

Interpreting The Dominique Standard in 2015



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February 25, 2015

Points for Evaluating a Dominique

By Mark A. Fields

For the past 30 years I have been a champion of America's oldest breed of livestock, the Dominique chicken. I've seen the fortunes of the breed rise and fall. Likewise I've seen breeding pressures that sway the type, color, pattern and weight of the Dominiques swinging wildly.

When first approached about creating a judging brochure I dismissed it until a dear friend pointed out that there are few of us left that have seen the quality Dominiques of yesteryear. It is my intent that this brochure gives us a common judging standard for our breed so that we might slowly turn the tide and once again have Dominiques of quality shown across the nation.

I am not so naive as to believe it will be universally accepted. Currently there are breeders who are winning with large Dominiques of poor type that are grossly oversized. Likewise the bantams are all over the map. Part of the blame is judging, but in my mind the majority can be pinned on the breeders themselves. It takes work to produce Dominiques that meet the Standard.

Speaking of the Standard of Perfection and the Bantam Standard I do not believe you will find anything that runs contrary to them. The "Standard" that I present is based predominantly on A. Q. Carter's recommendation to the APA in 1914. This was the "Standard" used by the National American Dominique Club (precursor to the Dominique Club of America.) It goes into greater detail than the current APA Standard of Perfection. I have woven into this Standard the bantam details and tweaked a few passages for clarity and to emphasize points pertinent to today's fanciers.

Disqualifications

- Comb falling over to one side badly or so large as to obstruct the sight.
- Absence of spike on comb
- Permanent white in ear-lobes
- Crooked backs
- Wry tails
- Tail badly squirrel
- Absence of main tail feathers.
- Entire absence of long sickle feathers.
- Feather or feathers or stubs on shanks or feet or toes or any signs of any having been removed.
- More than 4 toes.
- Legs, toes and beak of a color foreign to the breed.
- Web feet.
- Any feather or feathers or part of a feather of any color foreign to the breed, excepting solid gray, either light or dark.
- Any large fowl specimen falling 2 pounds or more above or below standard weight. (The APA uses 20% for a DQ)
- Any bantam specimen falling 10 oz above or below standard weight.
- Faking of any sort whatsoever shall disqualify the specimen and the entire exhibit of the exhibitor.

Special Notes to Judges

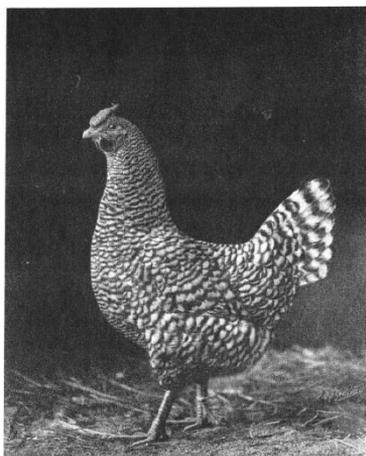
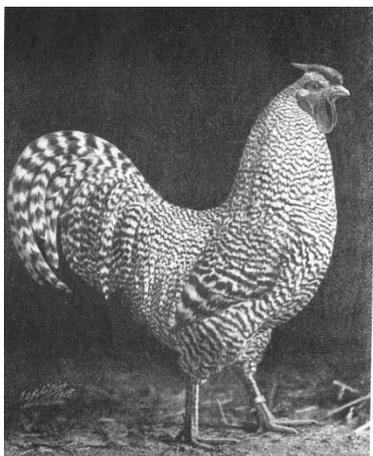
Very coarse-boned specimens shall not receive a ribbon over fine-boned specimens.

A specimen showing decided Barred Rock plumage shall not receive a ribbon over a specimen carrying the genuine Dominique gray plumage.

A heavy, dull, sluggish type of bird shall not receive a ribbon over a bird of active temperament and alert carriage. Other things being equal, shape and utility characteristics shall be considered of more importance than color.

Excellence of pattern will be determined by clarity of cuckoo pattern with minimal bleeding of dark into light

When considering excellence priority shall be given to type, then size and finally color.



Artwork of Schilling from the 1915 A.P.A. Standard of Perfection

Standard of Weights

Large Fowl

Cock	7 lbs.	Hen	5 lbs.
Cockerel	6 lbs.	Pullet	4 lbs.

Bantams

Cock	28 oz	Hen	26 oz
Cockerel	26 oz	Pullet	24 oz

Important Considerations on Combs

The Standard of Perfection does not say the Dominique has a round spike. It just says a spike that turns slightly upward. The picture of a rose comb shows what appears to be a round spike. Under Breed Shape, the Standard says to take off 2 points for a blade shaped spike.



However, the Bantam Standard specifically states the comb must have a spike that is round from its base to its tip. Additionally it states that a spike that is blade shaped is a defect. In the Dominique bantam the comb is only 5 points though some judges erroneously give more importance, similar to what is given for Rosecomb Bantams.

Some cocks have a spike that isn't huge like a blade, and unless you look closely you might not notice it's flat. While this is not a disqualifying trait, a round spike is preferred.

Shape of Male

Head - Of medium size, fine shape and carried well up.

Beak - Short, stout, regularly curved.

Eyes - Medium large and very clear.

Comb - True Rose, not large and beefy but compact, firm and straight on head, nearly square in front, even on sides, free from hollows and any tendency to overhang, terminating in a spike at rear, the top of which inclines to turn up; top of comb evenly filled in with small, rounded points.

Wattles and Ear-Lobes - Wattles, medium broad, nicely rounded and not too large. Ear-lobes, oblong, of medium size.

Neck - Of medium length, gracefully arched, tapering, hackle abundant.

Wings - Long and wide, well folded; wing bows and points well covered by breast and saddle feather.

Back - Of medium length and breadth, rising with a concave sweep to tail.

Tail - Long, full of medium expansion; sickles, long, well curved.

Breast - Full, round, prominent.

Body and Fluff – Body; compact, oblong in shape, with a broad back and good length. Fluff, medium full.

Legs and Toes - Thighs, moderately long, not large and coarse, strong, well covered with close, soft feathers; shanks, fine bone. Toes, of medium length, straight, well spread; shanks and toes free from feathers and stubs.

Shape of Female

Head - Of medium size, fine shape and carried well up.

Beak - Short, stout, regularly curved.

Eyes - Medium in size, clear, nearly round.

Comb- True Rose; similar to male, but much smaller.

Wattles and Ear-Lobes - Wattles, small and well rounded. Ear-lobes, of medium size, oblong.

Neck - Medium short, gracefully arched, tapering.

Wings- Medium long and wide, well-folded.

Back - Of medium length and breadth, slightly concave.

Tail - Full, rather long, expanded, carried at about 45 degrees from horizontal.

Breast- Full, round, prominent.

Body and Fluff - Body; compact, oblong in shape, with a broad back and good length. Fluff, moderately full.

Legs and Toes - Thighs, medium long, not large and coarse, strong, well covered with close, soft feathers; shanks, fine in bone. Toes, of medium length, straight, well spread; shanks and toes free from feathers and stubs.

Color of Male and Female

Beak - Yellow. Males should be clear yellow though females may have a small amount of dark stain at the base.

Eyes - Reddish-bay

Comb, Face, Wattles and Ear-Lobes - Bright red, not dark and dull.

Legs – Yellow. Males should have a rich yellow color. Females may have a small amount of dark shadow on the front of the leg. Excellence to be determined by clarity of color.

Plumage –Slate (blue gray, not black), well defined alternating light and dark lines or so-called barring which are narrower in the male than in the female, these two shades should never appear as stark black nor white. The tip of each feather should preferably be of slate and should be free from a faded, brownish tinge, shafting or a metallic luster. Under color is of no particular consequence but historically it was found to be gray with indistinct lines of the darker shade of gray. However these days we see distinct barring that goes clear to the skin which eliminates the gray under color. Excellence will be determined by the clear shades of gray alternating within the plumage.

I feel compelled to include my personal favorite. Up until about 1995 we still saw a few of the old “blue” Dominiques in the oldest lines. The bars were a dove gray on a silver white background as opposed to the darker gray we have today. This color resulted in the Dominique appearing blue from a distance. I personally will strive to recover this trait due to its historical significance.

Front Profile - Male

Let us now consider the profile defined by the breast and front underbody of the mature male as it applies to the preferred overall side view of the Dominique.

When an adult male Dominique is standing erect, this front outline should be well rounded and the breast should reach but not extend significantly beyond a line drawn vertically from his nostril to the ground. Specimens with the breast projecting excessively in front of this imaginary line are undesirable and not characteristic of the breed. It is interesting to note that this is one of the major differences between the profiles of the Dominique and the Leghorn male. The Leghorn's breast extends farther forward, and his underbody is relatively higher, whereas their backs and tails are more nearly alike.

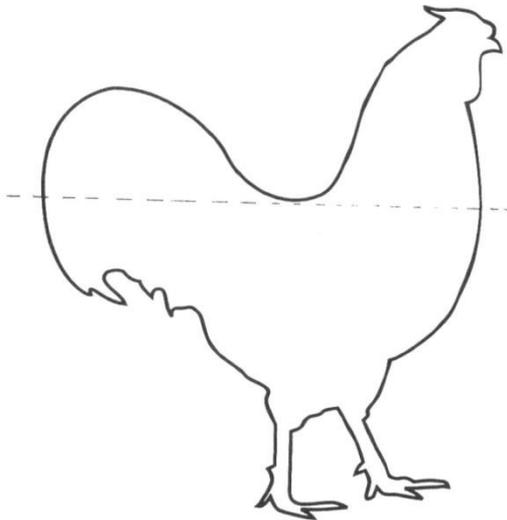
Even less desirable is a Dominique having the front of the breast well behind this line. This latter trait, if coupled with the front underbody being too high, can produce an objectionable "tube-like" appearance. This problem must not be overlooked in evaluating a specimen, even if all other features of the bird are nearly ideal.

The ideal Dominique in hand will more resemble a Leghorn than a Plymouth Rock, with a little more width, and a lot more flesh on a breast that is carried high. This reflects the Dominique's origin as a dual purpose breed.

These comments about the front of the Dominique male also apply to the adult female Dominique. However, the profiles of the back and tail of Dominique and Leghorn females are dissimilar.

Shape of the Male Back

Attention to this point is particularly important because the back shape -- by this we mean the overall side view encompassing the back of the neck, the top of the back and front of the tail—is first in importance of the items for consideration in judging Dominiques in competition. Secondly, and from an aesthetic viewpoint, the Dominique male with a proper back profile is a joy to behold even if some other characteristics are only average. Unfortunately, males with this prescribed shape are few and far between. Specifically, the male Dominique’s back profile should describe an opened-up letter “U” that has the side representing the tail tipped out to be at an angle of 45 degrees from horizontal. There should be a continuously curving sweep down the back of the neck, across the back and up the tail without any straight lines or sharp break in the curve at a point where the tail starts up. This shape is shown below.



Profile of Dominique male’s back

One of the most common faults found with the profile of many Dominique males is a flat region at the back -- that is, at the bottom of the “U” — which some fanciers refer to as the back being “too long”. Another is a tail that rises too steeply, being at an angle considerably greater than 45 degrees with the horizontal. The straight region in the back, and the tail that is too steep often occur together and, in doing so, produce the sharp, uncharacteristic break at the bottom of the tail.

The back being “too long” probably arises in most cases from an ancestry that includes Barred Plymouth Rock, which may have been used to overcome inbreeding problems and to regain size and vigor in a Dominique line. This characteristic can be “bred out” of your Dominiques by careful selection of birds for the breeding pens.

Bottom Line of the Male

From the chest down the front of the Dominique underline closely resembles that of the Leghorn or Hamburg, though the legs are set slightly more forward.

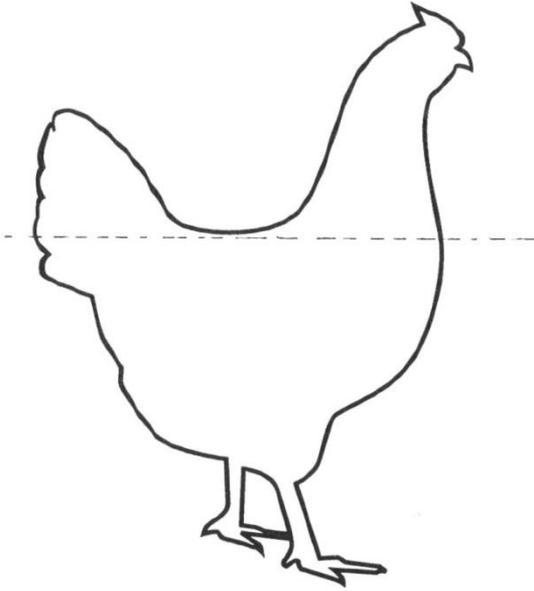
However, there the similarity ends. The Dominique back and tail is set higher which results in more of the “rear” of the Dominique being visible below the saddle and tail.

A male with Plymouth Rock influence will have a low slung chest resulting in a more horizontal bird. The chest will be set further forward away from the legs and there will be a noticeably fuller body behind the legs. Pictured is probably the most famous “bad” Dominique that too many breed towards. In later years Roger Voter regretted using the Megargee rooster in the club logo because of the poor type that tended towards a Plymouth Rock.



Shape of the Female Back

First, consider what the Standard of Perfection calls for. The back, starting near the base of the neck, should be of medium length with a curve that is so slight as to be almost flat to a point where the tail rises. The next important point is that the back should slant to the rear over the entire distance from the neck to the tail. The outline figure shown below, with a dashed line to show the horizontal plane, indicates these.



Profile of Dominique female's back

In contrast, the back of the Dominique male has a definite “U” shape, and thus does not show the characteristic slant of the hen's back. It is also shorter than the hen's considering the comparative sizes of the Dominique rooster and hen.

Crosses with Barred Plymouth Rock and Wyandottes have obviously been used in the past to instill new vigor and other

characteristics into Dominique lines. However, the imprint of their breed characteristics clearly shows up in later generations of Dominique females. The source of this influence can easily be seen from the pictures of the Plymouth Rock and Wyandotte females in the Standard of Perfection. Their backs slant in the opposite direction, toward the head.

Bottom Line of the Female

Similar to the male, the female's front line all the way down to her toes is close to that of a Leghorn or Hamburg.

Again, if there is Plymouth Rock influence the chest will be farther flung out away from the legs, yielding a bird with a heavy front end. This is considered a serious fault.

The fluff and rear of the Dominique female more closely mirrors the Leghorn and Hamburg than does the male counterpart. However the set of the tail is what yields a different profile of the breed.

Like the male, the female should appear as though she is alert and spry; standing on well centered finely boned legs.



Back and Body Width

Now let's discuss the breadth of the back of idealized Dominiques as prescribed by the Standard of Perfection. In this discussion, this breadth (or width) is as observed from above. Appearance of the bird's body from the front will, of course, also show the effect of this breadth. The Standard says the back of both the male and female should be moderately broad and, as we have previously shown, of medium length. At this point it may be helpful to make a mental visualization of "moderately broad" by comparison with some other breeds. Obviously, the ideal Dominique should not have a back that is broad and flat at the shoulders like Wyandottes or Plymouth Rocks. Specimens being represented as Dominiques and having quite broad backs are seen from time to time. These birds, which are not desirable type, probably have resulted from the recent use of Wyandotte or Barred Plymouth Rock in the breeding pen. The broadness definitely detracts from the handsome, trim, compact appearance of the correct Dominique type.

On the other hand, Dominiques with very narrow backs are not characteristic of the breed and should not be used in breeding. This narrowness will undoubtedly be found where the body weight of an adult, healthy, otherwise normal bird is well below that called for in the Standard of Perfection.

In comparison to other commonly seen breeds, the back of a Dominique should be somewhat but not much broader than that of a Hamburg or Leghorn. The Standard calls for Hamburg males and females to have "fairly wide" backs, so they may offer good reference. But one must remember that we are referring to the back width as relative to the overall size of the bird. The Hamburg is a smaller bird than the Dominique by two pounds for cocks and one pound for hens. The Leghorn, which the Standard says should

have a “moderately broad” back, is closer to Dominique size (six vs. seven pounds for cocks and four and one half vs. five pounds for hens) and thus offers a more direct comparison.

In summary, the back width of a Dominique should be such as to create an image of the body being well filled out without being bulky, and compact without looking underweight. The Dominique should be wide at both the shoulder and hip. When viewed from above the bird should have a good shoulder and fullness of the tail. When viewed from the front or rear the legs should be set well apart but firmly below the body so as not to look out of balance.



This hen is the epitome of poor type. Too coarse, too large, too thick, wrong stance due to type, etc. We must breed away from this type.

Tapered Tail in Female

One characteristic, not often considered, that detracts from an otherwise appealing appearance when the tail is viewed from the side, and at the same time results in a variation from the Standard of Perfection, is what might be called a “tapered” tail. This is a condition where the tail feathers appear to be gathered too closely together. It can result from the upper tail feathers being the proper length and the lower tail feathers being short and perhaps curving upward, or from the upper tail feathers being abnormally long and the lower tail feathers being the normal length. In either case, the lower tail feathers may assume too high an angle relative to the back, while the top tail feathers are maintained at the more nearly correct angle.

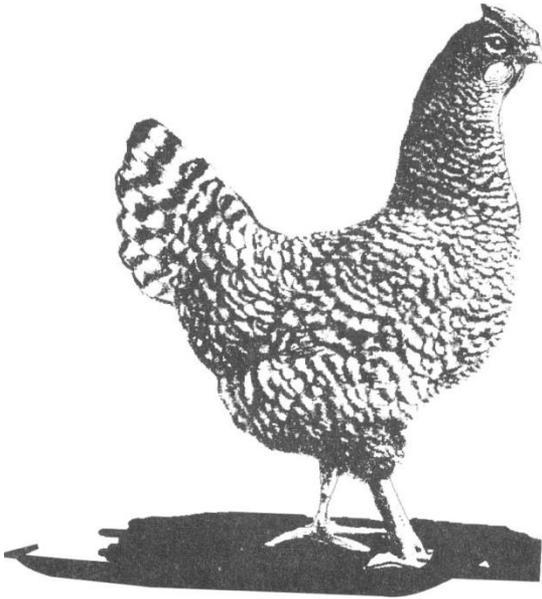
By contrast, there are several long-tailed breeds in which these female tail feathers are gathered tightly and the lower feathers are comparatively short. For example in the Hamburg and the White Faced Black Spanish females, the line represented by the tips of the tail feathers slants in toward the lower body, and in the female Campine this line “rounds” in toward the body. However, this line of the feather tips in the female Dominique should be nearly vertical except that it may curve in slightly at the top. This is illustrated below, along with the tail shape to be avoided.



Correct and incorrect tail spread

Careful selection of females for breeding, as well as culling females with objectionable tails, is probably the only way to eliminate this problem. The Dominique female shown below, as pictured in the older Standard of Perfection, better illustrates the appearance of the proper tail profile.

There is no question that in the Dominique female the proper profile and length of the tail enhance her beauty.



Female Dominique bred by A. Q. Carter

Main Tail Feathers

For both the male and female mature Dominique, the main tail feathers should be lined up in an overlapping fashion in two rows that resemble an inverted “V” spread farther apart toward the bottom. The figure that follows, showing the widest aspect of the

main tail viewed from the back of the bird, illustrates correct as well as poor conformation:

When the rows of main tail feathers are spread the correct amount, they fit well with the lines of the back of the Dominique, which is supposed to be moderately broad for both males and females. With tail feathers forming two rows that are too close to each other, the whole tail gets a “pinched-in” look that is not typical Dominique. This narrowing will be evident even when viewed from the side. Likewise, a tail that is spread too wide produces an undesirable appearance and makes the bird seem unbalanced toward the back as viewed in profile or from above. I have observed birds having Dominique characteristics except for small size and very broad tail that would appear to have come from mating a Dominique with some other breed.



Desirable, too narrow and too wide tail spread, as seen from the rear of the bird.



Details of Feathers

So that we will all be talking about Dominique plumage from the same basis, your attention is called to the Standard of Perfection, which states that the feathers should be “crossed throughout their entire length by irregular dark and light



bars that stop short of positive black and white”, with the “tip of each feather dark” and “with the under color of all sections slate colored”. In addition, much of the description of Dominique feathers that is generally accepted is derived from the Schilling pictures in the Standard, from writings of poultry authors in the early part of this century and descriptions of the “cuckoo” pattern, which Dominiques possess.

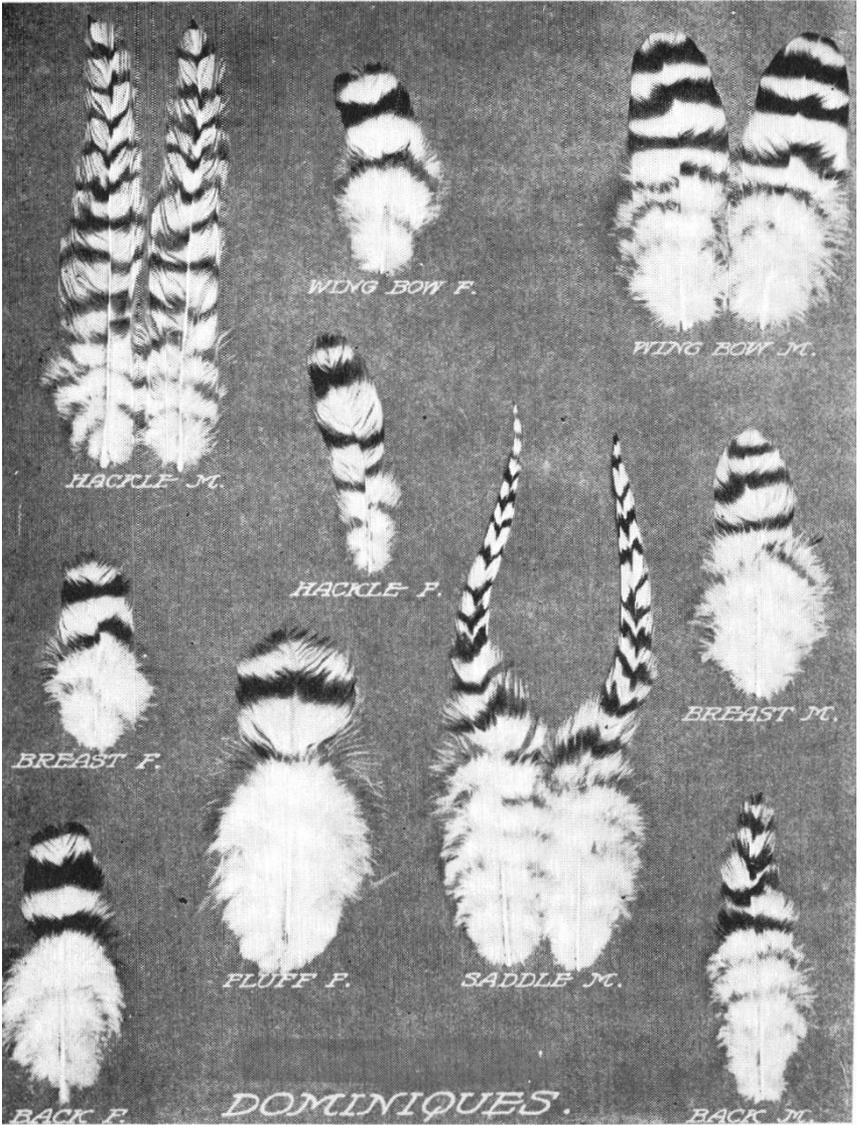
We must be clear on one point. The cuckoo pattern is not a substandard barring. It should never possess the clear distinct even barring as seen in the Barred Plymouth Rock.

In the main tail feathers of the male, the dark bars should be widely spaced and have the general appearance of an irregular “V”. The key words here are “irregular” and “widely spaced”. There are several acceptable variations, as shown in the figure below.



Well Marked Dominique Feathers

Bureau of Animal Industry, United States Department of
Agriculture



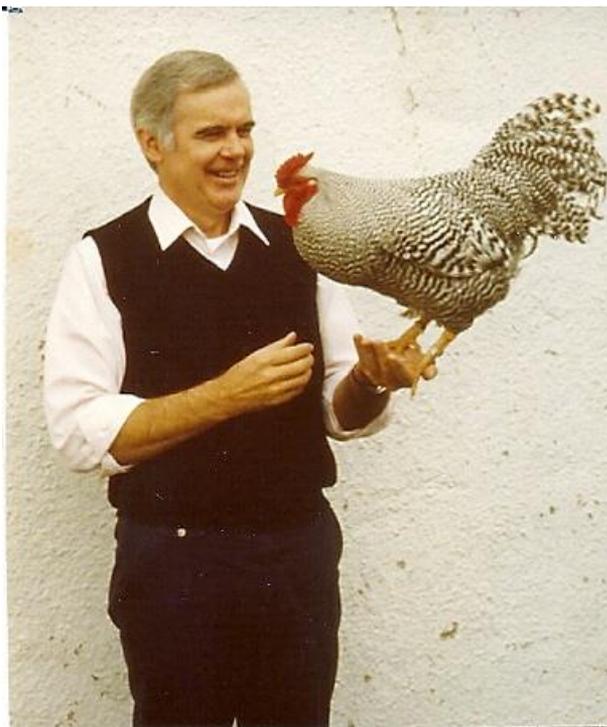
On an adult large male, the spacing of the dark bars should be on the order of 1 to 1 ½ inches on centers. The main tail feathers of the female should also be irregular and proportionately widely spaced. However, they do not seem to have as pronounced a “V” shape as do those of the male.

To be avoided are the regular, straight, dark bars and particularly those that are more closely spaced than indicated above. This undesirable regularity of pattern may result, among several reasons, from crossbreeding with Barred Plymouth Rocks. It is interesting to note that the appearance of Dominiques with these objectionable characteristics was evident in times past, as indicated in an article in the American Poultry World page 240, vol. 3, January 1913, which laments that besides the Dominiques' becoming rare at shows the authors “occasionally find a few specimens at fall fairs but they are not the Dominiques of old. The barred Plymouth Rock cross is too plainly evident in these modern Dominiques, the finer and more regular barring...not being the characteristic color of the breed of the past.”

This undesirable characteristic of fineness and evenness of pattern will also be evident in other male tail feathers such as the main and lesser sickles as well as elsewhere on the bird and will produce an uncharacteristic overall appearance that is easily spotted by a Dominique fancier. Obviously, you would avoid breeding this pattern into your flock, and if your birds already have it, should eliminate it by proper selection of breeders.

Another trait that is a personal goal is the return of the “eye” to the female's feathers. The last bar on the body feather are closer to being lacing than a straight bar. This results in the last light bar looking like an orb or eye. Refer to the Schilling female as an example.

As for the shade of the dark bars themselves, there may be a considerable variation in the degree of darkness among young males, depending on heredity. In this regard it should be noted that as males become older (for example, three or more years old) the dark bars in the tail feathers as well as in the main sickles, etc., may become progressively lighter, giving a “washed out” appearance. We have not observed this condition with the female tail. This trait does not affect the bird as a breeder however it should be discouraged in males for exhibition.



David Hyman with one his cockerels “Victor”

Bantam vs Large Fowl

This is a difficult topic. Ideally we would like Dominique bantams to be exact miniatures of the birds that were retouched for the Standard of Perfection by Schilling. However, today the bantams shown are the dwarf equivalent of a Dominique, not a miniature.



Dwarfism is a condition where an animal is smaller except certain attributes are disproportionate to the body. The most obvious trait in our bantams is the wings. Many otherwise fine specimens have long wings, some to such an exaggerated length as to have the feathers grow past the rear of the bird. In others the wings are long and very low hung.

Our goal is to have Dominique bantams that closely mirror the Schilling depiction of A. Q. Carter's winning birds. This will require breeders to select bantams with better wings, a little harder of feather and more refined combs.

We encourage judges to award those bantams most closely resembling the description put forth in the Standard and as depicted by Schilling and Gary.

However, I cannot endorse the use of the current color Standard pictures; they do not accurately represent our fine breed.

In Conclusion

Large Fowl

- We need to return to smaller better typed Dominiques.
- The combs need to be refined.
- Better cuckoo pattern.
- Eliminate the washed out sickles in males
- Breed for tighter feathers
- Bring the slightly arched neck back to the breed.

Bantams

- Breed for a consistent type – Use Schilling pictures as guide.
- Reduce the size to Standard weights
- Pull up the wings on the males
- Males must have wider sickles, not narrow, short feathers.
- Improve the pattern
- Move away from black and white birds
- Improve yellow on female legs
- Refine the combs
- Breed for tighter feathers

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