

Appleyard Ducks: breed profile (2)

By Christine Ashton

For any breed, the adult offspring should look like the parents and, for the purposes of standardization, the shape, size, colour and markings should be distinctive. Males and females will closely resemble one another in down, juvenile and eclipse plumage. The colour form, therefore, needs to be genetically stable.

Appleyard selection

There is a great deal of agreement worldwide on what the various breeds and colours in waterfowl should look like. Appleyards, which are striking in appearance, are seen in baskets of Mohawk ducklings in the Far East; they have become very popular in Australia in both full-size and miniature form; and have been developed as a breed in the USA. Dave Holderread's adult birds (2011, page 81) reflect those of Tom Bartlett and the BWA Standards (2008). The regular occurrence of the silver-white face markings suggests that this characteristic is often linked to the restricted gene, but these markings are not essential to the mallard restricted allele. The face markings are a separate characteristic, identified in the French Challans ducks and drakes (cf. *Fancy Fowl*, April 2011).

What makes this breed colour distinctive?

Colour combinations			
<i>The table shows that the duck colour genes span the breeds. The Rouen, Mallard Call and Mallard Runner share the same plumage properties. The same is true of Abacots, Silver Runners and Silver Calls. Hence standard descriptions for these colours should be similar. Modifier genes such as brown hoods, tail colour intensity, face markings (i.e. Appleyard markings) contribute some variability in the detail.</i>			
Alleles	Mallard (M^+ / M^+)	Dusky (md / md)	Mallard restricted (M^R / M^R)
Phases			
Dark (Li / Li)	Rouen Mallard Runner Mallard Call	Dark Campbell Dusky Call	
Light (li / li)	Rouen Clair Trout Runner Trout Call	Fawn Runner * Dusky Runner*+	Appleyard (large) Appleyard (Mini) Appleyard (Call)
Harlequin (li^h / li^h)		Silver Runner Silver Call Abacot Ranger Welsh Harlequin*	
KEY	No standard colour	+ plus blue	*plus brown

As you can see from the table, pure colours make the pure breeds. But cross-breeding will introduce mixtures. The ducklings in Article 1 were a mixture of M^+ and M^R . They were also split (heterozygous) for light phase and dark phase. In addition to this kind of mixture, some

‘no-go’ areas (marked in orange on the table) are regularly turning up in Appleyard classes at the shows, the birds showing many of the listed *Disqualifications* and *Faults* which are indicative of cross-breeding.

Photos in the standards

Inaccurate Appleyard photos can be very misleading for new breeders/exhibitors and people who sell eggs on the internet. The birds illustrated in past Poultry Club Standards have never matched the text, and show numerous faults. They probably mislead some judges into awarding *First* to birds which are crossbreeds—which goes on to disillusion those who pen the correct birds which are ‘passed’!

The photos of the birds in the Poultry Club editions (1997, 2007) show drakes (Miniature and Large) with excessive claret along the flanks. The Miniature (1997) even shows a pied fault. Dark grey underbodies are also indicated in drakes (1997, 2007), as are solid/dark grey wing coverts. The female Miniature photo used in both editions also shows this wing fault. In addition, her crown graining and eye stripe are too dark, and the colour on the neck may not join the shoulders without a break. This photograph, taken pre-1997, did not meet Tom Bartlett’s criteria.

Show-birds are often photographed even when awarded *First* in a class with no competition—and where there is no assessment of their worth on a points scale. In addition, some birds have been photographed outdoors, often in late summer. By then, the females are in poor, old, weathered feathers; the drakes are even in partial eclipse (page 449, Poultry Club Standards 2008). Standards photos should be of birds in nuptial plumage, at their peak for the winter shows.



An example of serious faults
‘Dark grey underbody and/or wing coverts. Excessive claret along the flanks.’

Despite showing these faults, the drake was placed first because of clear head markings.



Drake placed third despite no major faults. The broad bands of white tipping the secondaries (speculum) and tipping the greater coverts (which overlie the secondaries) are correct for mallard restricted. M^R also gives the paler plumage on the wing coverts and body, and paler colour of the 'split chest'.

Some key factors for breeders and judges to keep in mind:

- Although size is important in the large Appleyard, it is 15 points; colour is 30. Biggest is not best. Size is increased by cross-breeding; colour is confused by cross-breeding.
- The face markings of the Appleyard are a distinctive stamp BUT they are independent of the other colour genes (*Fancy Fowl*, October 2015.)
- A big drake with good face markings might not be the winner. His body plumage should be pale, not dark, grey. He should have a white band on the greater coverts (overlying the blue speculum). Wing markings are a good guide to his purity; the patterns on the bars help distinguish between dark phase/light phase/harlequin phase.
- Variability in the ducks is less evident from their plumage. But they should not be dark brown like the Rouen Clair. Face markings (eyelines) should be apparent but not too dark, on a clear cream ground to justify the term 'silver'. No brown or shadow of a hood (the hood being a Streicher/Abacot Ranger characteristic).
- Choose breeder ducks from selected, correct drakes. Select matching pairs in the fluff, then juvenile and eclipse plumage when they are similarly marked.
- Mallard Restricted is basically dominant for the yellow Mohawk, but in M^+/M^R ducklings there is a darker under-fluff, leading to the growth of darker feathers.
- Another consideration: the preferred show-pen 'shade' seems to have got darker. Birds have probably shifted from light phase to dark phase which may make the eye lines darker and more defined, and the pencilling and ground colour stronger. Such birds are brown, not 'silver'. This has probably come about because pure light phase birds often lack blue iridescence on the bar in the first year (see photo). They are usually perfect in year 2.
- There will always be a certain amount of variability in the 'shade.' What are perceived as 'perfect birds' are quite likely split for light phase/dark phase—but agreed photos in the standard would help.

Finally—this is a plea for the next Poultry Club standards book: either leave out the Appleyard photos, or get photos which represent the true birds. This 'breed' is on the 'Rare breeds' list, yet most people are in a fog about what it should actually look like.

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First prize drake with underbody too dark. His greater covert markings (upper wing bar) show fine white rimming around the tip of each feather. This characteristic and the exaggerated claret flank colour would grace a Welsh Harlequin. The female from same breeder was third with a similar wing bar and muddy face markings.



Fourth prize drake: lighter grey underbody and less claret. The corresponding, and best, duck (M. Hicks) was first, showing a broad band of white on the upper wing bar (greater coverts)—a matching pair.



Young drake thought to be mallard restricted (M^R) and pure for light phase. He has the correct yellow bill, pale face and throat markings, and pale grey body. The claret does not extend too far along the flanks, and the wing fronts are white. His fault is the lack of blue speculum, which will be corrected in Year 2. Fear of this forces exhibitors to use darker drakes i.e. drakes split or pure for dark phase, which also makes the ducks 'browner'.



Both John Hoyle and ourselves have bred Miniature Appleyards for over 25 years. We have consistently found that judges would choose the correct ducks – but not the corresponding drakes which they considered to be ‘too pale’. These drakes on the pool match the females. Both sexes show the characteristic mallard restricted light wing bar (not visible here). The birds are also similar in colour to Tom Bartlett’s original photographs.

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