

## **Two Color Points for Breeding Brown Red Modern Game Bantams**

By T.S. Cleworth

This is by no means an exhaustive article on the subject. A score of others dealing with other observations have been or could be written about this little jewel of the poultry yard. But the two points I discuss are based on my own study of the variety, and are applicable to it under various circumstances.

Brown Red color has been a personal preference since I first saw it at the Chicago Coliseum Show nearly sixty years ago, in December, 1908. Brown Red Modern Games and Game Bantams were both being bred and shown in considerable numbers at that time, and were generally of excellent quality. During the past thirty-eight years I have owned and bred Brown Red Old English and Brown Red Irish Pit Games in the large fowls, and the same variety in Cochin, Modern Game, and Old English Game Bantams. This experience has given me the opportunity of comparing shades of color and lacing patterns in all five varieties, especially since some of them were kept concurrently.

First, consider color designation. The full name of Brown Red color originally was Brown Breasted Red, since it was a counterpart of the Black Breasted Red variety. This designation was applied to the variety when the males had smudgy, brown-colored breasts with no distinct lacing, and ginger-red hackles and saddles. The true Ginger Red Game is now at least a continuation of the old-time Brown Breasted Red, and is a strikingly beautiful bird. The Brown Red Modern Game Bantam of today, however, must be distinctly separated from its ancestral color type, and show a laced pattern in the breast of both sexes.

The shade of warm color has been controversial, especially in connection with the Bantam, for a long time. Successive issues of American Standards have variously worded the color requirements through the revisions of the past thirty-eight years. Referring only to head and breast color of the male, the 1930 edition of the Standard of Perfection called for an orange-colored head, and the breast, "black, laced with lemon," The 1945 edition used similar language. In 1953 the wording was changed for the head plumage to "lustrous lemon," and the upper breast, "black, with very narrow lacing of lemon."

Every breeder of brown-red colored fowls found this coloration standard next to impossible to maintain. I never bred more than ten per cent of a crop of males or females carrying pure lemon color requirements. Consequently, we had an overwhelming number of color culls improvable only with the introduction of Lemon Blue stock. At last, thanks to the new Bantam Standard, the head plumage color for the heads of Brown Red males is "lustrous deep orange", and for the upper breast section, "black, with very narrow lacing of deep orange." This is as it should be, for most of our Brown Red males during the past fifty years have carried orange, and even darker shades in the sections prescribed. The standard now fits the variety, not only in head and breast sections, but wherever a warm color is required elsewhere in the plumage.

A second point is that of color correlation. This is one of the most fascinating, even amazing facts in the breeding of Game fowls of all breeds. Dealing with it in Modern Games we find that of the eighteen varieties of Modern Game Bantams, most of them can be reciprocally crossbred with effective and desirable results, an utter impossibility in many other breeds of domestic fowls. This is an extremely valuable factor, since the improvement of existing varieties, or the production of new varieties within the breed can be accomplished without using the bloodlines of other breeds. The cross already mentioned, Lemon Blue with Brown Red, is a case in point. The successful correlation of Black Breasted Red and Red Pyle varieties has been practiced for centuries by Game Fowl breeders all over the world.

One of the most astonishing examples of color correlation in Modern Game Bantams occurred in England over sixty years ago. Mr. Fred Smalley, one of the greatest exponents of this breed for all time, took a six-year-old Silver Duckwing cock (proof of the prepotency and longevity of Game Fowls), and mated him with two Brown Red hens heavily laced with saffron yellow not only on the upper breast, but half-way down their backs. Seven chicks were hatched and reared from this mating; four pullets and three cockerels. The pullets were so uniformly good in type and color that Mr. Smalley mated all of them the next season to a Birchen cockerel for which he paid the equivalent of \$73 in American money. While the pullets resulting from this second cross were overlaced, the Birchen cockerels were so superior that one of them won the highest medal at the 1910 London Dairy Show for champion Birchen and champion Modern Game Bantam of the Show. This was at a time when classes

in the breed often contained from fifteen to thirty entries in each variety, so that cockerel had to be near perfection.

I am convinced that what Mr. Smalley accomplished with Birchen Modern Game Bantams through the color correlation feature, with which Nature has so richly endowed Game Fowls, can be a challenge to enterprising Brown Red breeders of today and tomorrow. There is no reason to doubt the possibility of making similar crosses by attempting Golden Duckwing-Brown Red, and Wheaten-Birchen combinations. The resulting progeny could possibly establish, through several generations of careful selection, new strains of Brown Red Modern Game Bantams that could maintain the hardiness of the breed and the unique beauty of the variety.

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