

Lesson On the Modern Game Bantam: an American Bantam Association Bantam Culture Course

Modern Games are entirely a fancier's breed, developed in a surprisingly short space of time from birds of normal build into sleek long-limbed freaks which nevertheless have a strangely fascinating charm that is hard to resist.

Many of the problems of breeding for color are similar to those of the Old English Game and generally a Modern Game breeder can do as well in breeding the Old English colors as the Modern Game.

Foremost of the Modern Game varieties is the Black Breasted Red while at some shows the Birchen takes over. Red Pyle, Silver Duckwing, Brown Red and small numbers of Black, White and Blue. Black Breasted Red probably retains the popularity because they breed true to color, and produce very few bad ones when properly mated. Very often the Red Pyle requires washing before a show and this takes away some of the hardness of feather and lack of luster in feather.

In Moderns shape and style are most important. The male should be tall, reachy and graceful, with prominent square shoulders. A rounded or roached back is a very serious fault. A short flat back tapering towards the stern is essential.

Shanks must be round, fine and very long, and thighs should be long and muscular, set well apart. Flat shins are a severe exhibition fault and are strongly hereditary. The back toe should be as nearly as possible direct in line with the middle toe. Avoid duck feet and back toes that do not touch the ground. In very stylish birds the back toe is often carried too high.

Wings are required short and curved, just long enough to meet at stern, close to the body and carried well up, but avoiding goose wings - (which means carrying them partly across the back).

Look for a long, snaky head, with eyes large and prominent. Eyes in Brown Red and Birchen's should be black while in the Black Breasted Red and many of the other, colors the eyes are red. If in doubt about the eye color of any variety consult the Bantam Standard. The neck should be fine and long, with close fitting hackles.

Tail and tail carriage are particularly important. Main tail feathers should be narrow, fine, and close fitting. Male sickles should reach only a couple of inches or so beyond the tail proper, and are slightly curved and close together, not forked. Tails should be carried only slightly above the body line.

In body build, avoid slab sides due to lack of curve in wings, and do not breed from turkey breasted birds or the stock will acquire ugly, prominent keels.

In Modern Games we are dealing with highly bred stock, so size is very important. Many old time breeders aimed at the smallest specimens for show. These were seldom good stock birds, and the females often died when passing their first eggs. Now we are less obsessed with smallness, and allow certain latitude above standard weights, which are: Cock 22 oz., Hen and Cockerel 20 oz. and Pullet 18 oz.

Many beginners with the Modern Game Bantam buy the high-class show birds right out of the show pen with the result that very often very poor quality is produced. The beginner gives up. Of course the breeder gets a much better price for the show birds than those good, straggly looking breeders back in the breeding pens. This all results in fewer Modern Game Bantam breeders.