

The Modern Game Bantam

By Irving deGaris

The Modern Game Bantam originated In England and is an example of what experienced fanciers can do to create a breed of Bantams. They were imported to this country from England and Scotland. It is one of the smallest but tallest of all Bantams, and great emphasis is placed on its reach and station, shortness of body and shortness and hardness of feather. It comes in many varieties, the Black Breasted Red, Birchen, Silver Duckwing and Red Pyle being the most popular. Because of its size and short feathers, it is a bit more delicate than other breeds of Bantams and therefore requires better attention. In cold weather it should be housed in a fairly warm house free from drafts.

There are conflicting ideas as to the proper time of year to hatch Moderns. Many think that early hatched birds tend to be large and coarse while others think one has to hatch early to obtain reach. Based on around forty years experience, I favor early hatched cockerels because they are in their prime for early fall shows. On the other hand, I favor later hatched pullets because they will not look like hens when exhibited in the Fall. In my opinion, ancestry has more to do with size than the time of year hatched and methods of feeding.

Having tried all kinds of feeding methods, I find that one can use most any kind of clean poultry feed. I have raised chix on fine scratch, pigeon grain, mash, crumbles and combinations of feed. I

do not subscribe to the theory that all mash feeding produces soft feathers and hard grains produce hard feathers! Probably the most satisfactory feeding plan for chix is to use fine scratch, game bird crumbles and of course, fine grit. This can be supplemented with green food such as lettuce or finely chopped cabbage. The breeding stock can be fed laying mash or crumbles, and a feeding of scratch grain in the evening. They too need grit or oyster shell and enjoy green stuff.

A Modern Game Bantam must be tame and like attention if it is to be exhibited. A wild one just can't win! This was brought home to me at a show in Allentown many years ago. I had to substitute an untrained cockerel and he just wouldn't show. I told Judge Matlack that the bird was untrained and he quickly told me he was there to judge and not train! As the chix mature they should be handled often and well before show time they should spend much time in exhibition coops. They should be handled and trained to stand up on their toes with a judging stick. A well-trained Modern does not require the use of a judging stick but most judges use it. Remember a well-trained Modern of just fair quality will beat a better one not trained.

Cockerels should be dubbed when grown. I like to do that after sickle feathers are fully grown. Close, clean dubbing adds much to their appearance. After removing comb, ear lobes and wattles with small, sharp shears, wash away the blood with cold water. After scabs have formed, apply carbulated vaseline. It requires about six weeks for the scar to heal and for the flesh to return to normal color.

In breeding Moderns, study the Standard, cull ruthlessly and breed only the very best birds. In-breeding is fine so long as one improves his strain and produces healthy birds. However, bad qualities are prone to multiply faster than good ones. Some of the most common defects are lack of spurs on males, split wings, high tails, narrow bodies, long bodies and short heads.

Perhaps the best varieties for a novice to start with would be Black Breasted Reds or Silver Duckwings because their color patterns are not so difficult to produce as other varieties. Birchens are beautiful and popular but it is a problem to produce purple faces and white caps! Red Pyles appeal to many but here again one runs into difficulty in maintaining color without crossing with Black Reds every few generations. Brown Reds should now be easier to produce since the A.B.A. Standard has been changed from lemon to orange color for certain sections of feathering. Blues, Lemon Blues and Silver Blues are quite interesting but are not for the novice because of the problems involved in producing blue colors. Of course, from a color viewpoint, Blacks and Whites offer few problems, yet they are not popular and are seen in few shows.

The writer has bred Blacks for over 25 years because I like them. In my opinion they have the shortest, tightest feathers of all varieties of Moderns and that combination of glossy black feathers and red faces is beautiful.

If you like tall, sporty, little Bantams with lots of character, try Modern Game Bantams and you will greatly enjoy your hobby.