The Basic 12 Traits of a Fantail

James Demro 2019

I have done quite a number of crosses with fantails through the years to either put traits on fantails or fantail traits on other breeds. Where the individual traits start to show up the most for me is in putting a couple traits from fantails to my toy modenas. I would be willing to take a wild guess and say it might take another 12 traits (or in most cases genes) to produce a show winning fantail. I am not going to address any of those in this write up.

In a cross to wild type you get a pretty standard looking bird that has between 16 and 24 tail feathers that form an upside down V. I at first assumed these were a number of dominate genes expressing themselves. After putting quite a number of F1 young birds together to raise young I don't get many of those that look like a typical F1. Part of that is out of an F1 pair you can actually get a full fantail out of the pair. It would be in the range of two to the twelfth power or about one out of 4000 babies. Yet with most of the genes being recessive I would expect to see a number of F1 looking young. It makes me wonder if those F1 appearing birds are a result of combinational affects of recessive being present with some dominates. I don't have an understanding of why the upside down V shape of the tail. I have never seen a dominate gene showing the upside down V by itself.

This information is from my experience with making many fantail crosses with various breeds. I have raised around 500 young from those crosses. This is not a scientific study, but my best logical conclusions from observations raising these birds. When I talk about traits associated with another trait I am talking about the trait from a combination of genes other words the hybrid affect.

1. Partially dominate is one of the roll back genes that can also cause shaky heads. I am not sure why this doesn't show up all the time. I have had it show up in modenas two generations later after a cross. It looks like part of this is that the bird holds its tail up just a bit. The roll back part is different from the roll back in modenas. I have gotten modenas that look more like a Holle Cropper from the Modena and fantail roll back traits put together.

2. A dominate gene is one that puts a little width to the tail. In heterozygous state it might appear as one feather on one side sticking out or sometime one on each side. There is no lift to this and not associated with increase in number of tail feathers.

3. One of the widening genes is recessive. It again isn't associated with any increase in tail feather count. This is a slight arch to the tail, but it is a smooth curve. Unlike the V tail of an F1





4. I assume there is another widening gene that is recessive. I have never seen it by itself.

5. There seems to be two different genes for holding the tail up that are recessive. One seems to be associated with the bird rolling back more.

6. The other gene to lift the tail up is a simple recessive and will hold the tail pretty much vertical without any associations with roll back , tail feather count or width of the tail. It is one trait I have used in toy modenas. This photo to the right is an example of this plus it shows the lowering of the flights. There is no roll back on this bird and the tail is narrow and smooth curve.



7. There is a partially dominate to dominate trait (I haven't raised enough to figure it out yet) of having the flights hang below the tail. This has been one of the major problems I have had with crossing with toy modenas. Toy modenas are supposed to be above the tail. Higher than the wild type. I have had that trait show up from toy modenas in my fantails. No matter how many times I replace a tail and place the flights below the tail within a minute or so the flights are up in the tail. I have a bird with no additional tail width from wild type and a vertical tail. I couldn't get it to cooperate for a photo.

8. There seems to be a simple recessive gene to get full roll back on fantails. It doesn't seem to be associated with any other trait. This is a photo of that recessive trait without many other factors involved.



9. A simple recessive gene that makes the tail flat. Doesn't seem to associate with any other trait, but I have never gotten to express by itself yet so the lack of association is not clear.

10. Legs bending back or what some call getting up on its legs. It appears to be a simple recessive. It doesn't seem to express without that the number one trait of shaky head and slight roll back.

11. Tail feather count. There seems to be at least two different genes and probably tree involved with this. I have had birds with 20 tail feathers show up out of pairs with over 32 tail feathers. So this is not a simple thing to understand. Since F1 young are so variable in tail feather number I don't think there is any way to differentiate the different genes with tail feather count.

12. The second tail feather gene for feather count.

There may be more genes associated with a simple fantail. It depends if you count leg width as a part of a simple fantail. Then there is tail feather count. It is amazing that you can get a good type fantail in

five generations after a cross. To make a good show fantail would probably add a couple more generations to that on average. The hard part of making a good show type fantail is knowing and understanding all the genes involved. If you don't know what ones are recessive and dominate you can end up discarding birds that might have everything you need just because they don't have the look. I think this is one of the major parts of why some people like the late Bill Shekleton could make and keep

This photo to the right is one of the only upside down V birds I have gotten out of F1 pairs or later generations. This one is actually 7/8 fantail. It is out of a sibling pair of 7/8 fantails. It had 30 tail feathers. I do like that pretty much solid bronze wing shield and I am going to keep it and put on a much better type blue white bar toy stencil fantail. This bird actually has wider tail feathers that by blue white bar birds don't have. This is an example of how the Modena head follows through the generations. I have a pair of 7/8 fantail frill stencil carrier birds that both have the same head. It is a simple dominate trait so no big deal to weed out. With the right dirty genes you can make a bird that looks black with bronze shield. A very nice expression. This bird also shows the flights on top of the tail from Modena. Wild type the flights would be a bit lower.



If you were to cross a perfect show fantail (lets say there are 12 more genes involved) there would be a one in about a 15 million chance of making the same quality show fantail out of a sibling pair of F1's If you look at crosses this way it is understandable why people fear putting birds from other breeders into their birds. Except more than likely you would only be dealing with a couple genes difference. Again understanding what genes you are working with it is a simple thing to work out.

Here is an example of the combination affect or hybrid affect. When you put heterozygous recessive red on ash red you might get a hint of red tinge in the tail if there the right dirties along with the recessive red. If you put indigo on ash red you might again get slight reddish to the tail and a lighter tail bar. If you put recessive red and indigo on ash red you get a bird like this with a very red tail and the light grey tail bar stands out.

