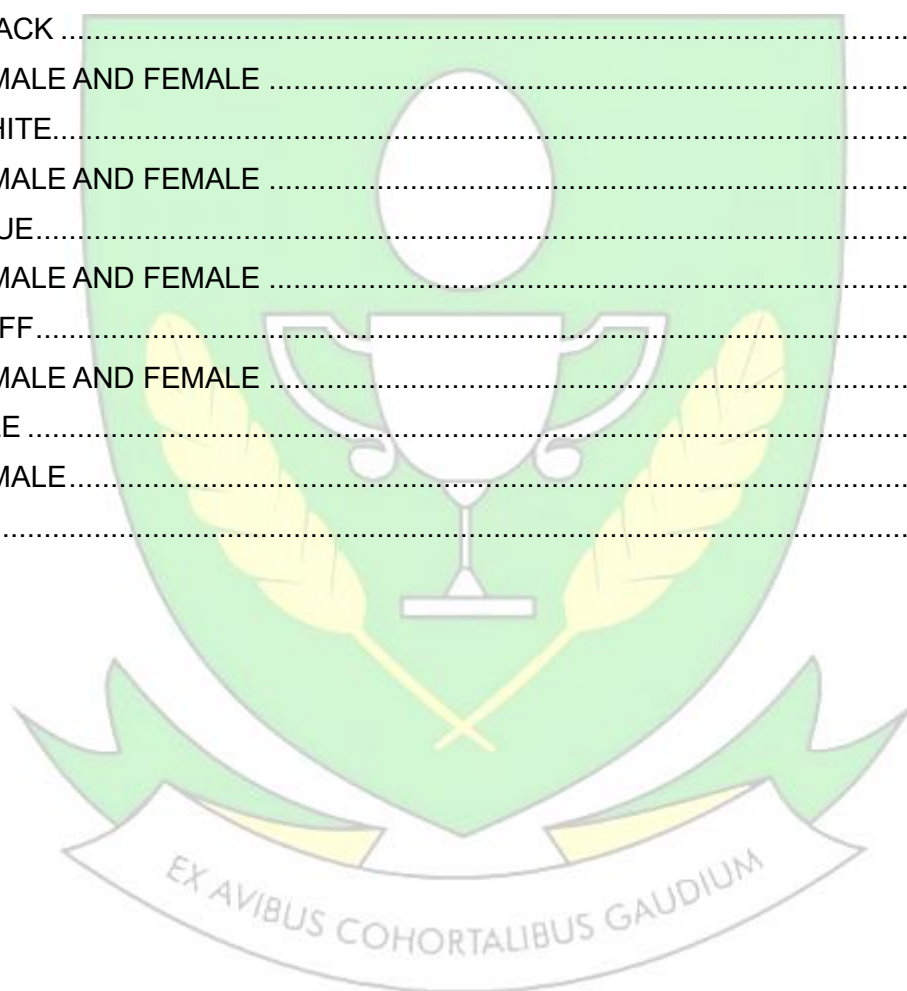

MINORCA

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AREA OF ORIGIN:	Mediterranean
CLASSIFICATION:	Light breed: Soft feather
EGG COLOUR:	White (Non-sitters)
MASSES:	
LARGE:	
Male:	3.2 – 3.6 kg
Female:	2.7 – 3.6 kg
Cockerel:	2.7 – 3.6 kg
Pullet:	2.7 – 3.2 kg
BANTAMS:	
Male:	960 g
Female:	850 g

(Excessive weight to be strongly discouraged)

The Minorca has been developed in Britain as their heaviest light breed, and was at one time famous for its extra-large chalk white eggs. Crossing with the Langshan and other heavy breeds did not improve the egg production of the breed, and concentration on exaggerated headgear had a similar effect. Those times have passed and wiser counsel now prevails. The result is that a much better balanced type is aimed for on the show-bench, with moderate size of lobes and of comb, and a more prominent frontal.

Minorcas originated on the island of Minorca and were imported into England early in the 19th Century. The fowls which were imported to England from Spain in the year 1780 to 1820 were rather small and with much smaller ear lobes than the later standard Minorcas. They remained virtually unchanged for about a century, as valued layers of extra-large chalk-white eggs, until the competitive atmosphere of the British poultry show scene prompted fanciers to try some crosses to improve their chances of success in the 1880's. Indeed, until about 1870 Minorcas were only kept in the south-west of England by breeders that were former Spanish and French prisoners of war, who decided to settle here when released from captivity as part of various colonial wars, as well as the 1807-1812 Peninsular War. Minorcas were virtually unknown north of Gloucestershire or east of Wiltshire.

The first series of crosses were made with White-faced Spanish, which had long been a very popular breed in the Bristol area. This was obviously done to increase lobe size, but the breed obviously required subsequent back-crosses to restore the red face. Minorcas were exported to the US and Canada in about 1885, and fanciers in those countries have continued with the type fashionable then, with smaller lobes and a bigger, more fanned tail, than has since become the norm in the UK, Germany, and most other countries. The second series of crosses was with large black breeds such as Langshans and Orpingtons, and was

done by fanciers in the north of England. By 1890 Minorcas of large size and with big lobes, were being shown all over the UK, indicating that the North Country and Bristol breeders had exchanged stock.

They became a very popular breed from about 1900 until 1930, with several regional Minorca clubs in addition to the main UK Minorca Club formed in 1888. There was even a Utility Minorca Club formed in 1925 to promote the smaller, more productive type. This was followed by a gradual decline in popularity, with amalgamations of all those clubs to a single UK Minorca Club in 1962.

Black has always been the main colour variety of Minorcas, but other colours do, or did, exist. Whites have been known at least as far back as the 1880s, but have never been popular. This is probably because competitive exhibitors, who wanted something similar, regarded the White Leghorn classes as 'the only game in town'. Buff Minorcas were only ever bred in the US, and were mainly bred and promoted by the Lindgren Brothers of California, circa 1905-25. A barred variety was made in Germany, but was never accepted as a Minorca. This variety was standardised as a separate breed, the 'Deutsche Sperber', where they still exist, but are very rare. Blue Minorcas were known in Devon, England as far back as 1890, but were not widely bred until promoted by another Devon fancier, Herbert Whitley in the 1920s. He had an extensive collection of poultry breeds and other livestock, concentrating in 'Blue' varieties in all of them. A classic English eccentric! Rose-combed Black Minorcas were made in both the UK and US by crossing with Black Hamburgs, but few have been seen since 1940.

Minorca Bantams were first seen in about 1900, but remained very rare until the 1920-1940 period. It can be a problem, but a fascinating problem for enthusiasts, to combine Minorca characteristics such as the long back, strong boned shanks, and relatively large lobes and comb, on a bird small enough to be a satisfactory 'Bantam'. This conundrum may have limited their popularity, along with the difficulties of keeping the lobes perfectly smooth and white, and the face red. Judges appreciate the skill required, so a good Minorca Bantam has an excellent chance of going on to win top show awards over the other 'Best of Breeds'.

It can be reliably stated that South African stock originally came from England. The first pile Minorca was bred by the late Mr. Eustace Schoultz from Pretoria.

GENERALE CHARACTERISTICS

THE MALE

Carriage:	Upright and graceful. Smart, active and alert.
Body:	Broad at the shoulders, square and compact. Breast: full and rounded. Wings moderate in length, neat fitting close to body. Tail: full, sickles long, well arched and carried well back.
Head:	Long and broad, so as to carry the comb upright.
Beak:	Fairly long and stout.
Eyes:	Full, bright and expressive.
Face:	Fine in quality, as free from feathers or hairs as possible, and not showing any white.
Ear-lobes:	Medium in size, almond shaped, smooth, flat, fitting close to the head. The lobe should not exceed 6.88cm in length and 3.75cm at its widest part on the top, tapering as the Valencia almond in shape. No definite size for lobes is fixed in bantams.

Wattles: Long and rounded at the end.
Neck: Long, nicely arched, with flowing hackle.
Legs & Feet: Legs of medium length, and thighs stout. Four toes.

THE FEMALE

The general characteristics are similar to those of the male, allowing for the natural sexual differences, with the exception of the single comb which drops well down over the side of the face, so as not to obstruct the sight, and the ear-lobes which are 3.75cm deep and 3.13cm wide.

SERIOUS DEFECTS / DISQUALIFICATIONS

White or blue in face. Feathers on legs. Other than four toes. Wry or squirrel tail. Plumage other than black, blue or white in the several varieties. Legs other than black or slate in the black, blue or slate blue in the blue, or white in the white. Side sprigs in comb. Excessive weight to be strongly disfavoured.

COLOURS

THE BLACK

THE MALE AND FEMALE

Plumage: Glossy black.
In both sexes:
Beak: Dark horn.
Eyes: Dark.
Comb, face and wattles: Blood red.
Ear-lobes: Pure white.
Legs: Black or very dark slate, the latter in adults only.

THE WHITE

THE MALE AND FEMALE

Plumage: Glossy white.
In both sexes: Beak white. Eyes: red. Comb, face and wattles: blood red. Ear-lobes: pure white. Legs: pinky white.

THE BLUE

THE MALE AND FEMALE

Plumage: Soft medium blue, free from lacing, the male darker in hackles, wing bows and back.
In both sexes:
Beak, comb, face, ear-lobes and wattles: As in the black.
Eyes: Dark brown (darker the better). Legs blue to slate.

THE BUFF

THE MALE AND FEMALE

Plumage: A sound buff colour throughout.

In both sexes:

Beak, eyes, comb, face, ear-lobes, wattles, shanks and toes As in the Whites.

THE PILE

THE MALE

Plumage: Creamy white with golden, reddish to brown colouring on the shoulders and back. Primaries and tail: creamy white. Secondaries: may have a reddish or brown pencilling. Neck: streaked with salmon red feathers. (This colour is usually called Custard Pile, normally without a wing bay.)

THE FEMALE

Plumage: Ground colour is creamy white with salmon red breast feathers. Neck creamy white tinged with golden red. Back, body and shoulders creamy white with salmon red lacing, or lightly streaked all over with red. Primaries and main tail feathers creamy white. Secondaries may have a salmon red pencilling or lacing.

Eyes: Red

Beak: Light horn colour.

Legs and feet: Dark slate to black.

BANTAMS

Minorca bantams should be miniatures of their large fowl counterparts and standard points, colour and defects to be the same for bantams as for large fowl.

EX AVIBUS COHORTALIBUS GAUDIUM

SCALE OF POINTS	
THE BLACK, WHITE, BUFF AND PILE	
Style, symmetry (type)	10
Size	15
Face	15
Comb	15
Ear-lobes	10
Legs, eyes and beak	8
Colour	10
Condition	10
Breast bone	7
Total	100
THE BLUE	
Type	15
Size	10
Condition	10
Head, comb and ear-lobes	5
Colour	60
Total	100

