



RARE BREED

JAVA'S

The Java is one of America's rare breeds; it is one of the oldest and most useful of the dual purpose breeds in North America. The history of the breed is that both the black and the mottled varieties arrived in the US from Java in around the 18th century. The breed soon expanded across the eastern US and eventually down to Missouri, there is a belief that Java's were crossed with Black Hamburg's

and Cuckoo Dorkings to produce the Dominique's, this is a claim made by the poultry historian Weir. Many other historians think that the breed was crossed with the early Cochin imports; therefore the breed is considered to have Asiatic origins with an oriental influence. Java's were used to develop other breeds these in particular included the Black Jersey Giant and the Barred Plymouth

Rock, the popularity of the breed reached its highest around the 1850s to 1860s but with the development of the Jersey giant it caused a demise of the breed as a table bird, in 1880 the black Java was crossed with a Black Langshan and Dark Brahma which is the actual cross which produced the Black Jersey Giant, with this creation came the instant relegation of the Java back to farmyard status at the same time another rare breed the Jersey blue was also pushed to one side but unfortunately they soon became extinct. The Java was only saved by one hatchery Urch/Turnland Poultry and a few private breeders, without these the breed would almost certainly suffered the same fate as the Jersey Blue. Thankfully with this number of dedicated breeders continuing to keep the breed it was eventually admitted to the American Standard of Perfection in 1883.

An institution The Garfield Farm Museum became involved in the Java in the mid 1980s when research found that Java's, Dorkings, Hamburg's, Dominique's and Poland's were present in the 1840s especially in Illinois, For a number of years the Farm kept the breed for exhibition but in 1986 the plans were made to

keep rare breeds on the site as a permanent fixture.

In 1992 a letter from a Mr Robert Gregory of Alabama voiced his concern that the Java was indeed under threat of extinction but even though contact with Mr Gregory was lost the Hatchery of Urch/Turnland Poultry still had Java's.

Thankfully the Garfield Farm Museum decided to launch a program to conserve the rare breeds including the java, so in 1994 the project started and although with several mishaps along the way by 1994 success was achieved and by using intergenerational mating the numbers soared. The hatching tends to produced males which are too small so approximately half the males are culled on size alone.

Breeding the Java's is not difficult but to produce a pure bloodline is not quite so straight forward, there were tests carried out at the university of Iowa using a blood test to try and establish the purity of the breed, these were compared with Astrolorps, Black Jerseys and the Barred Rocks combined with the birds from the Urchs parent flock, although the test were not totally conclusive they did agree that there is a definite possibility that the Black Java's studied are indeed from a pure bred bloodline.

The Java has a nice temperament combined with excellent laying abilities, they are still a first class meat bird and are normally calm and easy to handle although they are a very active breed.

The hens lay a large rich brown egg and do in most cases make very good mothers, the young cockerels make good table birds and a Java Male can produce about 9.5 pounds as the female tend to be around the 6.5 mark.

The breed is available here in the UK but is very rare, and although not a British breed all conservation is important, what I like about both these and the Buckeyes is there ability to both produce eggs and meat which competes with today's commercial breeds, although I may be bias in keeping pure breeds what is better than a pure breed with these standards.

The breed has a variation which is the mottled java which is a very attractive counterpart to the self black; the standard for the bird is almost identical taking into account the colour variation.

The conservation of these American breeds is of the utmost importance as world wide we are losing breeds of poultry which are irreplaceable.



Black Java Cock bred in the UK



Mottled Java wing showing feather pattern

