



SOUTHERN AFRICAN SHOW POULTRY ORGANISATION BREED STANDARDS

DORKING



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:	Great Britain
CLASSIFICATION:	Heavy breed: soft feather
EGG COLOUR:	Tinted (Sitters)
MASSES:	

LARGE:

Cock	6.4 kg
Hen	4.6 kg
Cockerel	5.0 kg
Pullet	4.5 kg

BANTAMS

Cock	1.4 kg max
Hen	1.1 kg max

The Dorking's purely British ancestry makes it one of the oldest of domesticated fowls in lineage. A Roman writer, who died in A.D. 47, described birds of Dorking type with five toes, and no doubt such birds were found in England by the Romans during the invasion under Julius Caesar (55 B.C.). By judicious crossings, and by careful selection, the Dorking or Dorking breed was established.

Dorkings were mentioned occasionally over the intervening centuries, for example being sold at Dorking market in 1683 and 1824, but as far as present day fanciers are concerned, the story only picks up again at about 1850, when poultry shows started, which required standardised plumage colours and patterns for exhibitors and judges to agree upon. Previously, a few farmers had bred uniformly coloured flocks so their birds would be identifiable locally in case of theft. White and Cuckoo Dorkings were probably established for this reason, and 'Old Red and Tawnies' were known and named, along with 'Japans' - black Dorkings with gold or silver hackles. 'Red Speckles' were also known, and could be either marked like present day Spangled O.E.G. or Speckled Sussex. Indeed, Lewis Wright noted that before 1850 the breast feathering of almost all Dorking cocks (except Cuckoos and Whites) had white speckles.

Wright also wrote at length about John Douglas, who established a consistent coloured strain of Dark Dorking, starting in 1857 when he crossed his variable coloured Dorking hens with a cock of unknown ancestry he had imported from India, which was an almost perfect exhibition Dark Dorking cock in terms of colour, size and type, just lacking the 5th toe, which was rectified after a few years of selective breeding. Silver Grey Dorkings were stabilised with their present pattern, particularly in respect of the salmon breast on hens, by crosses with Lord Hill's strain of Silver Duckwing O.E.G., which were recorded as being used by some Dorking men, including Oswald Cresswell of Hereford, who tried this cross in 1868.

Dorkings remained a popular exhibition and practical table breed until the outbreak of war in 1914, and then declined. They only survived through to the present day because of the dedication of a few breeders, until a new generation of poultry breed enthusiasts appeared in the 1970s. The bantam version of the breed has appeared sporadically since the 1890s, but has never been very popular, indeed there are probably more of them, and in more colour varieties, now in 2012 (in the UK at least) than at any time in the past.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE MALE

Carriage: Quiet and stately, with breast well forward.

Body: Body massive, long and deep, rectangular in shape when viewed sideways, and tightly feathered. Back broad and moderately long with full saddle inclined downward to the tail. Breast deep and well rounded with a long straight keel bone. Wings large and well tucked up. Tail full and sweeping carried well out (a squirrel tail being objectionable) with abundant side hangers and broad well-curved sickles.

Head: Large and broad. Beak: stout, well-proportioned and slightly curved. Eyes: full. Comb: single or rose. Either kind is allowed in darks, single only in reds and silver greys, and rose only in cuckoos and white. The single comb is upright, moderately large, broad at base, evenly serrated, free from thumb marks or side spikes. The rose is moderately broad and square fronted, narrowing behind to a distinct and slightly upturned leader, the top covered with small coral-like points of even height, free from hollows. Face: smooth. Ear-lobes: moderately developed and hanging about one-third the depth of the wattles, which are large and long.

Neck: Rather short, covered with abundant hackle feathers falling well over the back, making it appear extremely broad at the base, and tapering rapidly at the head.

Legs and Feet: Legs short and strong. Thighs large and well developed but almost hidden by the body feathering. Shanks short, moderately stout and round (square or sinewy bone being very objectionable), free from feathers, the spurs set on the inner side and pointing inwards. Toes: five, large, round and hard ('spongy' feet to be guarded against), the front toes (three) long, straight and well spread, the hind toe double and the extra toe well formed, viz. the normal toe as nearly as possible in the natural position, and the extra one placed above, starting from close to the other, but perfectly distinct and pointing upwards.

THE FEMALE

The general characteristics are similar to those of the male, allowing for the natural sexual differences, except that the tail is carried rather closely. The single comb, too, falls over one side of the face.

SERIOUS DEFECTS / DISQUALIFICATIONS

Total absence of fifth toe. Legs other than white or pink-white, or with any sign of feathers. Spurs outside the shank. Single comb in cuckoo or white. Rose comb in red or silver grey. White in breast or tail of silver grey male. Any coloured feathers in white. Very long legs. Crooked or much swollen toes. Bumble feet. Any deformity.

COLOURS

In both sexes and all colours:

Beak: White or horn, dark horn permissible in the dark.

Eyes: Bright red.

**Comb, face, wattles
and ear-lobes:** Brilliant red.

**Legs and feet
(including nails):** Delicate white with a pink shade.

THE CUCKOO

MALE AND FEMALE

Plumage: Dark grey or blue bands (barring) on light blue-grey ground, the markings uniform, the colours shading into each other so that no distinct line or separation of the colours is perceptible.

THE DARK

MALE

Plumage: Hackles (neck and saddle) white or straw more or less striped with black. Back various shades of white, black and white or grey, mixed with maroon or red (bronze objectionable). Wing bows white, or white mixed with black or grey; coverts (or bar) black glossed with green; secondaries outer web white, inner black. Breast and under parts jet black; white mottling not permissible. Tail richly glossed black, and a little white on primary sickles is permissible, but white hangers decidedly objectionable.

FEMALE

Plumage:

Neck hackle white or pale straw, striped with black or grey-black. Breast salmon red, each feather tipped with dark grey verging on black. Tail nearly black, the outer feathers slightly pencilled. Remainder of plumage nearly black, or approaching a rich dark brown, the shaft showing a cream white, each feather slightly pale on the edges, except on the wings, where the centre of the feather is brown-grey covered with a small rich marking surrounded by a thick lacing of the black, and free from red. Another successful colour is every feather over the body pencilled a brown-grey in the centre, with lacing round, and the breast as described above.

THE RED

MALE

Plumage:

Hackles (neck and saddle) bright glossy red. Back and wing bows dark red. Remainder of plumage jet black glossed with green.

FEMALE

Plumage:

Hackle bright gold heavily striped with black. Tail and primaries black or very dark brown. Remainder of plumage red-brown, the redder the better, each feather more or less tipped or spangled with black, and having a bright yellow or orange shaft.

THE SILVER GREY

MALE

Plumage:

Hackles (neck and saddle) silver white free from straw tinge or marking of any kind. Back, shoulder coverts and wing bow silver white free from striping. Wing coverts lustrous black with green or blue gloss; primaries black with a white edge on outer web; secondaries white on outer and black on inner web, with a black spot at the end of each feather, the corner of the wing when closed appearing as a bar of white with a black upper edge. Remainder of plumage deep black, free from white mottling or grizzling, although in old males a slight grizzling of the thighs is not objectionable.

FEMALE

Plumage:

Hackle silver white, striped with black. Breast robin red or salmon red ranging to almost fawn, shading off to ash grey on the thighs. Body: clear silver grey, finely pencilled with darker grey (the pencilling following the outer line of the feather), free from red or brown tinge or black dappling.

Note:

The effect may vary from soft dull grey to bright silver grey, an old fashioned grey slate best describing the colour. Tail: darker grey, inside feathers black.

SCALE OF POINTS			
	Dark	Silver Grey or Red	Cuckoo or White
Size	28	18	15
Type	20	12	20
Colour	12	24	15
Fifth toe	10	10	15
Condition	12	12	10
Head	10	16	17
Feet, condition of	8	8	8
TOTAL	100	100	100

BANTAMS

Dorking Bantams are to be exact miniatures of their large fowl counterparts, therefore the same standard as for the large fowl is applicable.