

Red Pyle Modern Games: By Wallace R. Leverett of Gainesville TX

Bantams and my interest in them goes back to another era In many things.

Being raised up on a fan here in North Texas I had them when they were referred to as "Banties" and the going price was around two bits apiece. I recall taking them for pay when wages for fan work was a dollar per day and dinner.

The bantams I saw exhibited at the country fairs impressed me to this day, especially the Modern GAMES exhibited by two breeders here in Gainesville, Gamer and Paclik. Barry Garner raised Red Pyles that I've never seen equaled and I suppose this is one of the reasons the Red Pyle Is my favorite variety.

My bantams and I had a hard time of it until I had to dispose of them to join the Navy. Back t hen most everyone had a flock of standard chickens for meat and eggs and my Dad was a breeder of Fighting Games. My bantams had to be fleet and strong of wing to survive. Being fleet afoot was a near necessity for me also, for the Hoover Hogs in this part of the country were scarce and wild.

While In the Navy I had bantam from tine to time but wasn't able to pursue the hobby until after retiring in 1963.

Old English, Modem Came and Sebrights have always been my favorite breeds, but I've raised Cochins, Japs, Cornish, Black Rosecombs and Mille Fleurs.

I've always had a fascination for all birds, wild and domestic and I've raised Game birds, Australian Finches and Parakeets, Anyone wanting a first hand lesson in genetics, hereditary, color breeding, etc, has o nly to obtain a few pairs of Parakeets. By observing these prolific breeders, one can see the results of selective and controlled breeding in several generations in just a few months.

It's my observation that all bantams are better today than in years gone by, with the exception of the Modern Game. Type, size and refinement today isn't what it used to be. I'm sure the reason for this is more out-crossing done today. Prior to the 1930s and early '40s prominent breeders of Moderns guarded their line of birds and did little out-crossing. From stories I've heard and read, the .Modem breeders in Scotland and England were fanatical protectors of their line of birds and kept then in their families for generations.

Today everyone is after instant success in the breeding pens with birds of unknown background and breeding. Consequently today there are few pure lines, hence type and refinement is not attained to the degree of yesteryears.

Today it is said that Roy Getz exaggerated his drawings of Moderns. In his day I'm not a subscriber to this belief.

Admittedly I'm biased when it comes to Modems, but honestly, few can argue the fact that the Modern Game Bantam is the leading show bird of all bantams, has more longevity in being so than any other breed and will remain so as long as people are allowed to raise and show them.

Actually the Red Pyle variety isn't any harder to breed than any of the other multi colored varieties; faults in them just show up more. With the zoning of contrasting colors on white, you can't get a way with the color faults you can in other varieties.

When you see any breeder of the Red Pyle consistently producing a good number of highly colored males with white breasts and white females with light breast color, it isn't just a stroke of luck, this person knows the background of his birds and has a Black Breasted Red running around his place somewhere.

I've tried all the combinations in crossing the Black Breasted Red and Red Pyle and in some of these matings things can get out of hand in a hurry. First indication of too much Black Breasted Red is gray or smut in the breast of the male birds. Some will tell you black ticking is a sign of too much Black Breasted Red - I say ticking goes with highly colored Pyle males.

My highest percentage of properly colored males came from using Black Breasted Red males with proper color and zoning (with particular attention given to clear neck hackles and sound wing bay color) over exhibition colored Pyle females. From this mating you should get a good percentage of highly colored Pyle males - females will come green-legged and in most cases dark breasted and rosy-winged. Exhibition colored female's came from Pyle to Pyle matings which is the correct mating as long as the number of properly colored males is acceptable.

I cull all green-legged Pyles and yellow-legged Black Breasted Red chicks when hatched. Both can be used in Pyle breeding but in my case I find their use hard to control and predict what their offspring will be. These dark breasted, rosy-winged Pyle females and the yellow-legged male and female Black Breasted Reds can be used to improve color in the Pyle males. As I've stated in my line of Pyles, results are unpredictable. Also, I like every Red Pyle and Black Breasted Red I have on the place to look like a good one and not have some visitors think I have a bunch of mixed up chickens.

At about one month of age or so the colors show on the back or in the wing bays of the males, you can cull for proper color for if they don't have the proper bay color in the wing bays at this age, they never will.

Proper leg color in the Red Pyle is a rich yellow in both the male and female. Color declines in proportion to the light or washed-out feather color. Most all Pyles that are too light in feather have legs that are too light in color also. It goes without saying that leg color is affected by diet, health, age and egg production, but none of the above should be accepted as an excuse for poor leg color in cockerels and pullets. Proper leg color is attained and maintained by the Black Breasted Red cross.

In short, what I'm saying is, you must produce a few exhibition colored females and highly colored males each year, backed up by some Black Breast Reds that are related.

MCBC Note: this article is a reprint from a 1982 Yearbook