

Translation of a chapter from the Yuri Dmitriev book “Russian chickens”

Translated by Alexander Korolev

“The Orloff chicken is an old Russian breed. The breed first appeared in the 18th century. Chickens of this breed were known worldwide. There is an assumption that Orloffs were bred by crossing the Gilan game chicken with local breeds. The breed is considered to have been created by Count Orlov, the man, who was responsible for the Orlov Trotter.

Count Alexey Grigoryevich Orlov was born in 1737 (please see the full biography of count Orlov).

According to the recollections of contemporaries, he took his bird so seriously that every egg that was laid was recorded with utmost accuracy and detailed breeding records of each cock were maintained.

Count Orlov had a bird of red plumage basically. He also had Gilan chickens that spread over Russia and were later named Orloff.

The Gilan chicken breed came to Russia from the Persian province of Gilan through Astrakhan. Orloffs received beard and muffs, plumage color and game body from Gilan chickens. Gilan chickens must have been crossed with local breeds to tolerate local weather conditions because the breed was not cold hardy enough. Broadly speaking, Orloff chickens kept the characteristics of its ancestor of the Gilan breed but due to weather and local conditions, they so changed that they were recognized as an independent breed.

By improving his birds, Count Orlov raised an entirely new breed that was later named after him as Orloff.

He first planned to raise a new game breed of chicken similar to Moscow game breed. In the result of crossing Gilan chicken with local breeds, a potentially productive husbandry poultry breed was raised which quickly spread to farms. Count Orlov’s participation in creation of this breed can be noted in view of the following:

- Count Orlov kept game fowls of red plumage that Gilan chicken has;
- only a rich man could buy such fowls because imported birds were expensive, capricious and they needed heated poultry houses;
- a man should have had knowledge and experience in breeding game chickens;
- and skills to select birds in the right direction.

Let’s ask breeders who bred chickens in the 18th century to clarify this matter.

Moscow breeder M. Avrakhov was the first man who presented the bird under this name. Naturally, a new breed raised many questions of fanciers. M. Avrakhov gives answers to them in magazine “Nature & Hunting” for 1881, in which he writes:

“At the 1st Moscow Society of Poultry Fanciers Show on March 1st, 1881, I presented chickens that were called Orloffs in Tula. According to local long-term residents, this breed was raised by Count Orlov, the famous hunter who had bred trotters, pigeons and English game fowls. He most likely bred Orloffs by crossing local chickens with Holland breeds and other foreign breeds. Chickens that were developed were very beautiful. Orloffs have been bred in Tula for more than 70 years; many Tula hunters had bred them till 1860”.

This was how M. Avrakhov who had received a silver medal for his bird described the Orloff's history in his memoirs.

After him, as if to confirm his words, another breeder from Tula A.S. Batashev presents the bird under name Orloff at the second and subsequent shows. As a matter of fact, he receives only gold medals for his bird.

His bird was a great continuing success at the shows. His collection was awarded the first prize of the show many times, and many medals as well. His Orloff cock Fine Fellow and hen Russian Beauty were especially excellent and beyond all comparison.

This is what famous Russian breeder I.I. Abozin, a breed expert and an author of many poultry books wrote about Orloffs later.

"I carefully observe the literature in the field of poultry; I have many various editions with a lot of pictures of every breed – foreign and Russian, but I could not find chickens similar in beauty to Orloffs in any of such editions. Therefore, I venture to say that the Orloff is an independent breed developed by famous Count Orlov. It has existed here in Tula for almost a century. The Orloff breed was named after the person who had bred it".

Orloffs were true bred in various Russian provinces for more than two centuries and they were only raised here. At the end of the 19th century, there were no Orloffs either in Western Europe, or in America. And references to them can only be seen in professional literature.

The golden age of the Orloff breed occurred in 70s-80s of the 19th century. That was a time when the noble Russian Orloff was enthusiastically described. Breeders and experts of this bird I.I. Abozin and A.S. Batashev and others noted its own distinctive features: hackles puffed up, a very wide frontal bone, peculiar beak abruptly bent unlikely in any other breed, a very big height and weight. It was not uncommon to find cocks that could peck from dinner table.

Honorary member of the Russian Poultry Breeders Society S.N. Khudepov wrote in 1901, "The Orloff has only been bred here, in Russia for a long time. We, Russians, are familiarizing Europe and America with the beautiful breed for the first time". And famous breeder I.I. Abozin in his book "Poultry Yard" wrote, "A height of good specimens is quite big. At the exhibition in 1881, the weighting showed that some cocks weighted eleven pounds and hens – 7-8 pounds". By our standards, it is 4.4 kg and 2.8-3.2 kg respectively.

Orloffs were particularly loved in Tula Province. Tula residents delivered them to Moscow and other towns but when foreign breeds became fashionable, Orloffs' fame dwindled here and they were forgotten for about 10 years.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Orloffs achieved the fame of Russian national breed. They were always successful at the national and foreign exhibitions. At the same time large farms appeared for true breeding of Orloffs in Moscow Province, Ryazan Province, Tula Province, Orel Province, Nizhniy Novgorod Province and Kazan Province. I. Abozin wrote that Orloffs were highly esteemed before the Brahma and Cochin chicken had appeared.

Excellent specimens of Orloff chickens were attractions at many poultry shows and their owners were awarded first prizes.

A.S. Batashev was awarded a big gold medal for Orloffs at the 5th Moscow Society of Poultry Fanciers Show in 1884.

A big silver medal was awarded for Orloffs at the show in 1889.

An exhibition of Moscow Society where Orloffs were presented took place in 1892. White Orloffs of I.I. Rudnev were recognized in the category of particularly remarkable exhibits. His Red Orloffs were also rated among remarkable exhibits. A small silver medal was awarded there for Orloffs from M.A. Moskalev's farm.

A Russian Agricultural Poultry Exhibition where Orloffs of different colors were presented took place in Moscow in 1901. The second international poultry show in Saint-Petersburg in 1913 presented Spangled Orloff chickens. The birds were taken from the farm of the Imperial Russian Society of Poultry Breeding. All of them were ringed and had competition rings on the shanks.

There were quite a lot of breeders in Russia. The book "Brief background information on farms where poultry, rabbits and goats are bred" published by N.L. Zhukov in 1913 provides a map showing that the Orloff was distributed across the area in the form of an arch from Nizhny Novgorod to the south and a little to the west, including Moscow. There were especially many farms in southern regions.

The type of Orloffs in southern regions was slightly different from those in northern regions. They had a stronger skeleton and short legs, with beak longer and less bent, very full beards and muffs and full hackles. Cocks had splendid plumage of blood-red color with dark walnut spots on black breast. Hens had solid dark walnut plumage but they were not so good layers as were Orloffs of northern breeding. The temperament of southern Orloffs was more like game fowls. Orloffs bred in the north had calmer temperament.

Orloffs were bred not only for meat and egg production but as an ornamental breed. They were loved and esteemed in trade regions of Moscow, Tula, Ryazan, Mtsensk and Nizhny Novgorod. Russian landowners were attracted to Orloffs too. However, despite this love, Orloffs had become a rarity at poultry shows to the end of the 19th century and finally "left the stage". I.I. Abozin believed that the reason they had disappeared was a fashion for new foreign breeds that quickly filled poultry yards of Russian fanciers. They displaced Orloffs. In Russia Orloff chickens were a rarity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Famous breeder A. Vladimirsky wrote about them in magazine "Poultry Messenger" for 1891, "For 15 years now no mention has been made of them not only at shows but also among hunters, with rare exceptions".

In 1899 I. Abozin visited all places where Orloffs were bred in large flocks in previous years: in Moscow, Tula and Orel but failed to find them. Upon advice of Nizhniy Novgorod fanciers, he went to the small old village of Pavlovo located 100 versts (160 km) from Nizhniy Novgorod and there he had the luck to buy some nests of adult chickens of the Orloff and Pavlov breeds and the young.

In his report to the Society Council on the trip to Pavlovo, Abozin wrote, "Such types of the Orloff as I saw in Pavlovo I had seen 15-20 years ago in the collections of famous Tula fanciers Avrakhov, Batashev and Rudnev. But, thank God, there still remains offspring of these noble breeds, and there is still time for their restoration in the same splendor. If the chance is not taken this time, then we must take final leave of our splendid, big, highly original Orloff breed".

The breed was presented by 14 specimens at the exhibition. After the exhibition the interest started to increase gradually. The Spangled Orloff and the White Orloff were presented at the 2nd international exhibition held in Milan in May 1906. They were awarded the gold and silver medals respectively. The Spangled Orloff, the Red Orloff and the White Orloff were awarded gold medals at the international exhibition in Turin in May 1911.

All these exhibitions aroused the interest of foreign poultry fanciers in Russian chickens.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Orloffs almost disappeared from Russian poultry yards but their stocks increased at West-European breeders' farms. Newspapers in all countries reported,

“A rich patron took Orloffs from Moscow and has them at his poultry yard arranged at his own expense under the Society of the Viennese Poultry Breeders”, “Wonderful birds – big, strong, with very specific eagle heads”.

The Russian breed of chicken became of interest in Austria, Germany and England.

In spring 1884, two nests were bought in Moscow and exported to Vienna and Leipzig. But the birds imported degenerated by 1910. The birds were dark-brown. In 1910 a nest of the Mottled Orloff was brought somewhere near Dresden that was awarded the first prize at the exhibition in Berlin. Its new restoration began with the establishment of the Society of the Orloff Fanciers in Dresden in 1912.

In 1890 the Austrian and German Poultry Society presented Orloff chickens that were brought from Moscow. Foreign poultry fanciers attached particular importance to Orloffs as most suitable for mass breeding in severe weather conditions. The qualities of the Orloff became known over the ocean. The Russian Orloff chickens were awarded the first prize at the exhibition arranged by poultry breeders of Chicago in America.

English fanciers brought their birds for presentation at Moscow exhibitions and took Orloffs when going back to England. Especially many Orloffs were exported in 1912-1914. By 1915 there were so many breeders of the Orloff in England that the Orloff Club was established in England whose task was to improve the productivity of the Orloff. The egg production was increased to 200 eggs in a year.

The diversity of Orloffs' plumage color suggests that Russian breeders were real artists and beauty connoisseurs.

Such colors may be white, amber (lemon), spangled with full, pure white beard and muffs (of two types – red-white and 3-colored); barred (cuckoo); brown-breasted red (with dark-brown beard), black-breasted red (with a black beard and black transversal bar on the wing); Indian red (black and red); palm; black.

The Russian Standard of Perfection for 1899 states the following Orloffs' colors: dark-brown, brown, black, white, mottled, amber.

If to take a good look at colors of the existing Orloffs, we will see that, as being the oldest, the standard for Orloffs was adopted for the Red Orloff that is supposed to be bred by Count Orlov. Next follows so called “Spangled” which is called “Mottled” abroad. They were bred in long-term domestic selection. The Red Orloff became the basis of their breeding whose plumage can be seen in the Spangled variety by a separate red feather. According to the standard, the Spangled Orloff includes not only Red Spangled, but also 3-colored. A Red Spangled is a bird with red or brown plumage with white feathers white laced. Birds that have black color in plumage besides these two colors are related to 3-colored. Typically a spangled feather has the most intensive pigmentation at the border of white and colored sides. For example, brown or grey color of vane in the Spangled is separated from white color at the tip of the feather by a black bar.

It should be noted that so called Black Spangled or Pied that have not yet been included in the standard for Orloffs can often be seen in fanciers' collections. They have been bred quite recently and have not been approved as the standard, despite being frequently presented at exhibitions.

The Pied are fowls with black-white mottled color. Feathers can be pure black or white, or black with white tips and vice versa. Many fanciers call a fowl with such plumage as marbled. As opposed to it, the Black Orloff has been approved as the standard. And the White Orloff has

quite recently been approved as the standard and is considered to be the rarest variety among the Orloff.

For the first time the White Orloff was presented at the 18th Moscow Society of Poultry Fanciers Show in 1887. This is how it is described: “S.N. Khudenvkov presented the White Orloff. It had a pure white plumage which was in harmony with bright red comb and intense yellow shanks. It is the pride and a jewel of his collection”.

This bird was recognized in the category of particularly remarkable exhibits.

According to publications of German fanciers, there are preparations to approve the Barred Orloff variety to be introduced in the standard which resembles the Barred Plymouth Rock. All other Orloffs' colors are considered experimental and are purely fanciers' variants of plumage until approved as the standard.

This is how A.S. Serebrovsky describes some Orloff varieties in 1926.

“The Red Orloff. The cock is red, black-breasted but hackle feathers and saddle are dark-red, up to brown and cherry, triangular patch of bay or chestnut on shoulders to show when wing is closed. Beard and muffs are whitish. In young plumage, many feathers are with white markings, especially in the wing and tail.

The hen is brown, walnut, many feathers with partial blackish band. At the base feathers are grey, muffs and beard are whitish from white tips of feathers. Hackle feathers hardly differ from other plumage. Feathers are a little lighter at the edge, lancets blackish, and rachis lighter.

Chicks are covered with light-colored fluff of various tints on different parts of the body – from almost white and pinkish to brownish. There are often 1-2 brown patches on hackles and back.

Clear distinctions are noticed both in the deepness of brown and the degree of the development of a black band within this sub-breed.

The Orloff breed, the Spangled Orloff sub-breed, is different from the Red Orloff in a large portion of white color. All feathers have white tips. White is thicker up to the head which seems as if covered with snow. Often many flight feathers especially primaries and some tail feathers are purely white. Proximal part of a feather at the border with white patch is colored deeper, up to black.

Chicks do not differ from the Red. Fanciers argue a lot about comb. What shape the Orloff's comb should have: signet, raspberry or rose. I think that we should keep to the original comb shape described by I. Abozin in 1882. He wrote, “A comb resembles a raspberry bisected along the long axis, covered with small tubercles and small feathers growing between them. It is located low on the anterior part of the frontal bone and closer to the nostrils”.

If to adhere to the standards of a comb shape, “raspberry” refers to walnut, not to rose, as some fanciers usually think.

These are the characteristics of walnut comb:

Walnut comb was called so for distant resemblance of its surface with irregular crinkles that we see taking a kernel out of nutshell. Walnut comb is small, low and moved forward: its surface is partially covered with small feather bristles. Walnut comb is rare, it is not wide-spread. Yet it serves as the main breed feature of the Orloff. Rose comb is protuberant, flattened from above, narrow at the rear; upper surface is covered with small tubercles. Such comb is inherent in Orloff chickens. Compared to rose comb, walnut comb is not narrow at the rear and without tubercles on the surface. They resemble wild ancestress in appearance: eye brow ridges are strongly

developed, beak is bent, cocks have some sort of a raspberry-type tony little hat flattened over the beak. Neck is broad. Orloffs' muffs are full. The body has a semi-vertical position so the bird seems long-shanked. Earlier due to pugnacious temper, the bird had to be kept separately from other breeds. It is for a reason that the breed is sometimes called the Orloff Game chicken. Bird's breast is broad, wings are tightly pressed to the sides. Tail is full, but medium size, upright set.

Among the Orloff's features there is the ability to inherit its beautiful beard. Historically, no matter with which breed the Orloff was crossed, its beard was always inherited. Fanciers try to use this quite interesting fact in creating new colors. By crossing the Orloff with another breed, they receive bird with plumage color they need. For example, the White Orloff was bred in the GDR in the result of crossing the Red Spangled variety with the White Plymouth Rock, Leghorn and further selection. As a result beautiful specimens of the White Orloff variety were developed which is known to be the rarest. Besides Large Orloff fowls, bantam varieties of the Orloff are bred abroad which weight: cocks – 1.2 kg, hens – 800 g.

Egg production is 120 eggs in a year and egg weight is 35 g. The size of cock's ring is 15, hen's – 13.

Who decided to specialize in Orloff selection professionally, should know main requirements to the breed, namely:

- the bird's exterior appearance must fully comply with the standard.
- the bird's plumage color must be set out in the standard
- requirements to the breed must be complied with: the bird's weight, egg production, etc.

A rigorous selection of the offspring and matching pure breeders are main factors in the breeding of this breed. The bird is rejected if it has the following disqualifications: narrow head, poorly developed neck hackle, other than walnut comb, white shanks and beak. The bird is unpretentious concerning feed and endures frost well. It is these qualities that the bird is valued for.

Orloffs were created as ornamental breed and, whatever the variety they belong to, they are valuable in terms of their economic qualities. These chickens attract attention by elegant appearance and unique plumage. The meat is white and tastes like pheasant; they are unpretentious concerning feed, they consume a lot of juicy green fodder and tolerate local weather conditions. Hens lay big eggs that weight 60-65 g. The average number of eggs laid in a year is 160-180. The shell of the egg is white to light-pink. Chicks hatch viable.

The original characteristics of the egg shell can also be referred to the features of the Orloff. According to old literature sources, Orloffs' egg shell has a unique pattern, so called "seams" that can be seen even in crossbred birds. It is characterized by seams that can be seen from the blunt end of Orloff's egg to the center if to have a close look at it. The originality of the shell enhances safety of eggs in long-distance transportation significantly.

Chicks hatch hardy and viable and begin on consuming fodder at once. It can be noted that Orloffs' chicks grow fast but feathering is going rather slowly. They adapt to local climate conditions perfectly well. Developing and growing up in natural environment, they acquire necessary qualities for wintering in harsh weather. The bird becomes hardy and resistant that it may be kept in not heated poultry houses. All these qualities attract fanciers to keeping this national breed at their farms.

Chicks often have crooked beaks (crossbill's beak). They reach maturity up to the age of two years and they become the most beautiful then. Therefore the cocks of this age should be used

for the breeding of this breed, otherwise the offspring will degenerate and will differ greatly from the standard in plumage color.

The Great Patriotic War was the most damaging blow to our poultry: a number of breeds, including the Orloff, faced the threat of extermination. Much persistence and obstinacy was required for their restoration.

Poultry breeders believed that the standard of the Orloff chickens of the original type had not been persisted. But it was. A mounted Red Orloff cock and a mounted Spangled Orloff hen of A.S. Batashev, a poultry breeder famous at the beginning of the last century, are kept in the State Darwin Museum, Moscow.

The Pushkin Agricultural Institute keeps a mounted Red Orloff and the Zoological Museum of Saint-Petersburg has a Spangled Orloff cock in its collections.

Due to fanciers' endeavours, the Orloff breed has been restored. Orloffs have been and remain a pride of our poultry breeders. Work on improvement of the Orloff is continuing.

In final decades of the last century, breeders from the town of Pavlovo-na-Oke A. Aminyev, M. Vinokurov, M. Babushkin and others were enthusiasts of Orloffs. The number of birds reached up to a hundred at the farms. Enormous help was provided to them by famous poultry breeder A.S. Blistanov back then. He presented a chicken brought from abroad and it became an ancestor of breeding stock in poultry yards of Pavlovo.

Invaluable contribution in restoration of the Orloff was made by Alexander Sergeevich Blistanov. In 1990 at the Alexander Sergeevich's, a regular meeting brought together an action group of breeders that established an Orloff Fanciers Club. A.S. Blistanov was elected the Chairman of this club by unanimous resolution. Next meeting of the club was held in Pavlovo-na-Oke in 1994. It was attended by the representative of the panel of judges of the Moscow Society of Poultry Fanciers Boris Stepanovich Antonychev, Orloffs' breeder, from Moscow region.

Many breeders do not know about the existence of two origins of the Orloff – Russian and German which was imported from Germany two decades ago. Chickens of both origins are alike only at first glance, but essentially they are markedly different.

During the war, purebred Orloffs were not preserved in Germany, and German poultry breeders, just as ours, started their restoration. This is what German poultry breeder Bert Münster writes in one of poultry magazines: "At the beginning, the breeding was difficult because we did not know how display specimens of chicken should look like. There was an old Russian description given by A. Osipov but it disappeared by the beginning of the war. A new standard description was developed and it was significantly different from the Russian standard and is currently in force basically".

That was the time when occurred a German variety of the Orloff and chickens of this variety were subsequently brought here and were very popular with our poultry breeders.

Orloffs of German origin are as good as Russian Orloffs in terms of ornamentalily. Foreign breeders are equally exacting with the bird's exterior appearance and the plumage pattern. For Russian fanciers, the main thing is the exterior appearance, color and plumage pattern take second place. The Germans have higher requirements to a wing bar (mirror) that red-feathered roosters have. It should be well-defined, black with a blue sheen, but the tail should be black with a green sheen. If this requirement is observed, the plumage gets a very beautiful combination of tints. Another example. A beautiful in color variety of Orloffs – a Mahogany variety – was bred in Germany. The feather color is dark, polished mahogany wood.

The Standard of Russian Poultry Breeds 1905:

Head: medium size, with a very wide frontal bone. Beak is short, abruptly bent at the base. Nostrils and the base of the beak are covered with thin rose-tinted skin.

Eyes: full, bright and amber. Eyebrow ridges are strongly developed.

Comb resembles a raspberry bisected along the long axis, covered with small tubercles and small feathers growing between them. It is located low on the anterior part of the frontal bone and closer to the nostrils. Ear lobes are very small, covered with feathers of the muffs. Wattles are only noticed in cocks, small-sized, red; hens' wattles are poorly-developed.

Beard and muffs: very well-developed, especially in hens.

Neck: quite long, straight set, thickly feathered. From the back of the head, hackle feathers are somewhat puffed up and form a ball-shaped protuberance called "hackles". Feathers are carried close to body at the base of the neck, so the neck does not seem as bulky near the shoulders as in hackles. Back is short, flat and broad.

Breast: broad, rounded, slightly convex.

Body: short and broad.

Wings: of medium length, tightly pressed to the sides.

Tail: of medium size, carried in an erect position and nicely spread. Cock's tail has narrow long sickles, the upper sickles are slightly above the rest of the tail feathers.

Legs: long and strong. Shanks are thick, with shiny thick scales, yellow; toes are the same as shanks in color. Shanks and toes must not be feathered.

Plumage: hard, lustrous. Color of feathers is mainly brown-red or black-red; sometimes you can find mottled red, black and white Orloffs.

Weight of the cock is 8 lb, the hen – 6 lb.

Disqualifications: other than raspberry comb, shanks not yellow, leg feathering, crooked back, poorly developed hackles.

Description of Orloff varieties:

The Brown-Breasted Red Orloff:

Cock. Head, neck, shoulders, back and saddle are lustrous, light-red. Beard and muffs are light-grey, breast, body and lower thighs are light-brown. Tail is black with green sheen. Flight feathers - primaries and secondaries - are with the inner vane of light-brown with shading into black, the outer vane – light-brown. Down feathers are light-brown.

Hen. Head, neck, breast, back, body and lower thighs are light-brown. Beard and muffs are light-grey. Flight feathers are the same as cock's in color. Tail is light-brown with shading into black. . Down feathers are light-brown.

The Black-Breasted Red Orloff:

Cock. Head, neck, shoulders and saddle are velvety red. Beard and muffs are light-grey. Breast, body, abdomen and tail are black with green sheen. Wings are brown or dark-brown with black

transversal bar. Flight feathers – primaries and secondaries – are with the outer vane of reddish-brown, the inner vane – black. Down feathers are grey. The tail feathers are often brown laced; few brown feathers are located at the base of the tail.

Hen. Head, neck, breast, body, lower thighs and tail (at the base) are brown-red; beard and muffs are light-grey. Neck feathers are with a black longitudinal bar. Flight feathers – primaries and secondaries – are with the outer vane of reddish-brown with shading into black. Down feathers are greyish-red.

The White Orloff has a pure white plumage, recessive. Neck feathers are sometimes with yellowness (Nenyukov, 1906). Recessive white plumage color mutation was proved by A.S. Serebrovsky (1926) in the experiments in crossing carried out at the Anikovskaya Genetic Station, and later by S. Monakhov (1978). The latter observed that greyish-brown and bright red color prevail over white. Studies in genetics of white plumage in this variety that were carried out by the All-Russia Research and Technological Institute of Poultry show that, apparently in the result of the admixture of the blood of breeds with dominant white plumage color, there are specimens with both dominant white and recessive white plumage color among White Orloffs (oral report by A.A. Sevastyanova).

The Brown-Breasted Mahogany Orloff and the Black-Breasted Mahogany Orloff.

These varieties are with mahogany, mahogany wood main plumage color, instead of red, as Red varieties' color. The remaining plumage of body parts is the same as Red varieties in color. The whole plumage is mahogany with much shine; beard, neck and flight feathers are black.

The plumage of the Barred variety of the Orloff is the same as the Barred Plymouth Rock in color.

The Spangled Orloff. There is sexual dimorphism in plumage patterns. Cock. Basic color is red, black and white. Head, neck and back are brownish-red. Feathers of beard and ears are pure white turning into light-grey at the edges. There is also a small amount of red feathers in the beard. Breast and body are black with white spots. Wings are brown, with a few white flight feathers. There is a black transversal bar in the middle of the wing, but not well-defined. Tail is black, with sickles white laced. Some white feathers are present in the tail and saddle.

Hen. Basic color is red, black and white. Every feather has brown color at the base, then a black bar and white at the tip. The remaining plumage is the same as the cock's in color. Spangled hen in Orloff Russian type has clay color prevailing in the plumage. The upper part of the neck, wings and tail feathers are black. Some primaries flights are white. The base is light-grey. Breast and abdomen is slightly lighter than the other parts of the body. All feathers are white laced.

The Mottled (red and white) are not, as stated above, true Spangled, they are sometimes called sub-variety of the Spangled. There is also sexual dimorphism in plumage patterns of these birds.

Cock. Head, neck, back and saddle are shiny red-brown with white markings on each feather. Beard and muffs are light-grey, with white feathers.

Beard and abdomen are with white markings. Wings are brown with white markings on the flight feathers and a shiny black bar across the wing. Tail is black with greenish sheen and sickles white laced.

Hen is brown with white spots all over the body. Spangled plumage pattern is quite difficult to preserve as it is recessive in regard to brown and mahogany. It is well-known that the Spangled

Orloff is difficult to breed because this plumage pattern manifests itself quite late. This bird can only be seen in all its beauty by the age of two.

The full name of the Orloff in Latin is *Gallus dom. Pugnax, Barbatus*” the end of citation from the book of Yu.I. Dmitriev.

The Orloff Russian Standard

Origin:

Russia, 18-19th century, supposedly bred by Count Alexey Grigoryevich Orlov-Chesmensky

Purpose of breeding:

Preservation of a rare, vanishing, native chicken breed that may be kept in low temperature conditions and that has good production traits and ornamental characteristics.

General appearance:

The appearance of the breed is half Game type, the bird is big, tall (cock at least 60 cm), with strong skeleton, well-developed muscles, broad shoulders, elevated posture, long thick legs. Long elegant neck, well-feathered, hackle feathers in the upper part are somewhat puffed up and form “hackles”. Typical head that resembles the head of prey birds – falcon or owl, deep-set eyes with heavily overhanging eyebrows due to a wide frontal bone 4-5 cm and more. With full puffy plumage of face and under the beak, covering poorly-developed ear lobes and wattles. Beard, muffs and hackles form something like a ball.

Breed features of the cock:

Body:

Body is short, broad, egg-shaped, elevated in the front part, but not so distinctly as in Malays.

Neck:

Neck is long, straight erect, with full, abundant hackle feathers; from the base of the neck, feathers form a ball-shaped protuberance - “hackles”. Feathers are carried closer to body at the base of the neck, so the neck does not seem as bulky near the shoulders as in hackles. The tips of hackle feathers slightly cover the shoulders.

Back:

Back is short, flat, sloping to the tail, straight, broad in the shoulders, narrows down to the tail. A slight, hardly seen convexity is acceptable.

Shoulders:

Shoulders are broad, square, slightly protruding.

Wings:

Wings are of medium length, wide, tightly pressed to the sides, with slightly protruding shoulders.

Saddle:

Saddle is broad with full, medium length feathers, but without cushion.

Tail:

Tail is of medium size, full, forms a right angle with the back. With narrow, well-rounded sickles of medium size. The upper sickles are slightly above the rest of the tail feathers.

Breast:

Breast is broad, rounded, slightly convex with feathers carried close to the body.

Abdomen:

Abdomen is moderately developed, well-formed.

Head:

Head is of medium size, with a very wide frontal bone; the top of the head is slightly convex and rounded. The back of the head is flat and descends steeply, forming an inward curve where it joins the upper part of the neck.

Face:

Face is red, smooth, partially covered by the muffs.

Comb:

Comb resembles a raspberry bisected along the long axis and flattened from above, covered with small tubercles, or protuberant, broad at the base and narrow at the rear, without spike, covered unevenly with sinuous furrows, in both cases with small feathers. The comb is located low on the anterior part of the frontal bone and closer to the nostrils.

Ear lobes:

Ear lobes are very small, red, unseen as they are covered with the beard and muffs.

Wattles:

Wattles are poorly-developed, red, covered with the beard.

Eyes:

Eyes are bright, being orange-red or amber by color, deeply set under well projecting eye brows as in prey birds.

Beak:

Beak is short, thick, massive at the base, abruptly bent as in prey birds, the beak with an air space more preferable in former times, yellow, a slight ridge is acceptable.

Beard and muffs:

Muffs are big, full. Beard is, preferably wedge-shaped, or with a fold slightly suspending under the beak. The Spangled and the White Orloffs have white muffs and beard.

Lower thighs:

Lower thighs are thick, round, protuberant, with feathers carried close to the body.

Shanks:

Shanks are long, quite thick, not feathered, with shiny, smooth scales, yellow.

Toes:

Toes are long, straight, widely spaced, not feathered, yellow.

Shanks and toes should not be feathered.

Plumage:

Plumage is hard, lustrous, the face, neck and abdomen with very full plumage, and the breast with shorter and hard plumage.

Breed features of the hen:

Breed features of the hen are similar to the features of the cock, except those which are due to sexual differences. Body is longer and not as wide as in the male, the back descends to the tail less. Tail is not so upright set. Abdomen and fluff are more fully developed, therefore the wings seem shorter. Beard and muffs are very much developed, ear lobes and wattles are hardly developed and fully covered by face feathers, that is by muffs and beard. Comb is poorly developed and covered by small bristles. Hackles are more protuberant and full.

Disqualifications:

Short height. Small weight. Narrow, or spindle-shaped body, or not semi-vertical setting of body. Narrow breast. Narrow or crooked back. Too long legs. Beak long, straight, of narrow width. Poorly developed beard. Poorly developed hackles. The spangled chickens having black beard. Shanks not yellow. The young chicken having not bright yellow legs.

Basic color of the spangled chickens is dark-red brown (mahogany). Feathered shanks and toes.

Weight:

Cock: Cockerel 3 -3.5 kg. Second-year cock 3.5 - 4.5 kg.

Hen: Pullet 2.5 -3 kg. Second-year hen 3 - 3.5 kg.

Egg production:

Egg production 160-180 number in the first year, 120-150 – in the second year.

Minimum weight of an egg is 58 – 60 g

Egg color is from rose-white to light cream, or of light rose color in the spangled chickens.

PLUMAGE COLOR:

The most wide-spread varieties are:

1. The Black-Breasted Red:

COCK: Beard and muffs are dimly black, with greyish down feathers. Head, neck, shoulders, back and saddle are lustrous, velvety dark or red-brown. Breast and abdomen are black, wings are dark-brown, with black transversal bar with green sheen. Flight feathers –

primaries and secondaries – are with the outer vane of reddish-brown, and the inner vane of black, down feathers are grey. Tail is black, with greenish sheen (tail feathers are often white laced; few feathers are located at the base of the tail).

HEN: Beard, muffs, neck, back, breast, abdomen and lower thighs are reddish-brown. Flight feathers – primaries and secondaries – are with the outer vane of reddish-brown with blackness, down feathers are greyish-red.

2. The Brown-Breasted Red (walnut):

COCK: Head, neck, shoulders, back and saddle are lustrous, light-red. Beard, muffs, breast, abdomen and lower thighs are light-brown, or there are grey-white feathers in the beard feathers and muffs feathers. Flight feathers – primaries and secondaries – are with the inner vane of light-brown with shading into black, and the outer vane of light-brown. Tail is black, with greenish sheen, down feathers are light-brown.

HEN: Head, beard, muffs, neck, breast, back, abdomen and lower thighs are light-brown. Flight feathers – primaries and secondaries – are with the inner vane of light-brown with shading into black, and the outer vane of light-brown. Tail is light-brown with shading into black, down feathers are light-brown.

3. The Black and Red Orloff (Indian Red):

They are different from the Red in much black color at the edge of feathers. Neck, saddle and tail are black with green sheen. Beard with white feathers is not a major fault. Note: in the Black and Indian Red varieties, a white feather on the head is the priority in the assessment (snow on the head). Shanks are yellow, shading is slightly black, acceptable in assessment.

4. The Spangled:

COCK: Basic plumage color is light-brown to reddish-clay. Breast, lower thighs and abdomen are black with white spots. Wings: primaries flights – the outer vane is brown, the inner vane is black, the tip is white. Secondaries flights – the inner vane is brown, the outer vane is black, the tip is white, three or four white primaries flights are acceptable.

There is a black bar with green sheen (mirror), not very well-defined, on the wing. Tail is black, sickles are white laced. Some white feathers in the upper sickles of the tail are acceptable.

HEN: Basic color is similar as in the male, but lighter, with big white spots all over the plumage, and with black proximal bars between white and brown. Lighter plumage color in hens of older age does not reduce their value.

5. The Mottled:

Similar as in the Spangled variety, but with interchanging white, black, red and brown plumage color in males.

6. The White:

COCK: Plumage color is pure white to cream tint of white, a slight yellow shading in old cocks is acceptable. Beak and shanks are shiny, bright yellow.

HEN: Pure white.

Disqualifications: strong yellow shading, not white feathers or other than white specks in feathers.

7. The Black:

COCK: Plumage color is black with strong green sheen.

HEN: Plumage color is black, smoothly saturated.

Disqualifications:

Plumage color with violet sheen, not black feathers or other than black specks in feathers.

8. Mottled Black:

Basic plumage color is black, feathers with white tips, with green sheen in the male. Color of young hens manifests itself weakly, as a rule. The main requirement is an even distribution of white pattern all over the body according to the gender. Moreover it is necessary to ensure that color of white spots is pure white, with clear boundaries from black feather color, and smooth without specks.

Disqualifications:

Plumage color with violet sheen, not black feathers or other than black specks in feathers.

More than four primaries flights are entirely white. The size of white tips in covert feathers is more than 1/3 of the feather.