

# The Pigeon Genetics Newsletter, News, Views & Comments.

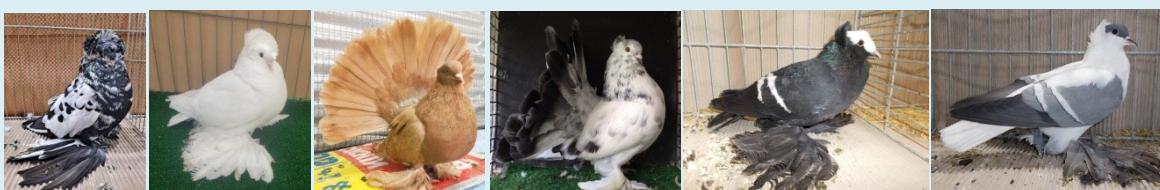
(Founded by Dr. Willard .F. Hollander)

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April 2025

This Month's Topic - 'These Boots Weren't Made For Walk'n .'



(1) Sabastien Demuyter, (2)Richard Leimann, (3)Akhil Sajeeve, (4)David Sandhoff, (5)&(6) Mick Bassett.

One can only imagine that at some point in the very early stages of the Domestic Pigeon Hobby, a fancier noticed that there was one different bird in his loft that had some small feathers running down the tarsus of the leg where normally there was only scaly skin. Next his curiosity may have caused him to mate this bird to its parent and then youngsters began to appear with yet more of this feathering perhaps even to show presence on one or more toes or at least down to the beginning of the foot. This effect would later be called "grouse legged" in English as it resembled the same sort of leg feathering seen on wild grouse where it likely evolved to help protect the legs from extreme cold spells in winter.

The unnatural selection for more and more feather likely led to the extremes we see today. However, there is an order of dominance and a suggestion therefore that there is a single locus with numerous mutation alleles involved. Sorting that out was a task for the likes of **Dr. Hollander** and **Dr. Gibson** among others. In this issue we will revisit what is known and may be suspected as fact with this anomaly.



(1) Jith Peter.,(2) Sener Onder., (3)Shoibal Sabbir.,(4) Rakin Habib.,(5)Royal Khan., (6)Mike Walters Sr.

In 1995 **Dr. Lester .P. Gibson** wrote in his Book "Genetics of Pigeons" *Columba livia* (Gmelin), "Foot feathers are classified as grouse (stockings) or Hosen(H), Slipper (Sl)., and Muffed. They are found in many breeds. Although a lot of research has been conducted on the inheritance of foot feathering the full story has not yet been determined. The grouse feathering is a short round feather resembling body feathers covering the foot . The Pigmy Pouter (Slipper) type have a mixture of short and long feathers on the upper foot and long feathers on the toes. The Muff type have long feathers on the feet resembling either flight or tail feathers and are believed to be a combination of both (H) & (Sl). All three types are usually partial dominants in tests. Crosses of non-feather footed to feather footed birds produce F1's that show some foot feathers although they may be small and/or sparse. The relationships of these feather foot types need to be determined fully.

Another part of the feather legged story is known as Vulture Hocks which consists of long feathers on the hock area. These seem to be recessive but closely linked to and may be an effect of part of the gene (Sl) for foot feathering. It is only found on a few breeds."

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**Hollander** recognized the three different types as listed by Gibson. Grouse, Slipper , and Muffed. He changed the symbol of (H) that was assigned by **Christie and Wriedt** in 1925 , to (gr) for grouse legged. This lower case lettering denoted a recessive trait. However **Gibson** found it to be a partial dominant trait. As seen in his above Book comment he maintained the symbol (H) . **Hollander** supported the idea that the muffed varieties were brought about by a combination of two different foot feather genes. Note Editor Bob R. {I mated an English Trumpeter to an Indian fantail and the F1's had medium foot feather but large or long Hock feathers.}

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**Quinn** did not address the topic of foot feathering in his booklet -

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**J.C. Lyell** (1800's) mentioned "half Leg" feather, "Stockinged"., also "Hocked & Booted" , but gives no information as to the genetics of same.

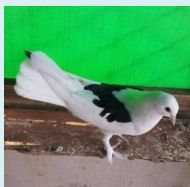


Photo **Anwarul Kabir** , stockinged.

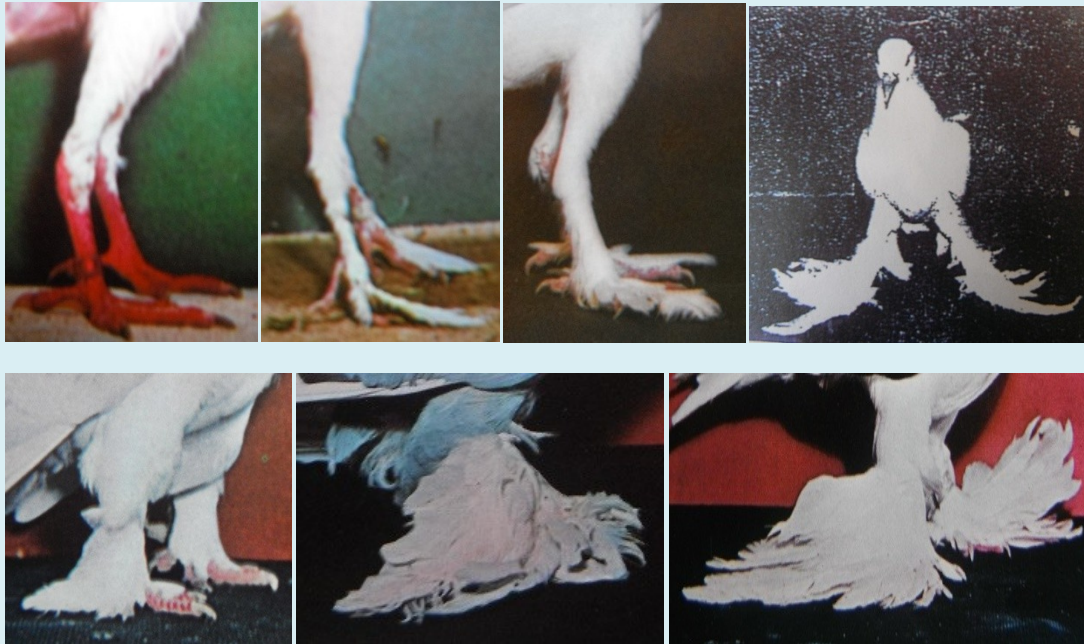
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**Axel Sell** ( Pigeon Genetics ) wrote that **Robert Mangile** 1976 supported Hollander's results who produced muffed birds from a cross of grouse legged Lahores and the slippered English Pigmy Pouters.

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Obviously there must be a great deal more testing done to gain a better understanding of the order of dominance of the various expressions of this/these foot feathering mutation(s) in relation to one another . There has not been a clear cut result from the various matings to date that would allow us to form any conclusive formula to create a large muffed specimen from lesser feather footed specimens. Multi - genes may be involved .

Here are examples of what those early foot feathered birds may have looked like as they evolved thru selection: (1),(2),(3)&(5),grouse, **Levi**. (4) Slipper type, **Gibson**, (6),(7) Muffed, **Levi**.



We can see that it would have been a gradual progression towards heavier Foot covering with only slight variations based upon the size of the breed and length of the legs.



SV dZ Althollandischer - Breeder.



Lahore



Saxon Monk



X

= The black White headed cock below , mated to a

Roller



X



= The youngster below, you can

see that the tarsus and toes have pin feathers that will barely cover thus this would be classified as "grouse leg" (Gr) (English) or "Hosen" (H) (German).



All 4 birds bred by Bob R., the photo of the Monk taken from **Levi** Encyclopedia of Pigeon Breeds.

The following pair of full siblings were also siblings to the black Cock above from the Lahore X Monk. Mated together their offspring has larger Muffs than any of the immediate ancestors shown. Then he was mated to a Racer and produced Grouse legged offspring, not shown.. The Dun Barred hen mated to a clean leg Feral blue checker produced the Black hetero Bald grouse legged cock, obviously the Dun Bars are spread. Project/s - Bob R., few years ago.



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This Pouter submitted by **Jerry Sindelar**, has what is referred to as Slippers (SI) whereby varying lengths of foot feather are involved on the tarsus and toes with larger flight-like feathers extending outward at the sides but not in the sickle shape of the Muffed varieties.

Here we take a closer look at the foot feathering as it progresses in expression: You will see that the terms used and the actual type of feathering for each has become more profuse over the years as breeders worked to select for fuller , longer , and more complete foot covering. Every time a different breed is introduced to add a different colour or some other trait , the foot feathering may be lost to some extent , so the whole process of selection must be repeated.



Grouse (Gr)



Slippers (SI)



( Boots )



Muffs .



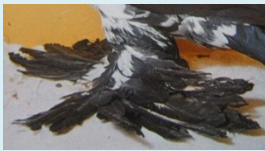
You will note that I added ``Boots`` as a fourth type from **Lyell**. Over the years , the quality of Grouse leg and Slippers has improved and that meant that the wide range of 'Grouse legged' types became lessened. There is a need I think in between Grouse and Slippers , and many people over the years have been using the term Boots to fill that gap. The toes are usually covered in with short feather.

Muffs were once also referred to as 'Long' feathered .

Back in the days of **Wendell Levi** these terms were used with the following add-ons and all foot feathering back then was generally shorter and of less symmetrical quality than those seen today 2025.



small Muff.



Medium Muff.



Large or LONG Muffs were also terms used and we have to look to Breeds such as the Muffed Swallows, English Trumpeters and Russian Trumpeters to see this type of extreme foot feather.



Gorgeous Toy Stencil Swallow Bred and Owned by Photographer **George de la Nuez** - Cover of the 2015 "Quarterly Review" - **National Pigeon Association USA** .



This English Pouter owned by **Afzal Kasuji** taken from the 2021 Calendar published by the Canadian Pigeon Fanciers Association shows more of the 'Slipper (SI)' type foot feather. This amount of foot feather is also referred to as a Muff in some show circles, however a Muff usually must fully cover all of the foot such as seen in Pomeranian Pouters. Most breeds that are classed as Muffed or large muffs have a semi-circular sickle shaped muff with no gaps. The trick is to attain this without a rather wide gap between the Toe feathers and those of the tarsus. There is no doubt that careful selection is necessary to achieve and maintain this very unique feature! When creating and perpetuating such abnormal feather ornaments on our birds we need to always keep

in mind the comfort and well being of the birds themselves. The type of bedding placed on the loft floors can make a great deal of difference in preventing sore and infected feathers.

Most breeders especially those who show their birds must Band them. Banding serves many purposes as they allow you to keep good records and proof of ownership. If a bird escapes or in some way becomes lost, a finder can quickly notify the Pigeon Association and report the bird found. However they may find a heavily muffed bird and think that it is not banded due to all that feather cover, and they may not realize that the band is usually placed above the hock (actually the heel) of the foot. This is the area above the tarsus where much larger bands are placed when the young are still just in the early pin feather stage in the nest usually around 6 or 7 days old. The bands are placed on upside down so that when the bird is held in hand with its breast against your chest, with the legs held gently back toward the tail, you get to read the letters and numbers right side up.

\* I have however had birds brought to me that had been banded by a size or two too small for the birds and considerable damage had been done over years of agonizing pain for the poor bird. Please make sure you order the correct size bands and watch to see that your strain of bird has not developed a larger leg that requires a larger band on their future offspring.



**Michael Spadoni.**

The very large muffed Russian Trumpeters also have most of their ability to see impeded by the head tuft so they are judged on the floor of the showroom without any fear of them flying up into the rafters.



Here is another example of what seems to be a Slipper (SI) foot feathering. This Sheraji Breed or one-sider Lahore, usually would have Grouse legs or small muffs, but I think the longer toe feathers and gaps in the coverage would classify this as Slipper. One can see by this that **Robert Mangale's** tests of breeding Slipper with Grouse leg would very likely result in filling in the gaps to make a muffed bird with possible varying density of feather.

Here you can see the Hock Feather extending out at the back of the leg from just above the hock joint giving another gap from the tarsus. Photo: **Mohd G Kibria**.

Many Breeds now have one type of foot feathering or another as it has been introduced. The ancestors of the present day Lahore were clean legged Tumblers of slighter build. I have not seen any record of when the foot feathering was introduced, I expect like so many, it was just a matter of either an accidental cross, planned introduction or an outright mutation.

#### **Photos of various Muffed varieties.**



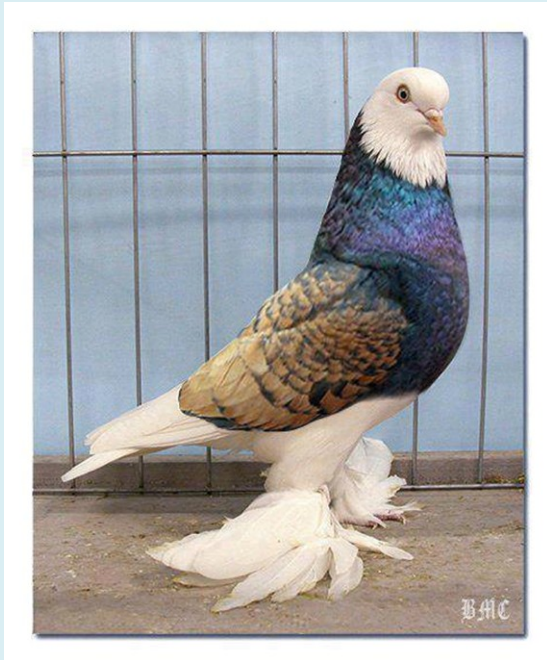
**Kevin Smith** -Australian Saddleback.



**Cam.** Reverse wing Pouter.



**Chapai Naw Chad Yar - W.O.E Tumbler**



**Srk Shawon - Reverse Wing Pouter**



**Pigeon Full Spec. - Saxon Monk and another South German Breed,**



Over the years the various Breeds have evolved through outcrosses and selection to have larger and fuller Muffs. This often despite the set standard requirements or recommendations of the specialty Clubs for each Breed in the various Countries.

The Lahore Pigeon is a perfect example of this . The following photos demonstrate this progression over the years:



**Rakin Habib.**



**Photo- Jerry Sindelar**



**Afgan Pigeon Lovers.**

**Nilesh Rajput**



**Arijit Kar**

**Royal Khan**

**Nsr Pigeon Loft.**



**Mohammad Atiq.**

**Subir Dey Prashan**



**Taif Bin Yousuf.** - three different foot feather expressions .



When considering what to call the feather features on your birds , check with the Breed Standard first to see if what you have co-insides. If not , adopt the term that best describes what you actually have and work towards the show standard by selection.



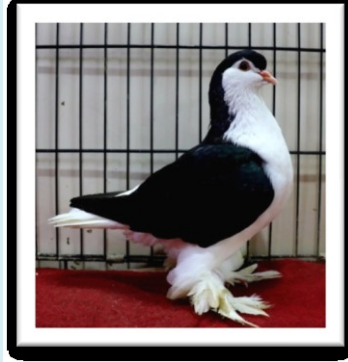
American Standard By **Dianne Jacky** -



**Chetan Patel.**

The European Type is in my view a much more "Typical" Lahore Pigeon style as opposed to the Runt/Rumbler style of the American standard. I like the head and Eye on the European a great deal more and the larger Muffs as long as they do not get any larger. I prefer the level stance rather than a high or low tail carriage. These following specimens below were bred by **Nilesh Rashput** of India.





~~~~~So there you have it for the Month of April 2025.  
Hope you enjoyed this look at the Foot feather mutations for our Show and Performance Pigeons !

Next Issue **"Size Doesn't Matter or Does it!?"** Depends upon who you talk to !  
The Pigeon World now has several very large Breeds from Carneaus, to Runts to Rumlbers but there is also the Commercial Meat breed the "Hubbel ". We will try to sort out some of that for you in May. If YOU have the Hubbel Breed please share some photos - send to:  
Bob\_rodgers556@hotmail.com as I cannot locate any .

Once again I want to thank those who have had their Birds featured in this issue to help us demonstrate the information that we offered. Credits were given in Bold print.



2025 Gr. Champion at the National English Trumpeter Club of India , Bred by **Rameez Karikkal** .