



ABOUT CALL DUCKS

Written for YEPA by Evy Avery, November 2008. ABA Master Breeder



The smallest of the domestic waterfowl, the Call duck was so named because of her especially loud quack or "call". It's believed this breed was developed in Holland in the early 1800s. Their loud voice & small size made them perfect little decoys for hunters. Carried in a pocket or basket, they were tied in the marshes & used to entice migrating birds down. This practice ended many years ago, but the toy-like little ducks continued to grow in popularity among collectors. They are now one of the top 5 breeds shown in this country.

Calls are hardy little waterfowl & easy to keep but are not the easiest to propagate. The desired type has evolved over the years from the racy, long bodied, long billed look of a Mallard to the short, round bodied, short billed bird found in the showroom today. These traits have made breeding & hatching somewhat more difficult than in other breeds like East Indies. With good stock & patience though, the rewards are worth the effort.

When choosing breeding stock, be aware that the tiny bird you see on Champion row, while adorable, often is useless for breeding. The tiny ducks may not lay & the smaller drakes often don't breed or are sterile.

Choose your breeders from birds that have the correct type & good proportion but are a little bigger. Thankfully, many judges today are taking these facts into consideration. They realize we may be breeding the desired type Call out of existence by demanding smaller & smaller birds.

When choosing the duck you want to show or breed from, the word to keep in mind is "round". *The head should be round* with a definite crown or rise from the bill to the top of the head. The eye should be set in the center, rather than towards the top of its head. The bill is short and broad; the neck is short & the head carried back, not forward of the breast. The body is short and carried level on very short legs. The overall appearance is that of a chubby, little toy.

There are a couple of good books available on Call ducks. One is a British publication "Calls & Other Bantam Ducks". It's available from several poultry dealers. Another desirable book is the revised "Call Duck Breed Book" by D. Sheraw. The American Bantam Association carries this book.

The National Call Breeders of America has a nice website that offers much information. and, of course, there's always the APA or ABA Standard. These will give you the correct information regarding type & color of the accepted varieties.



The photo shows the first Call to become Grand Champion of an ABA National Meet. He was a white old drake, bred & shown by Evy Avery.