to one of the pouter breeds.

Left: Cavalier Faraud bei Boitard und Corbié, 1824.

With progress in molecular genetics it becomes possible to compare conclusions from an analysis of literature and historical paintings with results of a DNS-analysis. Horseman-Pouters were one of the 70 analyzed pigeon breeds in a study at the University Utah, see for details

http://www.taubensell.de/molekulargenetische_studie_von_haustauben.htm.



Fig. 322: Horseman Pouter blue grizzle (Joe Powers), Silesian Pouter blue bar and Cauchois bronze laced

Source: Axel Sell, Pigeon Genetics. Applied Genetics in the Domestic Pigeon, Achim 2012.

It was not a great surprise that the Horseman Pouter was clustered in the same group together with the other pouter breeds investigated. The smallest genetic distance was given to the Pomeranian Pouter (D_{est} 0.015), followed by the Norwich Cropper (0.023) and the Racing Homer (0.026). Unfortunately there were no data for the Silesian Cropper. For the ancestry of the Horseman-Pouter it was not to expected to get by a molecular genetic analysis entirely new information, however, the results might indicate that the method could be useful in other cases to produce reliable and useful information.

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Additional text by Aviculture Europe:

Also in The Netherlands, since the recognition of the breed in January 2005, the Horseman Pouter has experienced greater enthusiasm, thanks to the enthusiasm of the Specialty Club of Rare Cropper Breeds, where the breed is protected and especially thanks to Rob Sekhuis, who did a lot for the promotion of the breed. In those years there were some 40 breeders and an estimated 700 Horseman Pouters in the Dutch lofts.

However, today there are only about 10 breeders that keep the Horseman Pouters and you don't often see them at the show. One of today's top breeders of the Horseman Cropper in the Netherlands is Ad van Eekelen from Roosendaal. He regularly shows in the Netherlands, but also participates in shows in England with his birds.

Following the ideas of the Dutch Breeders' club of the Iberian Fancy Pigeon Breeds (SIS), it was agreed that the Horseman Pouter should stay a flying pigeon, apart from being a show pigeon. This is a delicate balance and needs a lot of tolerance on both sides. The SIS, has shown that it is possible, however, there are plenty of examples of breeds that did not make it and were lost as a flying breed, after too much selecting for show quality.



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