

= Sebright chicken =

The Sebright / ˈsiːbraɪt / is a breed of chicken named after its developer , Sir John Saunders Sebright . The Sebright is one of the oldest recorded British ' true ' bantam (meaning it is a miniature bird with no corresponding large version of the breed) , created in the 19th century through a selective breeding program designed to produce an ornamental breed .

The first poultry breed to have its own specialist club for enthusiasts , Sebrights were admitted to poultry exhibition standards not long after their establishment . Today , they are among the most popular of bantam breeds . Despite their popularity , Sebrights are often difficult to breed , and the inheritance of certain unique characteristics the breed carries has been studied scientifically . As a largely ornamental chicken , they lay tiny , white eggs and are not kept for meat production .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

Sir John Saunders Sebright (1767 ? 1846) was the 7th Sebright Baronet , and a Member of Parliament for Hertfordshire . In addition to breeding chickens , cattle and other animals , Sir John wrote several influential pamphlets on animal keeping and breeding : The Art of Improving the Breeds of Domestic Animals (1809) , Observations upon Hawking (1826) , and Observations upon the Instinct of Animals (1836) .

Charles Darwin read Sir John 's 1809 pamphlet , and was impressed with a passage that elaborated on how " the weak and the unhealthy do not live to propagate their infirmities " . These writings , along with Darwin 's correspondence via their mutual friend William Yarrell , aided Darwin in the inception of Darwin 's theory of natural selection . Darwin 's seminal work On the Origin of Species , first published in 1859 , cited Sir John 's experiments in pigeon breeding , and recalled " That most skilful breeder , Sir John Sebright , used to say , with respect to pigeons , that ' he would produce any given feather in three years , but it would take him six years to obtain head and beak . ' " Darwin also cited Sir John extensively regarding the Sebright bantam , as well as pigeon and dog breeding , in his 1868 work Variation of Plants and Animals Under Domestication , his 1871 The Descent of Man , and Selection in Relation to Sex , and his book on Natural Selection (which was not published in his lifetime) .

= = = Development = = =

With the breed that carries his name , John Sebright intentionally set out to create a very small bantam chicken with laced plumage similar to the laced variety of Polish chickens . Although the exact makeup of the breed is uncertain , he is thought to have crossed British , Hamburg , Nankin and Polish birds with a base of Rosecombs before achieving a laced chicken that would breed true . After the breed 's establishment circa 1810 , Sebright founded The Sebright Bantam Club , which was the very first individual breed association for chickens . The breed has appeared in the American Poultry Association 's Standard of Perfection since the first edition in 1874 . Today , the breed is one of the ten most popular bantam chickens , according to the American Bantam Association .

= = Characteristics = =

In accordance with the intentions of their creator , the Sebright is an ornamental bantam , and is commonly seen in competitive poultry shows . As a true bantam , all Sebrights are very small in stature ; males weigh an average of 22 ounces (625 grams) and females 20 oz (570 g) . Their short backs , proportionally large breasts , and downward ? pointing wings combine to create an angular , jaunty look .

All Sebrights have plumage that is laced around the edges evenly with black , on a base of either dark gold or whitish silver . Sebrights have unfeathered legs with slate ? blue skin , and their beaks are ideally a dark horn color . Sebright roosters carry a rose comb covered with fine points , and a small spike that sweeps back from the head (called a leader) . Combs , earlobes and wattles were originally a purple colour referred to in the fancy as mulberry , but today are often bright red though mulberry is still desired according to the standards in most countries . Some breeders consider hen feathering to have an adverse effect on the fertility of male Sebrights , and may use roosters that don 't carry the trait for breeding purposes , despite their automatic disqualification in shows .

Characteristically , Sebrights are only one of a few chicken breeds in which the roosters are hen feathered , meaning they have none of the long , sickle ? shaped feathers common in most roosters that appear in the tail , neck and saddle . Due to the unique characteristic hen feathering , molecular biologists have found the Sebright bantam a useful model organism in the study of sex hormones . This is because they carry a mutation that causes the tissues of their skin to convert an unusually large amount of male sex hormones (androgens) into female sex hormones (estrogens) .

They are kind birds but the male Sebright may get protective around hens and may turn on its own owners like all roosters may do . And due to their light , flighty nature it might be best to keep them contained to a smaller , fenced off area . Sebrights often will live happily living amongst other breeds as well . Sebrights are not prolific egglayers and hens are only expected to produce 60 @-@ 80 creamy @-@ white eggs each season .

= = = Husbandry = = =

Sebrights are neither prolific egg layers , nor outstanding meat birds . They can prove to be particularly difficult to raise , especially for beginners . Hens rarely go broody and chicks usually have high mortality rates . Adults are generally hardy birds , but are especially susceptible to Marek 's disease .

In temperament , Sebrights are friendly and actively social birds . Males are not known to be aggressive , but Sebrights in general , like most small chickens , are somewhat skittish birds . Due to their small size and relatively large wings , they are one of a minority of chicken breeds that retains a strong flying ability . Thus , most keepers keep Sebrights in confinement rather than allowing them to free range . Due to their genetic make @-@ up , males may on occasion be born infertile , further complicating breeding .