

Q & A - re: RECESSIVE RED

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Q - I read in a book by Leon Whitney that red can be recessive or else dominant. How can that be?

A - He meant that totally different genes give somewhat similar color.

Q - Ah — then the gene for recessive red would be “r” and dominant red would be “R”, right?

A - No! they are not simply alternatives. When we say recessive or dominant we are comparing with blue-black.

Q - Why bring in blue-black? We are just talking about red.

A - Blue-black is the original color of pigeons, so we use it as the base of reference in identifying genes. The recessive red gene is a mutant. “Dominant red”, now generally called “ash-red”, is also a mutant, but unrelated — it is sex-linked.

Q - OK, but the recessive red gene would still be “r”, right?

A - That would make sense, but actually the gene got labeled “e”.

Q - Great. Well, what happens if you put the two kinds of red together?

A - If the “e” is homozygous, the resulting color looks the same as recessive red alone. The ash-red gene’s effects are hidden.

Q - Wow — then the recessive red is dominant over dominant red?

A - No! We use the term “epistatic”, which means masking. Recessive red can also mask checker and other patterns.

Q - Wow. Well can some other gene mask recessive red?

A - Yes — white or albino can. And that reminds me — recessive red youngsters commonly get some white feathers as they molt.

Q - Do you think recessive red is a good racing color?

A - Some prominent racers do, but I don’t know.

For more information try another book - *The Pigeon*, by Wendell M. Levi