

BURMAH BANTAMS, 1896

Drawn by Mr. Weir

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BURMAH • BURMA • BURMESE BANTAMS

They never became as popular as Pekins and Cochin bantams...

Entwistle had to 'revive' them after their initial arrival, they didn't thrive, he writes in 'Bantams' of 1894: "Burmese Bantams we have had in various colours, nearly pure bred. The first Burmese we saw were at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, about seven and a half years ago, and after that we were fortunate enough to obtain the cock bird alone (the hens having died) for breeding from and mated him with four of our best Sultan Bantam pullets, all pure white birds; but the result were Blacks, Browns, Greys, Speckled and Whites, the latter being in a minority. The pure White Burmese had been sent direct from Burmah by an officer of the British army, to another brother officer in Scotland; but the damp Scotch climate did not suit them, and the last survivor was sent to Newington to save his life. He was a very quaint little fellow, pure

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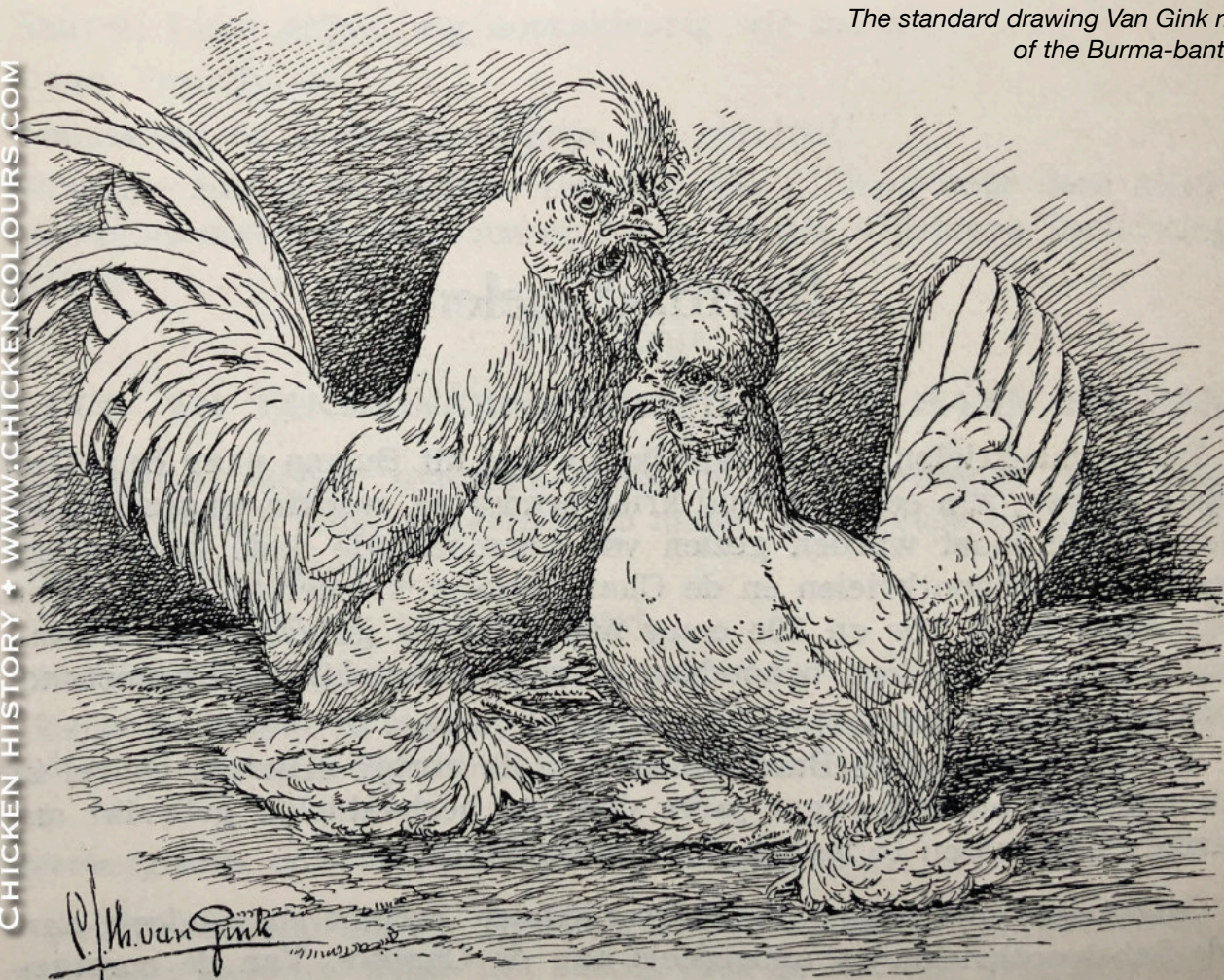


Burma-project growers, water colour.

white, heavily crested, with a straight, single, small comb at the front of his crest, long winged, very long sickled, his tail being one of the most striking

features about him. His legs were so extremely short that his breast and body touched the ground as he shuffled along; he had heavily

The standard drawing Van Gink made of the Burma-bantams.



Ideale witte Burma-krielen.

feathered legs, and his toes had feathers five inches long, which made his feet look like wings. His weight was very little over 20 ounces. He lived to present us with quite a large family of chickens from his own pullets, and among them some nearly as good as himself. We also bred some of these crossed Burmese pullets among our Sultans to the evident improvement of the latter in certain points, but to the loss of the pure white legs; for all the burmese have orange yellow legs, excepting the Blacks, and their legs were dark willow or black, with yellow under the feet and between the toes. The Burmese are also a four-toed breed. These, too, were scattered abroad, several going to Mrs. Ricketts, others to Miss Arnold, etc., etc."

Fast forward to Van Gink in the Netherlands, the 1950s standard texts seems to be partly derived from Entwistle's. Van Gink adds some history to it.

"Although Burma bantams are now rare, except for an occasional 'remake', they were described in the Dutch standard in the 1950s. Nankin bantams are also becoming rare. These breeds are just not attractive enough anymore in recent decades. They are trends that come and go just like in fashion. Also, interest will undoubtedly flare up again and then they will suddenly be trendy again.

The Burma bantams, which have come to England from Burma from time to time, are a very old bantam breed, in which probably should be seen the archetype of several ancient bantam breeds, such as the Feather footed (Sabelpoot) bantams and the Chabo (Japanese) bantams. The first

specimens came to Europe as early as the 15th and 16th centuries. In Burma, except in type and rather low leg position, these bantams are not very uniform.

In England, Burma bantams have been used repeatedly in the last century and especially in the 1880s and 1890s thereof to make or improve other bantam breeds.

General appearance. The Burma bantams recall partly the Feather footed (Sabelpoot) bantams and partly the Chabo. From the former they have the foot feathering and vulture hocks, from the latter the short legs. As a rule, they are single combed. There are crested and uncrested. It was the crested ones that attracted most interest in England. The rather compact and hardly medium-sized crest is on the back of the head. The wattles are rather short in the hen and about

medium length in the cockerel. The earlobes are also rather small and, like the other head ornaments, of a vivid red colour.

The body build is deep and shows even deeper due to the rather short legs and full feathering. The foot feathering is strongly developed. The thigh feathering is shifted to a pair of vulture hocks on either side, which are largely hidden under the rather large, low-bearing wings.

In the rooster, the short-toned neck is richly feathered. The tail is carried high and has well-developed, little curved sickle feathers and numerous tail coverts. The legs are yellow. In the black colour variety, so much black pigment is present in the legs and toes that they are yellow only on the soles of the feet and between the toes. Bearded ones have also come to Europe from Burma.

Features. The Burma bantams are lively and highly confidential in nature. The foot feathering, excessive feathering and short legs make it desirable to keep these bantams in a dry run. They are particularly suitable for keeping in limited space. The eggs, slightly tinted in shell, weigh from 28 to 35 grams.

Standard weight:

Young cock, 650 grams

Young hen, 550 grams

Old cock, 750 grams

Old hen, 650 grams

Recognised colour varieties: white, black, partridge, silver pencilled and black mottled.

Serious faults: too long legs, too short foot feathering, too little crest in the crested variety, insufficient ornamental feathering, too long back and insufficient beard development in the bearded variety.

Faults: slightly too long legs, slightly too short foot feathering, slightly too little crest in the crested variety and slightly too little beard development in the bearded variety, slightly too long back.

Fast forward again... 2023:

Later they were recreated in the Netherlands in the 1990s and early 2000s, blacks with a duplex-V comb were accepted. *Below a project Burma (rose comb is a Silkie relic) in khaki & gold, 12+ years old on the photo from 2017.*

