

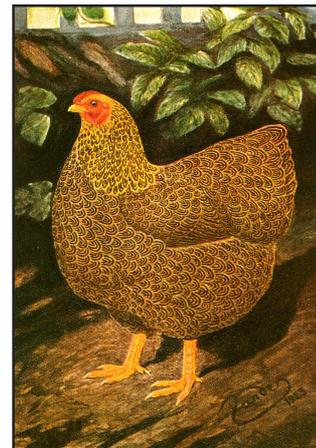
COLOUR BREEDING OF PARTRIDGE WYANDOTTES

Dr. W.C.Carefoot. England.



*Partridge Wyandotte
Male*

When Partridge Wyandottes were first introduced the people drawing up the standard decided to go for the simple beauty which has since caused Partridges to be called the "Royalty of the Showpen." It was a relatively easy matter to decide that the colour of the ideal male would be black with a beetle-green sheen and dark-grey undercolour except for the hackles, shoulders, back and bays. The hackles were to be black with beetle-green sheen uniformly edged with lemon shading to orange at the top of the head, both hackles to match, shoulders and back to be bright red and the wing-bays to be rich bay. Likewise, the ideal female had to be of soft, light partridge brown ground colour uniformly pencilled with concentric rings of black. The rings to be fine and starting inside the



*Partridge Wyandotte
Female*

feather, following the shape of the feather. The tail and wing feathers to be black or pencilled where they are hidden and pencilled to match the body wherever they were on view. The hackle to be as pencilled as possible.

These are very simply defined and precise requirements, but when the breeders attempted to attain these ideals they found they had problems. If they had a male with a solid stripe in the neck hackle his female relations were too strong in the black and this showed itself in black specks in the ground colour of the female. If, however, they had a female of correct ground colour then the male relations were too red, with centre-cores in the neck-hackle and very little black in the saddle hackle. It therefore became apparent that two pens were required, one to breed exhibition males, and one to breed exhibition females. The former were called cockerel-breeders and the latter pullet-breeders. From this moment on partridges were really two colours, the cockerel-breeders being a black-red and the pullet breeders a gold-pencilled.

The colour problem was to find the correct mate for the ideal show bird. The complete solution is still not known but I think we are very close to the answer. I will try to give the logic behind this problem which may be helpful to breeders of other varieties where double mating is required for colour reasons.

The ideal Partridge Wyandotte of either sex is so precisely marked that it is inconceivable that the mate for this bird should be anything but equally precisely marked, but this marking may not be so simply described. Since the perfect show bird is unlikely to be available, the mate for a show bird must be chosen to counterbalance the defects of the said show-bird. For this reason we have to find out which colour patterns in the male correspond with which in the female.

Several definite results:

1. The neck hackle colour of the female is very close to the lightest part of the neck hackle of the male and the width of edging is related.

2. Shaftiness of hackles is related in both sexes.

3. Colour inside the hackles of the male is related to pencilling in the female in some way.

4. Solid black hackles in the male are associated with black specks in the ground colour of the female (called mossiness).

5. The strength of the black and the beetle-green sheen in both sexes is related.

6. Uniformity of body colour in the female is connected with matching hackles in the male.

What a Cock-bred Female must have:

1. Lemon - edged neck-hackles as bright as possible and as free from shaft as possible.



Partridge Wyandottes from Feathered World.

2. Beetle - green sheen wherever it is possible to be seen, for instance in the neck and tail. Some of the best cockerel-bred females shine green on the body in the sunlight.

3. Very little pencilling, with what there is very coarse and blurred.

4. As little shaft on the body as possible, apart from the breast.

5. Primaries as dark as possible.

Having got the basic requirements for a cockerel-bred pullet other minor details probably determine the selection of a mate for a particular male. For instance, it is likely that if a cock-bred female is completely free from body colour then her sons may fail in the wing-bays, but if she has too much body colour then her sons will have shafty hackles. The margin for error is very fine as can be seen from the fact that a completely sound male with perfect wing-bays is rare indeed. Consequently, the amount of body colour on the female to be chosen depends on her mate.

What the Pullet-bred Male must have:

1. Beetle-green sheen wherever he is black.

2. Fairly bright neck hackles, the colour of the brightest part of the neck the same as the neck hackle colour of the ideal female. This discovery has led to a virtual disappearance of foxy females so predominant a few years ago when the fanciers were frightened that a male with a bright neck was partially cock-bred.

3. Hackles with centre core of bay, and not a definite light shaft which will lead to shaftiness in the females.

4. Some red on the breast, as completely solid black breast is related to heavy pencilling.

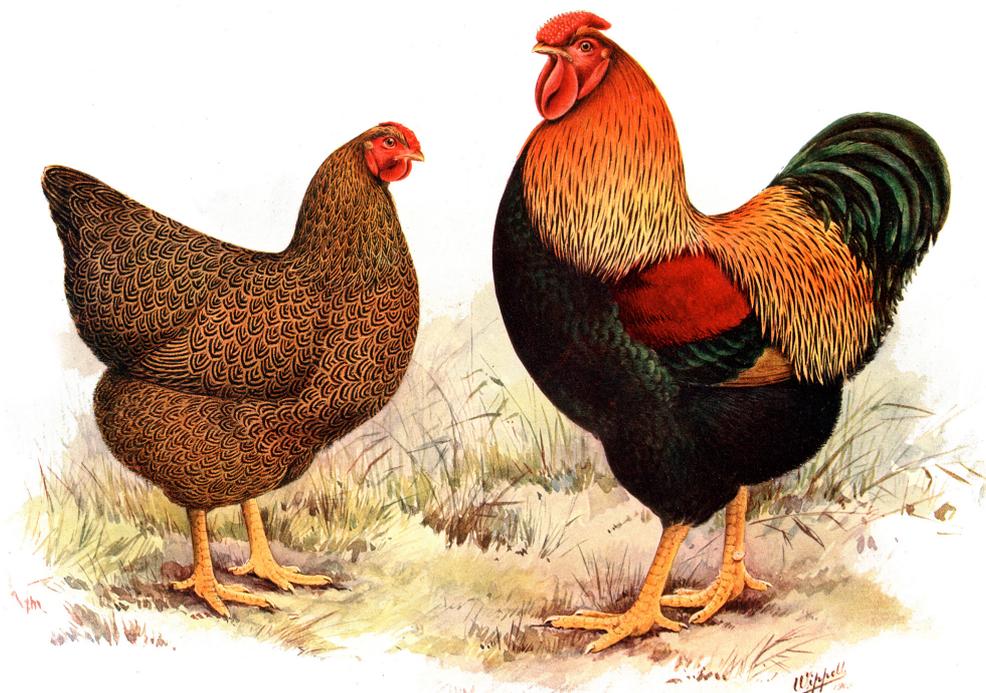
5. Wing bays of which an exhibition male would be proud.

As in cockerel-breeders the male chosen depends on the female selected. If she is too heavy choose a male with little black provided that what there is, is the correct black; if she is weak in the pencilling then choose a male with plenty of black.

Your breeding results can be seen from the chickens at "unisex" stage of eight weeks or so. At this stage the sexes are most alike in colour. A pullet-breeding cockerel will have feathers on the lower breast and on the wing coverts which are pencilled. The cockerels which are the finest and sharpest in the pencilling and which have these feathers of soft partridge brown colour are the ones which contain the potential to breed good coloured females.

It has often been written that the main point in selecting a pullet-bred male or a cockerel-bred female is that they are bred from a long line of exhibition birds. This, of course, is true and if a cockerel-bred female or pullet-bred male is, as I have described them, then it is certain that it's pedigree will be true. However, not all birds with correct pedigree are themselves worthy of a place in the breeding pen.

I should like to stress that I have only discussed the colour and the markings of the Partridge Wyandotte. At no time in selecting a breeding pen should the shape, the quality and breadth of feather, head, eye colour, leg colour and general vigour be forgotten as without these points any breed lacks character.



Partridge Wyandottes from Poultry World.