
Spanish

Paul Morgan, Breed Registrar

The Spanish as it is known in the UK, or White-faced Black Spanish, as it is known in other parts of the world; Cara Blanca or Española Cara Blanca in Spain, is a breed of domestic chicken which originated in Spain, but was largely bred to its present type in Great Britain in the eighteenth century.

A mature White-faced Black Spanish has a completely white face, and large white earlobes that hang very low. This "painted face" look earned them the nicknames "Clown Faced Chicken," or "Clown Chicken" for short.

Lewis Wright discussed Mediterranean breeds in his Book of Poultry and wrote in 1909: "The white-faced black Spanish has been much the longest known of these breeds, and it is perfectly easy to understand how it probably came to us direct from Spain. In the days of Philip the intercourse between this country and Spain was very great, so that Spanish and Portuguese wines almost drove French vintages for a time from the English market".

The Spanish was first popular in the West Country being the first ports reached by Spanish trading ships. However, breed names were a little confused with word of mouth.

Rev E S Dixon wrote in his 1848 book Ornamental and Domestic Poultry: "In North Devon they call the Spanish fowls 'Minorcas,' others call them Portugal Fowl, neither terms removing them far from their old-established location, if not their original home. It is a noble race of fowl, possessing many great merits; of spirited and animated appearance, of considerable size, excellent for the table, both in whiteness of flesh and skin, and also in flavour, laying exceedingly large eggs in considerable numbers."

The Spanish Breed through the UK Spanish Breeders Group is one of the RBST/RPS "target" breeds and continues to grow from strength to strength in all parts of the UK. From Anglesey, Ireland and Northern Ireland in the West to Inverness in the North of Scotland to The Isle of Wight in the South and Essex in the East.

From a relatively low activity level in previous years the breed has now its own website, dedicated email address and a quite an active UK Facebook page. Details of contact points appear later in this article.

Contacts have been made with breeding groups in the USA and Australia and individual breeders in Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy, Indonesia, Turkey and Czech Republic. We are always looking for new breeders to help us – please feel free to make contact.

We look forward to eventually having the breed accepted on the DEFRA Breeds at Risk Register.

The group produces quarterly newsletters and copies of these and other articles of interest have been uploaded onto the website and we continue to look for historical articles, photographs etc. in order to build

a decent archive for future generations to refer to. Any help in the way of donations of old pictures, books or information on where to look for articles or information on the breed would be gratefully received. Also, on the website is a scientific article kindly provided by the



Female Spanish

Roslin Institute in Scotland in collaboration with the RBST. Where it discusses in their DNA study of British breeds of poultry that "although the Spanish is genetically distinct, it also possesses very low genetic variation and was the lowest contributor to overall genetic diversity in the study."

UK Breed Standard

Origin: Spain

There are records of Spanish fowl in the UK as far back as 1572 and over the centuries there were further imports from both Holland and Spain. During the 19th century Bristol became a centre for the breed and enthusiasts focused on developing and enlarging the white face that the breed is known for. Indeed, the breed is also known as the White-faced Black Spanish.



Historical painting pair.

The breed was very popular during the 1840s and 1850s and large numbers were seen at poultry exhibitions throughout the UK. It is thought that a Spanish Club was founded in the latter half of the 19th century but the actual date is unknown. By the beginning of the 20th century the breed's popularity had slumped and the breed remains very rare.

The Spanish is a large Mediterranean breed, a slender laying breed with glossy black plumage. The breed's distinctive feature is the large white face

which is particularly impressive on the cocks. The standard gives half of the judging points for the head - 35 points out of 100 for the face and 15 points for the comb and wattles. All of the facial skin should be pure white without red patches, brownish scabs or other blemishes.

This is a breed for the specialist - that is those with only a very small number of breeds. In order to maintain a prize -winning flock, a considerable number should be kept.

The males are susceptible to extreme cold. Outside runs should be protected from wind, rain and extreme sunlight. As with the other Mediterranean breeds the Spanish is an active, flighty breed and a non-sitter.

The breed is a reputable layer but is reputed to be not as hardy as other Mediterranean breeds a claim disputed by long term Spanish breeders.

There is an increased interest in showing Spanish and in recent years serious breeders numbers have risen into the 30s and new breeders are joining all the time. The bantams are still extremely rare and this is forming an important part of the work the breeding group is doing, as with the Spanish Blues and Spanish Whites. Whilst the ongoing task of improving the quality of the Blacks continues year on year.



Spanish Bantam

General characteristics: male

Carriage: Upright, with proud action

Head:

- Skull long, broad and deep
- Beak long and stout
- Eyes full and wide open
- Comb single, somewhat small, erect and straight, firm at the base, rather thin at the edge, fitting closely on the neck at the back, of very smooth texture, and free from wrinkles, rising well over the eyes but not so as to interfere with the sight, and joining the ear-lobes and wattles

- Ear-lobes deep and broad, well rounded at the bottom, extending well below the wattles, meeting in front and going well back on each side of the neck, of fine texture and free from folds or creases

- Wattles very long, thin and pendulous

Neck: Long and fine, with abundant hackle flowing well over the shoulders

Body: Rather long, fairly broad in front, and tapering to the rear

Breast: Full at the neck and gradually decreasing towards the thighs

Back: Slanting downwards to the tail, short wings carried closely

Tail: Full, not carried too high, and with the sickles large and well curved

Legs and feet: Rather long and slim. Shanks free of feathers. Toes, four, slender and straight

Plumage: Short and close

General characteristics: female

With the exception of the comb (which falls gracefully over either side of the face) the general characteristics are similar to those of the male, allowing for the natural sexual differences.

Colour

Male and female plumage: Black with a beetle-green sheen, and free of purple bars

Comb and wattles:

bright red

Face and ear-lobes: white

Legs and feet: pale slate

Beak: dark horn

Eyes: black

Scale of points

Face and lobes	35
Comb and wattles	15
Type	15
Size	15
Colour	10
Condition	10

100

Weights Large

- Male 3.20 kg (7lb)
- Female 2.70 kg (6lb)

Weights Bantam

- Male 1075g (38oz)
- Female 910g (32oz)

Serious defects

- Blue, pink or red in face or lobes
- Coarse 'cauliflower' face or lobes
- Male's comb not erect, side sprigs on comb
- Lobes pointed at the bottom
- Black or dark legs or feet
- Any deformity

Bantam

Bantam white-faced Spanish should follow exactly the large fowl standard.



Blue Spanish Male



Spanish Male

Contacts

For more information about the Spanish, contact the Breed Registrar, Paul Morgan.

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