

**RACES
OF
DOMESTIC POULTRY**

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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Russian Races of Fowls.

Orloff
Pavlov
Russian-Dutch
Siberian Feather-footed

Ushanki
Russian Crested
Russian Rose-comb

Until recently very little has been known as to the races of fowls to be met with in European Russia, and our knowledge is still very limited indeed. Older poultry-books speak of Russian or Varna fowls, but there is no direct evidence to connect such breeds with the country. For instance, Dickson thus speaks of What he calls the Russian or Siberian fowl :

‘This breed seems to differ chiefly from others in having considerable tufts of brown or dark, loose feathers springing from each jaw, and others, longer or fuller, from the lower mandible, like a Jew’s beard. In the hen there is an upright tuft, spreading out from the hind-head, of the same silky texture. Independent of these, the cock has the usual comb and wattles, and the hen a small comb likewise. This sort is said to have come from Moscow, and varies in colour, one variety being white, with the ends of the feathers glossy blue or black, giving it a spotted appearance, and the legs being covered with fibrous or downy feathers. Another has the plumage of the Game fowl—a fine, tawny orange, spotted with black. This sort is much esteemed in Scotland for prolific laying.’

It is seen later that there are several points of resemblance between the fowl described above—now unknown in Scotland—and those found at the present time in Russia, and, in spite of the doubts expressed by writers upon the supposed source, we are disposed to think that they must have originated in that country, between which and North Britain commercial relationships have been constantly maintained for a long period. Miss Watts, speaking of the Russian fowl, stated that ‘ at the Royal Dublin Society’s Show, April, 1846, some specimens were exhibited by Mr. Nolan. It appears that they are sometimes gold and silver spangled, resembling the Spangled Hamburgs,’ by which is meant the crested birds called by that name at one period. But further information as to these birds is given below.

As to the general character of Russian poultry, we quote from an interesting report upon the Russian races of domestic poultry presented by M. Houdekow to the International Congress held at St. Petersburg in May, 1899, in which he says :

‘ The domestic fowls of which we cannot define the breed are very widely distributed in Russia; they are very mixed, the result of crossing species of the most diversified character coming into the country from Europe or Asia. These birds are, as a rule, small and poor layers, their external characters without end, to the extent that it is very difficult to find in the same nest birds of the same type, having identical qualities either in appearance or economic properties. Nevertheless, We can notice between them some points of resemblance, depending, without doubt, upon local conditions, soil, and food. Under the influence of these factors, nearly always unfavourable to fixity of type, our domestic fowls surprise us by their wildness, coarseness of body, and fighting qualities. We can call them half domestic and half wild. Taking into consideration the low degree of development in which we find Russian aviculture, from the point of view of the breeder’s

art, it would appear difficult to find any local races well known and of individual character; but the contrary is the case : we have breeds of fowls and geese well established. The origin of these breeds is unknown, and as they are not to be met with in the rest of Europe, or in America, or in Asia, we may call them Russian, because from the most remote times they have been bred in Russia, where we find them in their purity, with typical qualities and characteristics.'

Probably further and more careful observations will reveal other breeds than those named above, for poultry-breeding is in its infancy in that country.

ORLOFF.

NOMENCLATURE: Orloff.

VARIETIES: Red. Speckled, White.

CLASSIFICATION: Table.

COLOUR OF FLESH AND SKIN: Yellow.

Colour of LEGS AND FEET: Yellow.

COLOUR OF EGG-SHELLS: Brown.

Origin—That this breed has been bred for long period in Russia is undoubted, and it is surprising that it had never been heard of by English or Western European breeders prior to 1899, when we visited the International Exhibition at St. Petersburg. Nothing definite is known as to it. M. Houdekow thus speaks of its origin :

'The Orloff fowl has received this name by reason of the fact that it is supposed that Count Orloff-Techesmensky imported the breed; that is not probable, because it was known already to Russian amateurs before his day. We have found description in a work of an unknown author, published in 1774, where it is named, not Orloff, but "Chlianskaia." Amateurs, however, knew the breed under that name much later. In our days it is usual, without any reason, to call these fowls Orloff. The most general supposition is that specimens were imported by our celebrated horse-breeder, Count Orloff-Teches mensky, from Persia, and principally from the province of Ghilan. But he did not himself give them the name. We may ask if there exist any races of domestic poultry yet unknown in Central Asia. That country has been explored to very limited extent in many of the different parts, and it is not improbable that we may have many surprises in reserve there. In fact, this breed has definite character, and may not have originated in Russia. But the Russians have first made known to Europe and America the remarkable fowl Orloff.'

Our opinion is that probably the Orloff' owns the same ancestry as the Malay.

History—All that is known as to the history of the 'Orloff is given above. We are informed that birds of this type are to be met with in mid-Russia, but they have not generally been bred with much care, and the supply of pure stock is small. As previously stated, we first saw the Orloffs at the St. Petersburg Exhibition in 1899, where were several excellent specimens. After considerable difficulty, we secured a Speckled cock and two hens, but, unfortunately, the hens died soon after their arrival in this country, and we were

unable to obtain any more. We have not heard of any Western breeder being more fortunate. How far the Orloff is receiving the attention of Russian breeders is not known, but it would be distinct loss if race with such striking characteristics was not preserved.

Economic Qualities.—Upon this point very little direct evidence is obtainable, but it is generally acknowledged that the hens are poor layers, which is indicated by the structure of the body. The development of the breast is considerable, but the meat is hard, and the bone is very heavy; consequently, it may be assumed that it is slow in growth, and—like our Indian Game—more valuable for crossing with soft-fleshed races to improve the meat qualities than when pure. It is said to be very hardy, capable of withstanding the rigours of the Russian climate but there has probably been large amount of in-breeding with view to fixing the type and colour.

Description—The following description is taken from the standard issued by the Russian Poultry Society Head medium in size, but very wide in the forehead; beak short and curved at the base; eye bright amber-coloured, and with prominent eyebrows; comb like raspberry cut lengthwise, covered with small points, and carried close to the head; wattles small in the males, none in females; beard and whiskers well developed and full, especially in the hen; earlobes very small in cock, and not seen in the hen; neck rather long, carried proudly, and well covered with hackles, but narrowing at the base of the neck and carried close to the body; body short, compact, and very wide; back short, wide, and flat; wings moderate in size, and carried well up; tail medium, carried erect, and in the male ornamented with narrow sickles of moderate length legs rather long and very stout, the shanks being bright yellow in colour, but absolutely clean; toes four in number and well spread.

M. Houdekow says that the best models of this race are of large size; in general the adult cocks weigh about pounds, but in some cases 11 pounds or more; the hens about pounds less. In appearance the Orloff is tall, powerfully-built fowl, capable of defending itself to the extreme. The male we imported refused to associate with other birds after the death of his hens, although he was retained for two seasons.

Varieties.—Of the three varieties the Red is said to be most rare, and the Speckled most general. **Ran**—These are of dark reddish-brown, like mahogany, very even in colour, but brighter in the hackle. The effect is very striking, and we have never seen fowls with so brilliant plumage, as it shines like satin in the male. The hens are rather sombre, but have the same coloration, except that lighter tints are found in the centre of each feather.

SPECKLED—These are what may be termed black red in colour, having black breasts and tails, speckled with white, like our Spangled Game, which they resemble greatly in plumage, except that the body colour of the hens is darker.

WHITE—The entire plumage is pure white, with brilliancy of sheen which we have seldom seen equalled.

PAVLOFF.

NOMENCLATURE: Pavloff.

VARIETIES: Gold, Silver, Blue, Black.

CLASSIFICATION: Egg Production.

COLOUR OF FLESH AND SKIN: Cream.

COLOUR OF LEGS AND FEET: Slate-blue, but in some cases Yellow.

COLOUR OF EGG-SHELLS: White.

This breed must not be confounded with the Cosaque, which is sometimes met with in France, and which is evidently related to the Owl-bearded Dutch; but from the description it would appear to be the same as the Russian, or Siberian, or Varna fowls described in older poultry books, as already indicated. Our first acquaintance with it was at the St. Petersburg Exhibition of 1899, where were large number of specimens, varying greatly in their secondary characteristics, but all evidently of the same race. The opinion held in Russia is that they are closely related to the Polish, or Padoue, and we are unable to come to any other conclusion than that the last-named breed has descended from the Pavloff, but when and how it is impossible to trace. The one difficulty which presents itself in the acceptance of this theory is the peculiar conformation of the skull of the Polish, which, so far as we are aware, is not present in the Pavloff. But it is well-known fact that external developments lead to changes in the structure of the body, and breeding for excessive size of crest through long generations would doubtless cause enlargement of the skull and produce the cranial tuberosity referred to, even though that might not be present in the fowls retaining the original type. In this connection it is essential to remember that the distribution of fowls has been from East to West, and that even hundreds of years ago intercommunication between the various countries was fairly constant. Within our own experience it is realizable how the introduction of new race into country, even in comparatively small numbers, may be followed within few years by its wide extension and the displacement of existing breeds. As an instance may be mentioned the Leghorns in America, for the many million members of that family are descended from the few birds imported from Italy about forty years ago.

Origin—Upon this point there is very little information—in fact, nothing at all reliable. M. Houdekow states that ‘these fowls are so novel and have so fixed type in their different characters as to give them the right of being accorded distinct race. They have received the name Pavlovsk’ because they have been bred principally in Pavlovsk, at the Government (or Department) of Nijni-Novgorod, where, it is said, they were imported by the Empress Catharine II.’ Whence they were imported is not suggested, but from the description of the Siberian Feather-footed fowls We should imagine that both probably came from Northern Asia. They are, however, widely spread in Russia, and are to be met with on the Russian-German border country—that is, the ancient kingdom of Poland.

History—Until recently the breeding of poultry was not at all systematic in Russia, and selection for purity of race practically unknown. All that we have been able to learn is that fowls of this type are generally bred in many districts, and that the race is common over wide area. Under these circumstances it says much for the prepotency of the special characters that they are to be found to so great an extent.

Economic Qualities.—The Pavloff fowl is chiefly regarded for egg production, as it is said to be good in that respect, although not equal to other races in which the quality has been developed by breeding and selection. So far as we are aware there are no records as to actual production, and from information received very few hens would reach 100 eggs per annum; but that it is capable of great improvement in this respect is certain. It is chiefly spring and summer layer, and the eggs, which are white in colour of shell, are small in size, as, in fact, are all Russian eggs. The breed is very moderate in flesh qualities, but the chickens are quick growers, and very hardy.

Description.—The body is short and wide, with broad, straight back; neck short, slightly arched, and well covered with hackle head round, and beak nearly straight, horn-coloured, with prominent nostrils; eye full, nearly black; the comb consists of two fine horns, carried well forward; crest good size, in cocks composed of narrow upright feathers, in hens round. Of the specimens at St. Petersburg there were great differences in the crests. In some cases the feathers stood upright on the head; in others there was transverse line on top of the head, part of the feathers falling back and others forward, with well-defined division; in the third form the feathers formed fringe in front, few standing up behind; and fourth had the main part of the feathers falling back like lady's veil; wattles only in cocks, and small; beard and whiskers very thick, covering the earlobes, large portion of the throat and face; tail large, full, carried upright, and with long and broad sickles; legs short, and with the toes well feathered. Weight: males, 4 to 5 pounds; females, 3 to 4 pounds.

Varieties—Although there is a great divergence in the Pavloff fowls, and coloration of plumage is very variable, the varieties named below are those generally accepted as pure, the others being a result of indiscriminate breeding. An exception is in the White crested, evidently a cross with the Crested Dutch, from which they differ in that they are heavily bearded.

GOLD.—In these the ground colour is golden-bay, as in Gold Polish, with black spangles, but the specimens we saw were by no means evenly marked.

SILVER—Here the ground colour is silver-white, with spangles as in the Golds.

BLUE AND BLACK—Evidently sports from the above, and are not often seen.

RUSSIAN-DUTCH.

NOMENCLATURE: Russo-Hollandaise.

VARIETY: One.

CLASSIFICATION: Egg Production.

COLOUR OF FLESH AND SKIN: White.

COLOUR OF LEGS AND FEET; White.

COLOUR OF EGG-SHELLS: White.

Origin—As will be seen from the description given below, these fowls are evidently descended from what we call Hamburgs—that is, the pencilled variety of which were named formerly ‘Dutch everlasting layers.’ In Russia itself the source is recognised, and such differences as may be noted can be attributed to different climatic conditions and to less careful methods of breeding.

History.—It is claimed that this breed has been known in Russia for long period of time, as stated by M. Houdekow : ‘It is very ancient race, which was already in existence at the time of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovitch, from the evidence of historical documents of that period.’ And he adds that ‘they are called Dutch because, without doubt, they were imported in the first instance from Holland; nevertheless, it is not difficult to see that some peculiarities have an Asiatic origin.’ These fowls are bred only to very limited extent, and are chiefly in the hands of amateurs.

Economic Qualities.—The Russian-Dutch are medium in size of body, and are stated to be prolific egg-producers. They are distinctly above the average of Russian fowls for table qualities, and are fairly supplied with flesh, which is white and of good quality. No evidence has been given as to their vigour, and we should be inclined to the view that they are not hardy.

Description.—Head small, rather long; beak long, stout, slightly curved, white with light horn. coloured points; eye red; comb flat on top, firmly placed on the head, and well covered with small points; face smooth and red; earlobes and wattles small and red neck long, carried erect, scantily feathered; back wide at shoulders, narrowing to the tail, slightly rounded; breast full and prominent, and round body stout and long; wings medium in size, and carried close to body; tail moderate in size, compact, rather inclined backward, in cocks fully furnished with long, narrow sickles; legs and shanks long and stout, free from feathers, and white in colour; toes four in number; the plumage is bright and glossy, not very thick, and in cocks is dark red marked with black, in hens chestnut. **Weight: males, pounds; females. 5 ½ pounds.**

with the following breeds we have no personal acquaintance, and quote descriptions issued by the Russian Poultry Society, as it is stated that they are the best-known varieties of the domestic fowl in that country, by which is evidently meant that birds of these types are to be met with in different districts. During our visit to that country we did not see any, or if so did not recognise them as having individual characteristics.

SIBERIAN FEATHER FOOTED.

Description—Head large; beak short and stout; eye full and red; comb rose, small, and moderately developed; crest: behind the comb is small mass of feathers, which stand up well from the head; face red, but bordered with bushy whiskers, which entirely cover the small earlobes: there is also thick beard under the lower mandible wattles small in the cocks, and rudimentary in the hens; neck short, stout, slightly arched, and well covered with hackles; back wide, flat, and almost straight; breast wide and full, carried fairly forward, but not prominent; wings large and powerful; tail large, full, carried wide: in cocks the tail-coverts are abundant, and the sickles long and well curved; legs of medium length, well feathered with thick, short quills, right up to thighs, from which grow hard vulture hooks; the plumage is generally white, whilst others have cuckoo plumage. Weight males, about pounds; females, to 4 ½ pounds. From the appearance, with the exception of the whiskers and beard, here is race largely Asiatic in type, in affinity with the breeds introduced in the earlier part of last century. If, as has been suggested, the Siberian Feather-footed fowl is of ancient lineage, it may be the progenitor of several of the modern Russian races, and also of the fowls we have seen in South-Eastern Europe. As our information is so scanty, at present it is impossible to form a satisfactory opinion upon that question, and a further exploration of Siberia and Western Asia may reveal races of fowls as yet unknown to us, and solve problems which at present are difficult, if not impossible of solution.

USHANKI.

Description.—Head large, round, with broad fore head; beak moderate, slightly curved; eye full, bright, and red; face red, but hidden almost entirely by the beard; comb single, well developed, regularly serrated, carried straight and erect earlobes very small indeed, entirely hidden by whiskers; wattles red in colour, small in males, and rudimentary in females beard and whiskers well developed, more especially in the hens, very full and bushy; neck short, nicely arched, but carried backward, in males the neck-hackle thick, and falling well over the shoulders; back wide, flat, and straight; breast prominent, carried well forward, broad, well rounded; wings long and wide, and carried somewhat low; tail large, nicely expanded, inclined backwards, and the males have long, well-curved sickles; legs short and stout, but perfectly clear of feathers; colour generally black, but sometimes Silvers, Reds, and other colours are met with; the plumage is close and tight. Weight: males, 6 pounds; females, 4 pounds.

In this case we have race which appears to possess distinctive characters, and to be clearly defined from all the other types of Russian fowls. With the exception of the whiskers and beard it stands alone, although in some respects an affinity with the Orloff is indicated. Without, however, further information, or seeing any of these birds, it is impossible to classify them. The fact of their being clean-legged is suggestive, and we should not be surprised to find that they emanate from the same districts as the Orloffs, and that they are

connected, more or less remotely, with that breed. This is pure conjecture, which might have to be revised in the light of wider knowledge.

RUSSIAN CRESTED.

Description—Head rather long, of conical form, with straight beak, slightly curved at the end eye red; face smooth and red; comb small, generally single and upright, serrated only to slight extent; earlobes and wattles red in colour. and well developed; crest inclined backward, much fuller in development in the hens, consisting of long hackle-like feathers hanging over the back of the head: in the cocks the crest partakes of the character of broad ribbon; neck short, slightly arched, inclined backward, in the males abundantly covered with long hackles, which fall over the shoulders; back wide, flat, and straight; breast full and wide body long, deep, and wide; wings large, strong, and carried somewhat low; tail large, full, well spread, carried high, and in the males supplied with large and long sickles, which are well curved; legs short, and with the feet entirely clear of feathers; the plumage is very thick and abundant; colours vary greatly, having no fixity. Weight: males, 6 pounds; females, 4 pounds.

It will be evident that this is race different from any named before, and the absence of whiskers and heard is suggestive, in that these features may be accepted as indicative of racial affinity, which would also be true in the case of leg feathering. The peculiar crest may be due to a chance cross, or show some remote connection with the Pavloff. Further observations may prove that the Russian Crested is deserving of a separate position, and we should think that if carefully bred the race would evolve more distinctive characters. At the present time it apparently does not receive much attention, probably due to the fact that in Russia as yet the selection of fowls for utility purposes is in its infancy, and that attention is devoted to a very few native and foreign breeds.

RUSSIAN ROSE-COMB.

Description.—Head large; beak of medium size and short eye red; face clean and red; earlobes and wattles moderately developed; comb square and rose shaped, of medium size, with pointed spike behind, the top flat and covered with small points as in the Hamburgh; neck moderate in length, thickly covered with hackles back wide, flat, and straight; breast full in front and broad; body stout, wide, and of medium length; wings large, strong, and carried rather low; tail large, full, slightly expanded, and in the males well furnished with sickles, which are long and perfectly curved, and provided with an abundant supply of coverts; legs short, and with the feet entirely free from feathers; there are several colours, none of which appear to be definitely fixed. Weight: males, pounds females, pounds. It will be seen that this breed more nearly approximates to the Hamburgh, from which it is probably sport; but the Russians have not yet adopted that definiteness of description which is necessary in order to discriminate between the different

racess. That, however, will be remedied as time goes on, and the secondary characters are more clearly defined by breeding to standards. In country where there has been little attempt to adopt the principles of artificial selection such condition of affairs must always be looked for at first. Within the next few years we may expect great change in that respect.