

THE MODENA IN NEW ZEALAND

By: Don Barclay

The English Modena has been the most popular breed of fancy pigeon in New Zealand for many years and it is generally recognized that the birds we see in the show pen in our country have reached a high standard.

This has not always been the case. The importing of some top Modenas from our neighbour, Australia, 20 – 30 or so years ago boosted the local birds – many of the birds imported were of United States bloodlines. Unfortunately, all importing of pigeons in to New Zealand from Australia was stop approximately 20 years ago by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) as periodically they review the importing conditions for all animals and plant life in to our country.



**Right: Modena Gazzi, blue bronzebarred, M/O.
At the first New Zealand IMF sanctioned
Championship 2005.
Owner: Laurie Hatchard.**



Pigeons were not considered to be of importance and so were placed well down the list of priority. It has only been the last three to four years that work on the importing conditions has finally got underway. A Jacobin fancier who has been in regular contact with MAF when he was involved with the exporting of goats, informed me recently that the borders between New Zealand and Australia could possibly be open again soon for the importation of pigeons. This is encouraging news however I will wait till I hear officially before I believe that we can import once more!

**Left: Modena Schietti, Mealy grizzle F/Y.
Owner: Gordon Fletcher.**

The chance to import would be good news for those fanciers who are interested in Argents as this variety disappeared from NZ some time ago (not quite sure but it may be as late as 20-25 years).

New Zealand has a population of just 4.4 million people and correspondingly, the number of fancy pigeon breeders we have is also very low and indeed the number of fancy pigeon

breeds kept is also limited. The gene pool in some breeds is alarming small – quite often a breed will have only one or two breeders! As Modenas are kept by a reasonable number of fanciers, the gene pool is much healthier and there is very good camaraderie between the fanciers with key birds being swapped often.

Right: Modena Schietti bronze, double winner at the New Zealand IMC sanctioned Championship. Owner: Gordon Fletcher.



Our top fancier, Gordon Fletcher, has consistently produced top birds and his strain has had an influence on most of the better lofts in NZ. There is only one show in NZ where pigeons only are exhibited; all other shows are poultry and pigeon combined with eight shows in the North Island and 12 in the South Island. The show season starts in early May with the last show being in late July.

Most of our judges are termed as "all rounders" meaning they are required to judge all the breeds of fancy pigeon at a show. This is not an ideal situation as can be imagined as some judges are far more knowledgeable in some breeds than others. The amount of pigeons entered at shows varies somewhat with Christchurch in the South Island numbering 549 last year, however all other shows in that island had less than 100 entries. The North Island

had four of their eight shows with entries in triple figures (301, 212, 209 & 135). With several shows having such small numbers of birds, fanciers often find they are the only exhibitor in their breed.



Left: Modena Schietti white, M/O. Owner: Brent Marshall.

What has really boosted the Modena in this country has been the formation of the International Modena Club (IMC) which recently reached the milestone of being in existence for 10 years. The IMC produces a magnificent online magazine called the Quarterly that has been the vehicle for contact between fanciers the world over. With the co-operation with the Australian breeders, we have been able to invite some top Modena judges to NZ from the United States including Willi Richert and Dennis Weyrauch; from Australia we have managed to obtain the services of Damon Pownell and David Lewis.

A few years ago, Modena breeders decided to form the New Zealand Modena Club and it was agreed that we would have an annual show that would be hosted by one of the poultry and pigeon clubs. One of the club's aims was to introduce the "American " style of judging where exhibitors could observe the judging taking place. This is in contrast to the normal style of judging in NZ where all exhibitors are barred from the show hall till the completion of judging. The Club affiliated to the IMC which then gave us the opportunity to have our annual show "IMC sanctioned" meaning that several IMC certificates could be competed for e.g. Champion Modena, Best Gazzi, Best Schietti etc. These certificates are highly prized which adds another dimension to our show.

Right: Modena Schietti, white, F/O. Champion Modena, at the two shows in New Zealand season 2012. Owner: Brent Marshall.



In 2008, my local club (Wellington, Hutt Valley and Districts Poultry and Pigeon Club) hosted the National Show for poultry and pigeons. As this was the year that we had Willi Richert to judge the president of our local club suggested that we use a school hall that was very close to the main show building for the Modena judging.



This proved to be an extremely good move as many pigeon fanciers who have other breeds came over to watch Willi in progress and to observe the American style of judging.

Left: Modena Schietti, Bluegrizzle bronzebarred, V/J. Owner: Brent Marshall.

Right: Modena Schietti, black, F/O. Best self coloured Modena, at the New Zealand Modena Club Show 2012. Owner: Laurie Hatchard.

The latest IMC Sanctioned NZ Modena Club show was held in June of last year and was hosted by the United Pigeon Fanciers Association who have their show in conjunction with the Christchurch Club. We were privileged to have the services of David Lewis, Adelaide, Australia as our judge. Unfortunately we did not get as many birds as we had hoped for, the final entry being approximately 100 birds. We were able to set up a functional judging area that enabled exhibitors and interested spectators to watch the progress of the judging.





Left: Modena, Schietti, bronze, F/Y. Champion Modena, At the New Zealand Modena Club Show 2012. Owner: Gordon Fletcher.

David has kindly given me permission to reproduce his judge's report that he wrote for the United Pigeon Fanciers Club Bulletin:

Judges Report: Christchurch by David Lewis

"I started with the Gazzi's and it was a lovely Bronze (T Pattern) hen owned by John Ryan that won Best Gazzi. She is a wonderful hen with a great body and head strength and lovely style. From all reports I am not the first person to have liked her. Like all Gazzi sections there are never a lot of birds but certainly the best were very nice and Gordon Fletcher also had a very nice young Bronze (T) hen that will be a top bird in the future. The Schietti's were quite strong and some nice birds along the classes. The Blue cocks had me working for a while until I settled on a lovely bird owned by John Ryan as well. The Bronze (T Pattern) birds were very strong with good depth through the classes. This is where I found the best Schietti and in the end the best Modena in a lovely young hen. She

had everything I look for in a bird, great station; she was round everywhere and had a lovely head. The main thing is that she was in proportion and I feel that is so important. She was owned by Gordon Fletcher and he certainly presents his birds well and was quite moved by the win. One special youngster that also went a long way was a young Mealy Grizzle that Gordon had bred. While she did not quite have the power she was a real looker. I really enjoyed the experience and I hope the guys enjoyed my judging. The most important thing from my perspective is to take your time and give the birds a chance to show. I hope I did that. The overall quality of the birds is great especially since it has been over 20 years since any level of importation. It is a credit to the guys to have kept the birds at such a high level.

Right: Modena Schietti, blue bronzebarred, F/O. Owner: Laurie Hatchard.

As mentioned the show was an all-breed show and I also judged the Magpies, Carriers and Dragoons. I was pleased to attend the NZ Modena Club AGM and discuss how Australia can work with them to improve their shows, especially in the area of International judges. It was also great to spend some time with the guys socially and they certainly looked after me and I learnt just how passionate they are about their rugby team!



Thank you for the opportunity to come over and hope to do it again someday.

Host club, the United Pigeon Fanciers Association, was also celebrating their Centennial year and at the Centennial Dinner, two Modena fanciers – Gordon Fletcher and Brent Marshall - were presented with Master Breeder Awards for Modenas. Wonderful recognition for the effort that these two fanciers have put in to the breed over the years."



Left: A photograph of somewhat lesser quality, however we like to share this with you because of the prominent qualities of this pigeon.

Modena Gazzi. bronze, F/O. Best Gazzi at the New Zealand Modena Club Show 2012. Owner: John Rayn.



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