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FUR-PRODUCING
RABBITS

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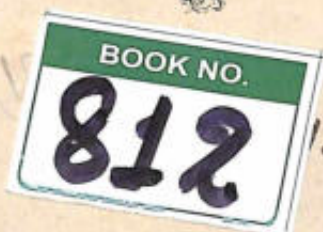


FASHIONABLE FURS.

Examples of the beautiful and serviceable garments, gloves, powder puffs and handbags that are being made from the fur of the Blue Beveren, Chinchilla, Angora, Lilac, Flemish Giant, Argente de Champagne, Silver Grey and Havana.

FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS

A DESCRIPTION OF THE MOST SUITABLE
BREEDS FOR THE TRIPLE PURPOSE OF FUR,
FOOD AND EXHIBITION, WITH INSTRU-
CTIONS ON HOUSING, BREEDING, MANAGING
AND MARKETING.



1234 (D)

THIRD AND REVISED EDITION

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PREFACE

"Fur Producing Rabbits" is, I have reason to believe, the most read of all the books that have ever been published on Rabbit culture. It has reached its third edition in a comparatively short space of time, and the demand for the work has never abated, week in and week out, since the first edition made its appearance in 1923. The huge numbers of copies of the book which have been sold are alone undeniable proof of the development of the Rabbit Fur Industry and the great desire of many thousands of people to learn more and more about the fascinating subject which is dealt with so capably by those who have contributed to these pages.

Since the second edition was published in March, 1925, the Rabbit Fur Industry has made great progress. Much has been learnt of breeding, management, marketing, etc., which was not known two years ago. More scientific methods have been adopted. Research into such questions as heredity, feeding, hygiene, economics, etc. has received great attention, and now that the National Institute of Poultry Husbandry has established a Rabbit Department, it is clear that experimental work in connection with Fur Rabbit production will be carried on more assiduously in the future than it has been in the past.

The number of keepers of utility Rabbits has again increased enormously, the industry is now well established, and in spite of the severe industrial depression from which this country is still suffering at the time of writing, the vitality of this branch of live-stock breeding is such as to make those who have been responsible for its growth highly satisfied with the results which have been achieved.

The old chapters of "Fur Producing Rabbits" have been brought thoroughly up-to-date, as the changes above referred to demanded that they should be. An additional chapter is that headed "A Brown Rabbit Experiment." In view of the great need for a new breed of brown Rabbit resembling sable, and the experiments which have been made to produce such animals, this work would be incomplete without some lengthy reference to the subject.

It may be considered by some readers that the chapter on Angora Rabbits is somewhat out of place in view of the fact that the Angora is a wool producing animal rather than a pelt producing animal, and that Angoras are not now allowed to be exhibited in classes confined to fur Rabbits. There were, however, chapters on the Angora in the first and second editions, and as Angora Rabbit pelts are still used, though maybe in small quantities, by the furriers, the publishers consider that it would not have been wise to have omitted the chapter referred to.

I hope and believe that not only beginners but experienced fanciers will gain knowledge from "Fur Producing Rabbits" which will assist them in increasing their incomes and in securing that great amount of pleasure which Rabbit-keeping is capable of providing for those who are true animal lovers.

W. WATMOUGH.

General Manager, Watmoughs Limited.

December, 1926.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

By W. WATMOUGH.

Those readers of "Fur-Producing Rabbits" who are as yet unfamiliar with the Rabbit world will no doubt be interested to learn that previous to the war the breeding of Rabbits for exhibition at the hundreds of live-stock shows that are held in the British Isles every year was a great hobby, with an immense following. It is still such. In fact, the number of those who keep Rabbits for the show pen is larger now than it has ever been previously in the history of the Fancy. But in those days preceding that memorable August of 1914, when Europe burst into flames, the Rabbit as a utility animal was little thought of, and beyond the selling of skins for a few pence each to the rag-and-bone man and the eating of the carcasses at home by those who did not feel the then popular prejudice against hutch-bred Rabbit-flesh, this attractive little animal was kept entirely by fanciers for exhibition purposes and by boys as simple pets.

But if the British did not realise the valuable utility qualities of the Rabbit, continental breeders most certainly did, and they exported to this country annually millions of carcasses and millions of pelts. The former were sold as what are known as "Ostend Rabbits," and the latter for the making of dyed imitation furs bearing such trade names as "Seal Coney," "Sable Coney," "Electric Seal," "Beaver Coney," etc. Huge numbers of carcasses and skins were also imported from Australia and other countries where wild Rabbits are so numerous that they have become a pest and are treated as vermin.

Evidence of the extent of this trade is provided by Board of Trade figures which show that in 1913 there were imported into this country 43,614 cwt. of fresh Rabbits, the value of which was £125,416; 481,964 cwt. of frozen Rabbits, valued at £655,960; 73,342,714 undressed skins, for which there was paid £701,440; and 2,865,649 dressed skins of a value of £116,164. Sixty-four per cent. of these skins were re-exported, but the fact remains that British utility Rabbit breeders, by not being alive to the possibilities, and not being organised, were deprived of retaining for themselves a goodly share of the £1,598,980 which was paid in one year to foreign producers for pelts and carcasses. A payment of such magnitude would never have been made had we in England realised the opportunities which Rabbit breeding presented to us if we would but grasp them. We were slow to learn the lesson.

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and we might have been even now allowing this young branch of British agriculture to remain unborn had it not been for the stern necessities of war.

When the question of feeding the population became so acute in England our Food Controllers had to search every avenue to discover new means of providing the nation with its sustenance. It was then the realisation came to some of those in authority that the Rabbit breeders of England could render invaluable assistance by augmenting the meat supply. The idea appealed. Experts produced analyses to show the high percentage of nutrition in Rabbit-meat. And it was proved, too, that hutch-bred Rabbits were superior to wild Rabbits for table purposes. Whitehall called on breeders to produce more and more Rabbit-flesh, and there followed an unprecedented boom in Rabbit-keeping.

Then did a number of sage breeders—realising what we could do in the way of producing Rabbits for eating—turn their attention to the producing of Rabbits for pelts and endeavoured to establish in this country an industry that had long flourished overseas.

The war ended. The boom for table Rabbits, simply as such, declined. But the producing of Rabbits for fur continued and the best varieties of fur Rabbits were imported from the Continent care after another. The movement has steadily progressed ever since, annually becoming more popular, until to-day this lusty infant has every appearance of developing to a maturity which will do credit to its sponsors.

ROYALTY INTERESTED.

Ladies of fashion are proud to wear garments made from the beautiful undyed fur of the breeds of Rabbit described in these pages. Her Royal Highness Princess Mary prior to her marriage was an enthusiastic breeder and exhibitor, and on the occasion of her wedding she graciously accepted as a present from the Fancy a coat and other garments made from the fur of the Blue Beveren. The presentation was made by Mrs. H. Lacy-Hulbert. Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (now the Duchess of York) accepted from the National Chinchilla Rabbit Club a coat made from Chinchilla Rabbit fur and a Beveren fur coat from the Fur Board Ltd., as wedding presents when she married His Royal Highness the Duke of York.

The daily and weekly Press of the country have published remarks of approbation in regard to the effort to cultivate the Rabbit fur industry in the British Isles, and the leading ladies' papers have expressed admiration for the garments made from the pelts of those breeds especially suitable for the purpose.

At leading live stock shows and other exhibitions displays of pelts and garments made from natural, undyed Rabbit fur have been organised by "Fur and Feather," the Fur Board Ltd., the

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Ministry of Agriculture, the Scottish Fur Breeders' Association, the Women's Institutes, and other organisations, and a number of enthusiastic lady fanciers. With the assistance of its readers, and Mr. Ernest W. Busby, of Kirkgate, Bradford, "Fur and Feather" had made some time ago a choice set of garments, produced in the latest and best style, and which are being exhibited by them so that the public may see the very best that can be done with this exquisite fur which the humble bunny supplies. A considerable amount of propaganda work is being continually carried out, and ever since the first edition of "Fur-Producing Rabbits" was published, public interest in our products has shown a marked increase, and the furriers' demand for our pelts has brightened considerably.

The Ministry of Agriculture is supporting the movement, recognises that it is likely to become an established agricultural pursuit, and issues leaflets, etc., devoted to the subject. This literature may be obtained upon application to the Ministry at 10, Whitehall Place, London, S.W. 1.

The National Institute of Poultry Husbandry has established a Rabbit department at the Harper Adams Agricultural College, Newport, Salop, where research work is being conducted, and lectures and discussions on Rabbit culture are included in the programme of the annual Harper Adams Conference.

On the day preceding the Bradford Championship Show—the largest exhibition of Rabbits in the world—in January last, there took place in the Technical College, Bradford, a Conference entirely devoted to the Rabbit fur and wool industries, organised by officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and "Fur and Feather." Mr. Wm. Adams, the President of the British Fur Rabbit Society, presided. Addresses were delivered by authorities on essential subjects and most educative discussions followed each. The event was a milestone on the road of progress which the industry is treading. It was another sign of the Ministry's desire to assist Rabbit breeders, and of their recognition of the pursuit as a branch of Agriculture, which we know they consider to be particularly suitable, for instance, as a subsidiary activity for cottagers and small-holders.

The National Federation of Women's Institutes, of which there are 3,664 which have 220,000 members in England and Wales, has given its blessing to the breeding of Rabbits for fur and the handicraft of making Rabbit fur garments in the home. The Scottish Women's Rural Institutes also show great interest in Rabbit fur production. There are 513 of these institutes, with an approximate membership of 29,000, under the control of a Central Council. The General Secretary is Miss Ferguson, Royal Bank Buildings, 4, Kinnoul St., Perth. This is obviously an industry the following of which is essentially suitable for inclusion in the synopsis of these commendable organisations, the objects of which

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are to regain the practice of home handicrafts with a view to restoring the past traditions of English workmanship and to assist in bringing the best instruction within the reach of the villages.

The number of keepers of fur-producing Rabbits still increases week by week, and in addition to many small breeders with limited studs, large Rabbit farms carrying over 500 head of stock have been established.

We think we have said sufficient—and we have been most careful not to over-estimate the position—to convince our readers that in commencing to breed utility Rabbits they will become associated with an industry which possesses great virility.

At this stage I must clearly point out that the garments made from the pelts of the modern fur-producing Rabbits, to which this book is devoted, must not be confused with dyed imitation Rabbit fur such as "Coney Seal," etc., referred to earlier in this chapter. These latter include the commonplace dyed furs which ladies of taste will not tolerate, and which, by the way, have been repeatedly subjected to the allegation of having been the cause of an irritating kind of skin rash, known to medical science as *dermatitis*.† The furs now being made from the pelts of Beveren, Chinchilla, Havana, Argenté de Champagne, Chinchilla Giganta, Lilac, etc., are bought by their fair wearers, not as imitations, but for their own natural beauty of colouring and texture, and

† With reference to fur dermatitis Mr. Henry C. Semon, M.D., wrote in "The British Medical Journal."—

"A current epidemic of 'fur dermatitis' among out-patients is worthy of notice. Except for degree of reaction, the type of dermatitis has not varied, and the patients mostly entered the department with its etiology on their shoulders. The eruption was limited to the lateral aspects of the neck and to the chin, but in one case the mucous membrane of the lips was dry and cracked, and in another, after three months of facial involvement, the reaction had spread to the forearms. A greater or less degree of oedema of the eyelids was, or had been present in all the cases. This is a common and well-recognised symptom of dermatitis artefacta from the use of hair dyes. The eruption consisted of a blotchy erythema, limited in the early cases to the lateral aspects of the neck and face, but spreading thence, in cases of over a month's duration, to the whole of these areas, and resulting in considerable oedema and disfigurement. The latter cases showed pronounced infiltration, with a tendency to vesiculation and 'weeping.' Itching and burning were complained of in a degree transcending the clinical manifestations, and in one case had prevented sleep for several nights. The diagnosis from seborrhoeic dermatitis—the only dermatosis at all resembling it—rested on the localisation, the absence of scalp involvement, and the history. In every case the direct association by contact of the fur collar with the neck and chin could be demonstrated, none of the patients had ever suffered from 'eczema' antecedent to their purchase of the coat. Further support to the diagnosis was obtained in two cases by applying a scrap of the fur under strapping plaster (and against a control) to the anterior aspect of the thigh. Erythema occurred in both subjects of the experiment where the fur was applied within twenty-four hours of the application. The coats responsible all had fur collars of a dark flat variety, of very poor quality, and known to the trade as 'dyed coney.' It is probably Rabbit fur dyed by one of the paraphenylen-diamine group of textile dyes. A sample has been submitted to expert investigation, and an attempt to trace the place of manufacture will be made."

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because of their relatively low price compared with the fabulous sums asked for garments made from the skins of the wild Chin-chilla, Beaver, Skunk, etc. The scarcity of these animals, by the way, provides us with an opening for trade in these new Rabbit furs, which alone makes the prospects of the industry bright indeed.

Now skins for dyeing purposes and carcasses for sale as "Ostend Rabbits" are still being imported into this country in large numbers, but as I have endeavoured to show above, the greater proportion of the pelts imported are used in connection with a trade separate and apart from that in which Rabbit-keepers are now interesting themselves so assiduously, and, as before the war, the majority of the skins imported are re-exported later. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that amongst the skins which enter our ports there are a quantity of Continental products, etc., which are sold in competition with the furs which we are producing. These importations will continue to take place unless the Government—avowedly sympathetic—puts a tax upon them. But apart from anything that may be done in that direction, this foreign competition need cause no alarm, for the reason that the quality of the home-produced skins is, generally speaking, superior to the quality of those which come from abroad, a fact recognised by British furriers, who are prepared to pay higher prices for our produce. Owing to this inferiority of the imported pelts, in our opinion the danger in this direction is not worthy of very serious consideration. Although we do not claim that we cannot learn anything from the Continent, the British live-stock breeder's ability to produce animals of a quality unequalled in any other part of the world is a recognised fact, and what he has done in other branches of stock breeding, so he is doing with the fur-producing Rabbit. Great strides are being made in this direction, and each year sees a marked improvement in type and colour and in quality of fur.

ANGORA WOOL.

In previous editions of this book it has been customary to dismiss the question of Angora wool production with simple reference to the fact that the wool is highly prized by spinners, and that enterprising commercial firms take stand place at leading shows where they exhibit garments made from Angora wool. During the past year or two, however, the entire question of Angora wool production has assumed very great proportions and bids fair to initiate itself as a recognised side-line of agriculture in this country. The work of pioneers is now bearing fruit. A Rabbit which has for many years claimed numerous admirers of a purely artistic temperament, and who have never failed to produce the glorious picture of the perfect Angora in all its loveliness, is now claiming a large proportion of Angora wool enthusiasts who,

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whilst live-stock lovers and fanciers as well, see the commercial possibilities in Angora wool production. On this occasion the subject is dealt with by Dr. McDougall, who has endeavoured to bear in mind the commercial side of Angora wool production in the presentation of his article on the Angora. The Angora has made immense strides in popular fancy, and its dual purpose is being very widely recognised. Readers who are anxious, therefore, to sample the potentialities of Rabbit farming would do well to make themselves thoroughly familiar with the elements of Angora wool farming. Dr. McDougall discusses the Angora as a Rabbit of the Fancy and as an adjunct to industry with impartiality, and explores the very great field which is still open for the beautiful wool grown by the Angora.

SELLING THE CARCASSES.

As we have already said, the prejudice against eating hutch-bred Rabbits was to a great extent killed by the war and the food shortage which it caused. It was always, like most prejudices, unreasonable to a degree. As well eat wild duck and refuse to eat the duck of the farm-yard as eat wild Rabbit and abstain from enjoying the more succulent and better-fed Rabbits reared in confinement.

To-day there is no difficulty in disposing of the carcasses. Those not retained for the family board can usually be sold to the local poulterer, or in the case of the larger rabbitry, where considerable numbers have to be disposed of at one time, they can be sent to the big London markets. The Ministry of Agriculture issues the following list of firms who are prepared to accept consignments:—

Sprigens & Son, 26, Grand Avenue, Leadenhall Market, E.C.3.

T. Jeffreyes, Leadenhall Market, E.C.3.

C. H. Ashdown, 23, Leadenhall Market, E.C.3.

T. March, Leadenhall Market, E.C.3.

Nixon & Co., 33, Grand Avenue, Leadenhall Market, E.C.3

W. J. Handley, 42, Leadenhall Market, E.C.3.

A. S. Juniper and Co., Central Markets, Smithfield, E.C.

Kerry Bros., Central Markets, Smithfield, E.C.

Keevil & Keevil, Central Markets, Smithfield, E.C.

W. Prince & Sons, 36/40, High Street, Kingsland, E.8.

Camfield & Tucker, 1, Grand Avenue, Leadenhall Market,
E.C. 3.

W. Colman & Son, 21, Nelson Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

It should, however, be mentioned that Messrs. Camfield and Tucker stipulate that any skinned Rabbits sent to them should not be chopped or cut in any way, but sent simply with the skin taken off.

The above firms will accept carcasses from one upwards if they are dressed in the Ostend style. Messrs. W. Prince & Sons,

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36-40, High Street, Kingsland, E.8., are prepared to take any suitable lots whether prepared in the "Ostend" style or otherwise.

The conditions of all acceptances are that the carcasses—

- (a) Are cleanly paunched.
- (b) Have been allowed to cool before being packed.
- (c) Are properly packed.
- (d) Are despatched so as to arrive by 6 a.m.
- (e) Are sent only in the season, i.e., during the cold weather from mid-September to the end of March. It is found that there is a prejudice against Rabbits at other seasons of the year. Also it seems that producers are often so careless in preparing them for the market and in their methods of packing, that late consignments during the warm weather are as often as not unfit for human consumption when they reach the market.

The following is a description of the "Ostend" style of dressing published by the Ministry in its Leaflet No. 265. After killing and skinning as advised in another chapter of "Fur-Producing Rabbits," the carcase should be carefully paunched thus—

With the point of a knife, make an incision from the chest-bone right up the belly, just deep enough to cut the skin but not so deep as to injure the intestines. This danger may be avoided by using a pair of sharp scissors. Remove . . . intestines, but leave the liver, lungs, heart and kidneys intact. Great care should be used in taking out the gall from the liver. . . . The pads should be chopped off but a small portion of fur left at the extreme end of each hind leg. Possibly this piece of fur is best omitted if the Rabbit is of any colour than wild grey, but enquiries as to this should be made of the buyer, as the prejudice against other colours is tending to disappear. One of the hind legs should be pushed through a cut made just behind the tendon of the other leg. The forelegs should be tucked into the ribs. . . . The Rabbits should then be hung up to cool in a dry place where there is a current of air. . . . In packing, the hind legs should be pressed outwards.

When cold and "set" each Rabbit is wrapped in butter paper and a second wrapping of newspaper. They are packed in grass mats, the largest size of which is capable of holding 5 to 6 couples, weighing about 50 lb. Smaller consignments are sent in smaller mats.

"Shaping" is sometimes resorted to to give the Rabbits an appearance of extra plumpness, but the "Ostend" Rabbits which were imported into this country before the war, were not, in general, shaped any further than above described.

If shaping is resorted to, place Rabbits of equal size on boards, or "L" shaped shelves, arranged one above the other in a cool and darkened house. Lay a board on the Rabbits,

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weight it down and allow it to remain until the carcasses are quite cold, when they will have a plump appearance."

The Ministry has been unable to obtain the names of all dealers outside London who will take carcasses. They would be pleased to add such to their list. Application from provincial dealers desirous of purchasing carcasses should be forwarded to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 10, Whitehall Place, London, S.W.1.

The flesh as will be understood from what we have said, is the secondary consideration to that of the pelt. True that is, but obviously it is advisable to dispose of this, the by-product, to the best advantage and thus augment the revenue which a rabbitry derives.

THE TRIPLE PURPOSE.

The reader, as he peruses the chapters of this book, will note that the consensus of the views of the writers is an advocacy of the keeping of Rabbits for the triple purpose of fur, flesh and exhibition. Such, in my opinion, too, is the ideal combination for the breeder to adopt. Apart from the utility purposes of his rabbitry, folly 'twould be for the fancier not to strive to breed specimens worthy of being placed in competition in the show pen. The successful exhibit can be sold for a high price. As much as £50 has often been realised for a big winner. A buck which earns fame in the pen can be placed at stud at a remunerative fee. The exhibitor who wins can always sell a number of good breeding does at a higher figure than he could obtain for their pelts and flesh were he to kill them. In many studs exhibiting has developed into the primary objective. It is, in any case, a very important branch of the Rabbit fur-production movement. It is by exhibiting that the high quality of our pelts will be maintained, and it is for these reasons we argue that the utility and exhibition sections of the Rabbit Fancy are inseparably linked together. Incidentally, the pleasures of a visit to a show are not the least of the attractions which Rabbit-keeping offers to the true animal lover.

THE PELT MARKET.

"Where can I dispose of the pelts?" is one of the first questions which is asked by the man or woman new to the business of Rabbit fur production.

The answer is that there are a number of organisations, firms and individuals who are willing to purchase pelts, and whose announcements appear from time to time in the advertising columns of "Fur and Feather." These include the Fur Board Ltd., of which the manager is Capt. W. Brumwell, The White House, Campsea Ashe, Wickham Market, Suffolk (a registered co-operative society); National Chinchilla Club (Pelt Sec., Mr. T. Leaver, 21, Willam St., Herne Bay, Kent); London Flemish Giant

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Club (Hon. Sec., Mr. E. Haltam, 69, Morgan Street, Canning Town, E. 16); and the National Chinchilla Giganta Club (Hon. Sec., Mr. H. G. Jarman, 79, Cornwall Rd., Brixton Hill, S.W.2). In Scotland there is the Scottish Fur Breeders' Association Ltd., the constitution of which is somewhat similar to that of the Fur Board Ltd. The Pelt Secretary is Mrs. E. Balfour Graham, Leven Bank, Leven, Fife. Full particulars of the above organisations may be obtained on application to the names and addresses given.

Producers should not overlook the fact that the best season for killing and disposal of skins is from late October to April 30th. Pelts obtained during the rest of the year are not so satisfactory and do not sell at remunerative prices. From June to October, inclusive, Rabbits are not usually in a suitable coat for killing.

Utility Rabbit-keeping, if properly conducted on the lines advised in this work, will prove a profitable venture, as the books of hundreds of keepers will prove. I do not, however, advise anyone to endeavour at the commencement to make it his or her sole means of livelihood. Except for those with considerable capital and ample time my opinion is that this industry should be treated as a side-line, as which it will be found pleasurable and remunerative, although there are now several large Rabbit farms which are making satisfactory profits.

In addition to those described in "Fur-Producing Rabbits," there are other breeds which provide fur suitable for making certain kinds of garments, but they are not yet used so extensively for that purpose as to warrant separate chapters in this work. In this category are the Silver Glavcot, the coloured and white English, and the Belgian Hare. Experienced breeders are now endeavouring to perfect a Rabbit bearing a brown fur resembling sable. Much experimental work is being carried out to achieve this end, and already praiseworthy results have been secured in more than one rabbitry. One of these experiments is described in a later chapter. As to which will be the favourite of these brown breeds in the future, time alone will tell.

New knowledge is still being obtained almost daily, and breeds not now in the public eye may be popular favourites in a few years' time. Fashion alone will decide which type of Rabbit fur demands the highest prices and the greatest popularity.

It is the intention of those who are working so energetically in the cause of Rabbit fur production to make natural undyed Rabbit fur one of the most popular lines in the fur trade of Great Britain. And they are surely succeeding.

Those who read this book should keep up to date their knowledge of the movement by regularly reading "Fur and Feather" every Friday. In its columns there is reported each development in the industry as it takes place.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHINCHILLA.

By O. MILLSUM.

It was, I believe, in the summer of 1919 that the first importation of Chinchillas came to hand from France. After these had appeared on the show bench several enthusiasts secured specimens. They first came under my notice in the spring of 1920, and, realising the dual possibilities, viz., fur production and exhibition, I obtained, through a friend of mine in Paris, an introduction to the originator of the breed.

Seeking information as to the origin of the breed, I was told it was first produced from a blue doe and a wild buck, and that later Black-and-Tan was introduced. By experimental breeding I have proved this statement to be correct beyond doubt.

Later in the same year a few enthusiastic fanciers joined forces, the outcome being the formation of the National Chinchilla Rabbit Club, with the late Sir William Ingram, Bart., as hon. president. Through his generosity the new club began its history the possessor of the most valuable trophy in the Fancy, now known as the Sir William Ingram 200-Guinea Silver Challenge Trophy, awarded annually to the best adult Chinchilla shown at the annual club show. Various other cups and bowls have been presented by officials and members of the Club, so that it is the possessor of trophies unsurpassed by any other Rabbit Society.

The success and rise to popular favour of the Chinchilla Rabbit was instantaneous, and, whatever the course of its original production, it is to-day one of the most beautiful types of Rabbit extant. Its excellence as an all-round utility and exhibition variety is unsurpassed. It possesses this combination to a marked degree, viz.: It is a dainty, beautiful little animal; its colour is a delightful blend of slate-blue, pearl-grey, white and black, the whole creating an effect of countless strands of delicate black and silver silk.

As a result of a joint conference of the Councils of the National Chinchilla Rabbit Club and the British Fur Rabbit Society, the official standard has now been re-drafted with the object of checking indiscriminate indulgence in out-crossing due to the rage for more length of coat. Chinchilla breeders are now urged to concentrate first on production of Rabbits with full, dense coats, of soft texture. The five points given in the old standard for eye colour have now been added to those given for texture and density of fur. Experience has conclusively proved that the insistence



CHINCHILLA

THE CHINCHILLA.

upon the brown eye has perpetuated brown in the undercoat—a fault that seriously detracts from the selling value of the pelts; also the effect of the selecting of breeding stock free from this blemish has been to eliminate the brown also from the eye colour. As the Chinchilla is pre-eminently a commercial Rabbit, I think the joint Council has done well to remove what has proved to be a stumbling block in the way of the development of the breed.

The Standard now reads:—

Colour. —To resemble real chinchilla fur, the undercolour to be slate blue at base, intermediate portion pearl grey, merging into white and tipped with black, the whole of the body fur from nape to flanks interspersed with longer hairs of jet black, both even and wavy ticking admissible; neck fur very much lighter in colour than body, but this is strictly confined to the nape; the flanks and chest to be ticked of a uniform shade of pale grey, but of a slightly lighter shade than the body; the eye circles to be pearl grey, distinct and well defined; the under parts of the body to be white, with undercolour slate blue; the tail to be ticked and slightly darker than body on upper side, white on under side, and the whole carried in a straight line with the body	30
Texture and Density of Fur. —Exquisitely soft, fine and dense, not a “flying coat,” length of fur to be about one inch, and not to exceed $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches; density and texture to rank above mere length of coat	30
Condition. —Firm in flesh, bright coat, bright eyes	10
Shape. —Neat and cobby in type, fine in bone, free from dewlap	10
Ears. —Small and erect, evenly ticked and to match the body in colour, with upper part laced with jet black ...	5
Head. —Medium size, free from coarseness, well carried on short neck and to match the body in colour	5
Feet and Legs. —To be straight, fine in bone, the upper part of the feet and outsides of the legs to be ticked of a uniform shade of grey and to match the flanks and chest. The insides of the feet and legs to be white with a blue undercolour	5
Weight. — $5\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. to $6\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.	5

100

Disqualification.—White patches on body.

Faults.—To lose 5 points each: Odd-coloured eyes, barred feet, dewlap.

To lose 10 points each: Drooping or lopped ears, white patches on feet or head, putty nose.

Since Chinchilla Rabbits were first imported vast strides of improvement have taken place. Texture, colour, and ticking have all been considerably improved by the ability of the English breeder. Other countries may create new varieties, but no people under the sun are such keen lovers of live stock as the Britisher or display the same capabilities of improving or building up any particular type or strain.

UTILITY.

The utility value of the Chinchilla stands supreme. Its size is of the average weight desired. A full grown adult should not exceed 6½lbs. and a pelt Rabbit when dressed usually scales between 2½ to 3½lbs.—quite the favourite weight for the market. Its flesh is second to none in firmness and delicacy of flavour. Being of a cobby type, it is small of bone and consequently yields full profit as a flesh producer. The carcase in the old type of utility Rabbit was the greater source of income; in the Chinchilla it is the lesser. The pelt of the former was usually consigned to the ragman for a few pence, or it added slightly to the weight if left on the carcase; in the Chinchilla the pelt is of the greater value. I am not going to mislead fanciers and breeders into hoping that fabulous prices will be realised for these pelts. High prices mean extinction as a commercial product, but I believe that fair and remunerate prices will always be maintained for regular supplies in sufficiently large quantities. I have proved that breeding for market can be made a profitable undertaking.

During the last few years a considerable industry has developed in this country in Rabbit farming for pelts, and much capital has been invested therein. I am confident that given a reasonable amount of business acumen and the required knowledge, this industry can be made a commercial success. But it is only right that breeders should be fully acquainted with the position of the fur market to-day; to be forewarned is to be forearmed. I would point out, therefore, the wonderful progress that has been made of late by furriers in the art of "faking" or dyeing, topping, plucking, and shearing. Practically every known variety of fur, particularly the shorter-coated varieties, can be closely resembled and produced from the homely Rabbit. There are on the market at the present moment in Coney most wonderful imitations of real Chinchilla, Squirrel, Mink, Mole, Beaver, Kolinsky, etc., and in addition there are remarkable new productions, which are strikingly effective and delightfully dense and soft in coat. From this

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it follows that the only prospects British breeders have of making the industry a success is to concentrate on the production of something entirely novel or something that the furriers cannot imitate with any real advantage. In the Chinchilla we have one outstanding variety that can answer this test completely.

The bane of the Fancy to-day is the self constituted guide. Numbers of writers—with little or no practical knowledge of the fur trade—rush into print, air their own particular fads and fancies, and confiding novices are too often led astray thereby. It is indeed a case of "the blind leading the blind" and the dissemination of advice from ill-informed sources of this description can only end in disillusionment, disappointment, and pecuniary loss.

There has been of late in "Fur and Feather," a great discussion on what has been termed, "The Chinchilla Muddle." The Chinchilla Rabbit of itself constitutes no difficulty for the breeder of average intelligence and perseverance. Any fault that it possesses to-day can be eradicated by the exercise of ordinary common-sense methods. The real "muddle" is the mental fog that has been raised by numbers of alleged expert advisers—themselves but novices of yesterday. According to such persons we have to close our eyes to what has been achieved in the Chinchilla of to-day, and go back to the Rabbit of seven years gone by. The work of scores of our best and most enthusiastic breeders is to be discarded, and any Rabbits that do not conform to the type originally imported from France are to be "scrapped." If there are any justification for resorting to anything so disastrous it would be worth consideration, but what are the real facts? We have a Chinchilla that is a vast advance upon its prototype, that is an immeasurably better exhibition Rabbit, and carries a very much more valuable pelt. The only tangible complaint appears to be the numbers of recessives to be found occasionally in Chinchilla litters, due, no doubt to alien blood introduction. This tendency can be overcome with patience, and the percentage of first-grade pelts will be far higher with our improved type than it could ever have been had the old order of things continued or been allowed to become re-instated in our midst.

Success depends entirely upon the individual breeder, whichever he be—the small man with half-a-dozen breeding does or the pelt farmer with his hundreds. My own personal opinion is that the small breeder will gain, proportionately, a far more satisfactory result than the large breeder, because of the latter's heavy overhead charges. The enthusiastic fancier desiring a spare-time hobby, with exceptional prospects, cannot do better than devote his interests and energies to the Chinchilla. This will afford him all that his fancier spirit desires.

As an exhibition Rabbit it stands unrivalled, in my opinion, and it is rapidly gaining favour on the show bench. First-class

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winning specimens realise good prices, and these will become higher yet. As a utility Rabbit I consider there is no other variety to equal it. No other type carries the dual combination—exhibition and utility—so perfectly balanced, and it is just because of this that the Chinchilla Rabbit excels.

ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING A STUD.

The financial possibilities, details of capital outlay, and returns depend largely upon the amount invested and the personal energy, interest and enthusiasm the breeder displays in his undertaking. However, a little sound advice, the outcome of practical experience, may be found beneficial to those who feel the need of a profitable hobby.

First, you must start right. That is the key-stone of success. Get your stock from a reputable source. Decide on the amount of cash you wish to put into stock. Put yourself into the hands of a reliable breeder. Tell him exactly your objects, and be prepared to pay a fair price. No breeder will sell you good stock at killing prices. You must remember you will be getting results of his past efforts; some recompense is necessary, and he is entitled to it. To buy the lowest price stock is to court failure. Far better start with fewer specimens, for if you do otherwise you will not only be courting certain failure but be wasting time and money (verb. sap.).

When you have your stock in full breeding condition lose no time. Winter breeding is as equally successful as breeding in the spring and summer, providing your stock is well and comfortably housed in cosy hutches. Fresh air never kills, but draughts are fatal. It is important that the breeding stock be in perfect health and coat, or you will have a succession of puny youngsters, exceedingly slow in development and most difficult, if not almost impossible, to get into good coat.

Make a point of giving water daily to all stock. A Rabbit that cannot properly allay its thirst can never make progress. It is also a very fine stomach corrective. If the doe has a large litter, assist Nature a little by giving her a drink of milk every morning. I do not recommend foster-mothers for Chinchillas. First, because of economy; and, secondly, an ideal utility Rabbit must rear a good family if it is to justify its name and merit.

The young need no special treatment, except when separated from the doe. Care must then be taken as to the quantity and quality of green food given daily. Never give green-stuff on an empty stomach. Feed beforehand with either hay, oats, or mash. It is a wise practice to give the doe, when in kindle or with young in the nest, an abundance of green-food or roots, just as much as she will eat. This enables the constitution of the young



COAT MADE FROM THE FUR OF THE
CHINCHILLA RABBIT

Presented to Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon on the occasion of her marriage to the Duke of York. The coat was made from pelts produced by members of the National Chinchilla Club, by whom it was presented.

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to resist intestinal disorders that might otherwise prove fatal. Separate the young from the doe when seven to eight weeks old. Let them run together until about twelve weeks. Then separate the sexes, or there will be constant fighting, and under the latter condition the weaker ones fail to get a fair or sufficient quantity of food, with disastrous constitutional results.

Baby pelts from Rabbits about five weeks old were at first favoured by some fanciers, and I must admit that this was the first proposition I made for this variety. It would be ideal for economy, convenience and profit if breeders could clear their surplus bucks at this age. For a few seasons there was a good market for such pelts, but experience has led the trade to discard them in favour of adult pelts, and there is now little or no demand for them. The great disadvantage of milk-grown pelts is their lack of durability and cost of dressing and utilisation compared with that of a full size skin. In the interest of the breed I think the loss of the baby pelt market is a blessing in disguise. The practice of killing youngsters often led to the destruction of many specimens that would have made ideal breeders and future winners, and with the insistence of the furriers for a total absence of all traces of brown in the pelt the removal from the stud of all clear-backed youngsters and the retention of those with brown was not calculated to assist in the attainment of our objective—namely a Rabbit that comes to maturity and is free from brown as early as possible. It is quite impossible at so tender an age to foretell the future development of the Chinchilla as regards colour, texture and ticking. One may fancy a particular youngster in a litter, or he may even have a most promising specimen that can win in the five months class, but the development of Chinchillas is so extraordinary that it is impossible to know with any degree of certainty what an immature Rabbit may ultimately become. It is but very seldom that a prominent leader in the young classes carries on his triumphs to the adult stage. Much, of course, depends upon ancestry. In my experience with a large stock, which usually numbered about 500, some startling surprises took place. Specimens that had been put aside for killing moulted out into wonderful perfection in the essential points desired, i.e. colour, texture and ticking. I am referring, of course, to sound coloured youngsters. Any showing signs of fawn in under-colour or flanks, feet or ears, or with putty noses, or pronounced wooliness of texture, can be relegated to the killing quarters without hesitation. These are inherent faults that must be stamped out and not perpetuated.

There is an intermediate coat in Chinchillas which makes a capital pelt at 14-16 weeks old, but it requires very careful watching to catch it at the psychological moment for killing. The ideal pelt is undoubtedly the first adult coat, when the natural bloom of maturity is at its height. This occurs when

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the Rabbit is fully six months old. Then its full beauty is apparent to even the least interested onlooker. Its intense ticking, texture, and colour are then usually at their best for either exhibition or pelts.

The natural development of coat in this variety usually follows in this form:—At five weeks old the baby Chinchilla begins to grow an undercoat which gradually replaces the nest fur. At 12-14 weeks the ticking and definition of colour show somewhat prominently, and this continues, if no set-back in development occurs, until the aforementioned intermediate coat shows itself in beautiful perfection. Hardly, however, has this reached its zenith before another undercoat begins, which gradually emerges as the adult in its full beauty. It is at the intermediate period of development that breeders will more correctly make their selections for future exhibition, breeding, selling, or killing.

It is thought by many that the pelt breeder has no need to consider or study the exhibition merits of his stock. No greater mistake could possibly be made. First-grade pelts cannot be produced from inferior specimens or indiscriminately-bred stock. It is just as essential for the fur producer to study individual breeding, selection and pedigree as it is for the exhibitor, who is content to possess a few classy specimens for show purposes only. There are always two good strings to the fur-grower's bow. First-class specimens always find a ready market at good prices, or enhance the breeder's stock by winning the coveted honours on the show bench, with further progressive breeding results. Those falling below the standard have their value in pelts and flesh.

Whatever the size of the stock, careful pedigrees of each arrival should be recorded. Those which produce inferior progeny should be consigned to utility, and so progress towards perfection is made. To get the best possible results, I suggest using the brood does until the fall of the second year, after which replace with young adults. Although the doe has given you good results and service, she still has a value in the pelt. By this cycle of rotation breeding by selection, retaining only the best specimens and keeping comparative youth in the breeding pens, you will be building up a strain that will yield good results and place you second to none.

You cannot expect financial gain without adequate outlay in time, labour, enterprise and money. Fortunately, in this sphere of interest the latter may be the least item, provided you are keen enough to go slowly in building up a strain and are possessed with the determination to get to the top. You cannot expect an income of any appreciable amount unless you have the stock to draw upon.

I am not going to suggest that a living can be made from a few Rabbits. I do not think it possible, but multiply the number

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to the utmost capacity of your management and, given a fair amount of business acumen and straight dealing, I then say, without hesitation or fear of contradiction, that the prospects of breeding Chinchillas are exceedingly rosy and exceed, in my opinion, some of those allied interests, e.g., sheep, fruit, cattle, or poultry farming. Do not under any circumstances whatever commence the practice of "dealing," in the sense of advertising stock, and, because you have more applicants than stock, commence to buy indiscriminately and send out nondescript animals as your own best for the sake of immediate gain. If you do there is eventually only one certain result, viz., a lost reputation and dismal failure, and you will deserve it!

To the small breeder, desiring to add to his income, I do not think there is any hobby with such prospects of pleasure and profit. What can be better for any man or woman than to be fully occupied in work they love? And love for animals reveals the finer chords of one's own nature, for it is very rare one takes to any variety of live stock without a natural love for it. To the fancier it is a labour of love. To the non-fancier it would be miserable boredom, with disastrous results to the poor animals.

FOOD.

To maintain health and condition in your stock depends largely upon your methods of feeding. Diet is an important factor in any form of life. Rabbits are vegetarians, and it is well not to overlook this fact. Be as systematic as your occupation will allow. Regularity in diet promotes health and condition. Cleanliness is another important factor which must not be overlooked. Food vessels must be kept clean if you wish to avoid digestive troubles. Much sickness arises—simply cause and effect—from dirty food-pots or stale food. A simple diet is all that is required. A general practice is to give two meals daily for adults and three for does with young and growing stock. I advise for the morning meal good sound clover hay and green-food or roots; mid-day, a few good, sound, whole oats; evening, again hay and greens.

Ring the changes as often as you think desirable by giving mash or bran for the evening meal instead of hay. A good mash for general use is composed of bran mixed with boiling water and dried off with sharps or barley meal, to which a little table-salt has been added, until the whole is crumbly moist. Never give the mash in a wet or sloppy state. It must be crumbly, of a consistency that will not adhere in a solid wet mass if held in the palm of the hand. Potatoes, parsnips, or greens can be boiled and mixed with the above if a little fattening is necessary. Many scientific dietary tables are published from time to time, but I find the above simple method all that is necessary to maintain a very large stud in good health and condition.

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When green-food can be had in sufficient quantity I would give the breeding and exhibition stock a good deep bed of meadow hay and an abundance of greens or roots, so that they may be constantly nibbling at both. A few good oats in a little food-pot, and you would find very little extra attention would be needed to keep them "in the pink."

For fanciers with little spare time at their disposal a system of one meal a day can be practised quite safely except with breeding does, and perfect health and stamina in the stock will be maintained. As is well known to those who live in the country wild Rabbits feed in the early evening and morning, and we cannot do better than follow such an example. Mr. Leaver, of Herne Bay, tells me that he has adopted this method for a number of years with complete success. He first administers a feed of clover hay, coarse bran or corn, which he follows up with a generous supply of green stuff or roots, sufficient to last the Rabbits till the morning. During the day, except when cleaning out operations are due, his stock rests undisturbed. His Rabbits show no desire for food until the late afternoon brings them to the front of the hutches again with a keen appetite for the food that they know awaits them. The saving of labour in a large stock is very great. Mr. Leaver makes an exception with breeding does running with youngsters, to which a morning feed of greenstuff is provided in addition to the usual afternoon rations. Where an abundance of green food is available Rabbits can be kept quite cheaply, and it is surprising what a large quantity they will consume without injury, and indeed with obvious benefit. Rabbits so treated develop with remarkable rapidity and come into prime condition much sooner than those which are restricted in the use of their natural food.

EXHIBITING.

A few words upon exhibiting will be helpful to fanciers anxious to obtain those little pieces of card which denote being "in the money." A Rabbit, if well conditioned, will need little preparation to catch the judge's eye. Given the necessary points and condition of coat, one can assist Nature a little to give the desired finish or brilliancy of coat by careful grooming. This is best accomplished by wearing soft, thin, wash-leather gloves, or using a piece of soft silk or silk-velvet, and by constant grooming of the coat from head to tail a bright glossy finish or bloom will reward your efforts. Another means of assistance is to add linseed to the mash when the Rabbit is in the moult or run down to just below par. The method of preparation is to pour boiling water over a small quantity of linseed, and place the jar or pot on the warm kitchen-range for twenty-four hours. It should by then have become a thick, glutinous mass, which it is necessary to add to the mash as previously described. Never use a

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sharp comb or wire brush on young specimens, or you will have what is termed "a broken coat." It is sometimes necessary to use a comb or brush on an adult which is "stuck in the moult" or finds a difficulty in casting off dead hairs.

Another important item is the travelling-box. Give sufficient room for comfort and watch closely the ventilation. Study the comfort of your exhibit if you want to come out on top. See that a sufficient quantity of food is placed in the box, so that the Rabbit may have a feed en route. If you study these little details they will be points in your favour over the exhibitor who does not care. Remember, judges are fastidious folk and need some pleasing at times, and however good an exhibit may be, the premier award goes to the one that is at its best when it faces the judge.

KILLING AND PREPARATION OF PELTS.

As these notes are intended to increase fur production and outline the value of Chinchillas for this purpose, I feel some remarks on killing and preparing pelts are necessary. The best, quickest and most humane method of killing is to suspend the Rabbit by its hind legs, and when the head is in a suitable position give one blow with a stout stick or similar instrument. I always use an old butcher's steel. The force of impact dislocates the neck or severs the veins. Blood flows quicker than if a knife is used and death is instantaneous. So rapid is the result that scarcely a convulsive movement is made and no pain can possibly be felt. Allow the Rabbit to hang for a few minutes, then remove the pelt. The trapper's method, which I follow, is to make an incision on the inside of each back leg; then, placing the point of a sharp penknife under the skin, not deep enough to lacerate the flesh, cut straight down the leg to the vent. This done on both legs makes a complete V-shaped incision of the skin. The next move is to ease with the fingers the skin from the flesh of both legs, working towards the tail until the fingers meet and the pelt is free. Then by placing the penknife under the tail and cutting upwards the skin is freed from both legs and top of back, which allows the whole pelt to be pulled, pocket shape, to the head. Cut round this, and the pelt is free in your hands—a pocket-shaped mass with the fur inside. Lay this flat on any table or box and cut straight down the centre of underparts, and it is ready to be tacked up on any board for drying.

To dry, stretch the skin to its full capacity on the drying board, retaining the natural shape, and secure by nailing at its outstretched points. Stand in any dry place where there is a current of air, and allow it to remain until quite dry. Then store away until you have sufficient to dispose of or make up.

Use no preparation whatever in the drying process. Fresh air is all that is necessary. Dried in this way the skin will keep for months without any deterioration whatever. Care must be

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taken that no surplus fat remains on the skins or that they are not exposed to moths. Two simple preventatives for moths are—(1) occasionally beating the fur sharply with a fine school cane, or (2) placing carbon balls, obtainable from any chemist, in the box or drawer in which the furs are kept.

DISPOSAL OF PELTS.

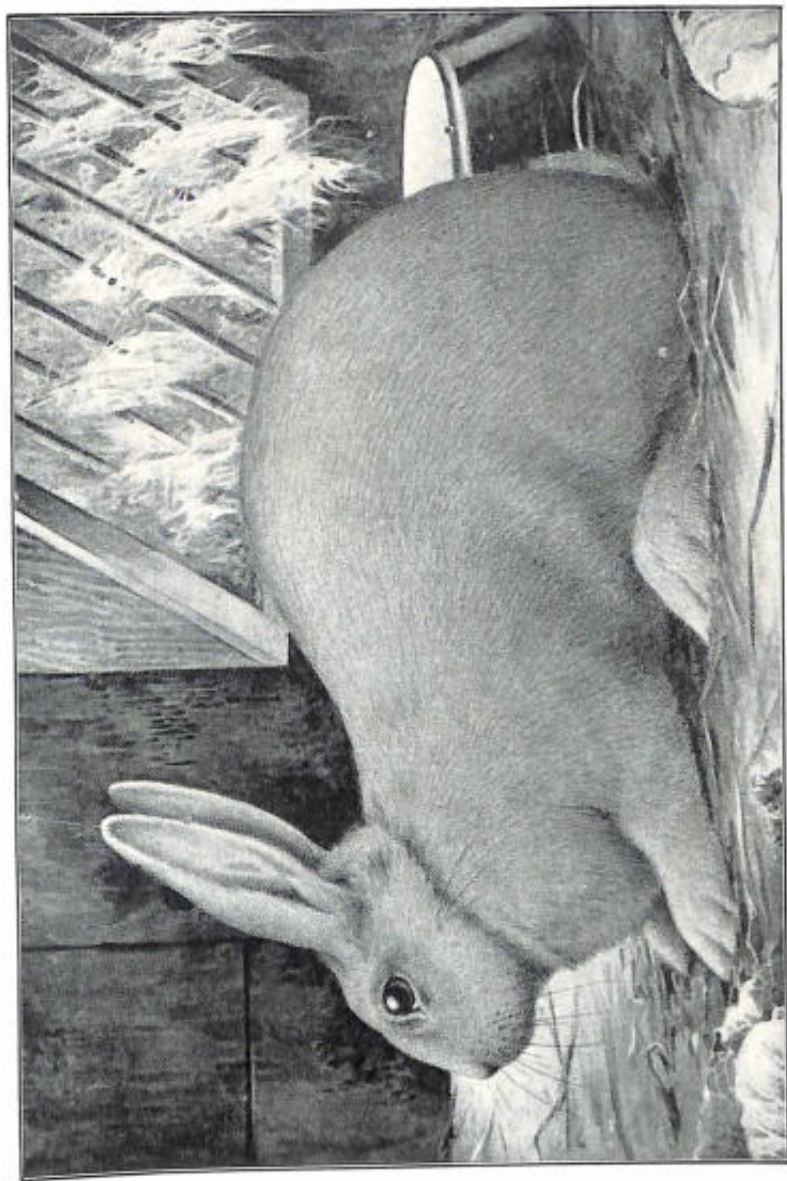
Having obtained the pelts the next problem is to dispose of them to the best advantage. This must depend largely upon the calls of the market. Fashion changes from year to year, and sometimes one colour of fur is the vogue, sometimes another, and Chinchilla is subject to the same fickle conditions common with all other furs. Where a breeder can command his own private sales or market he is indeed fortunate, but members of the N.C.R.C. who are unable to do this have two alternatives open to them. They may utilise the Pelt Disposal Department run by their own Society or they may join the Fur Board—a registered Co-operative Society—and dispose of their pelts through that agency. Prices depend upon the demand for our particular commodity, but skins of good grade, absolutely free from all traces of brown or fawn, usually sell freely at remunerative prices.

FUR CARE.

Having interested yourself in breeding the animal, it is more than likely some strong appeal from among your family circle will induce you to have some of the pelts made into a garment as a gift to wife or daughter, or a lady fancier will no doubt find the feminine instinct so keenly developed to have the first results of her labours made up into an article of fashionable attire for personal wear. I feel, therefore, the conclusion of this article should include a few words on the care of furs. To neglect necessary precautions means shortening the fur's life-time very considerably.

Furs of any description are much better hung than folded closely in a box or drawer. All furs require air if they are to escape rubbing and moth even in winter. After wearing your stole or coat shake it vigorously, and dust the garment with a piece of flannel and finally polish with a clean chamois cloth. Dirt is as great an enemy to furs as moth. Occasionally lay your furs out in the air, not the sun, and beat them well with a cane. All furs are better for an occasional comb through with a fine steel comb, care being taken not to tear the hairs through careless pulling.

When furs get wet, after shaking well leave them in a warm room to dry. Never place them near a fire or radiator or expose to strong sunshine, and never handle them when damp. Neglect, either through carelessness or lack of knowledge, means disappointment and loss.



BLUE BEVEREN

FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS.

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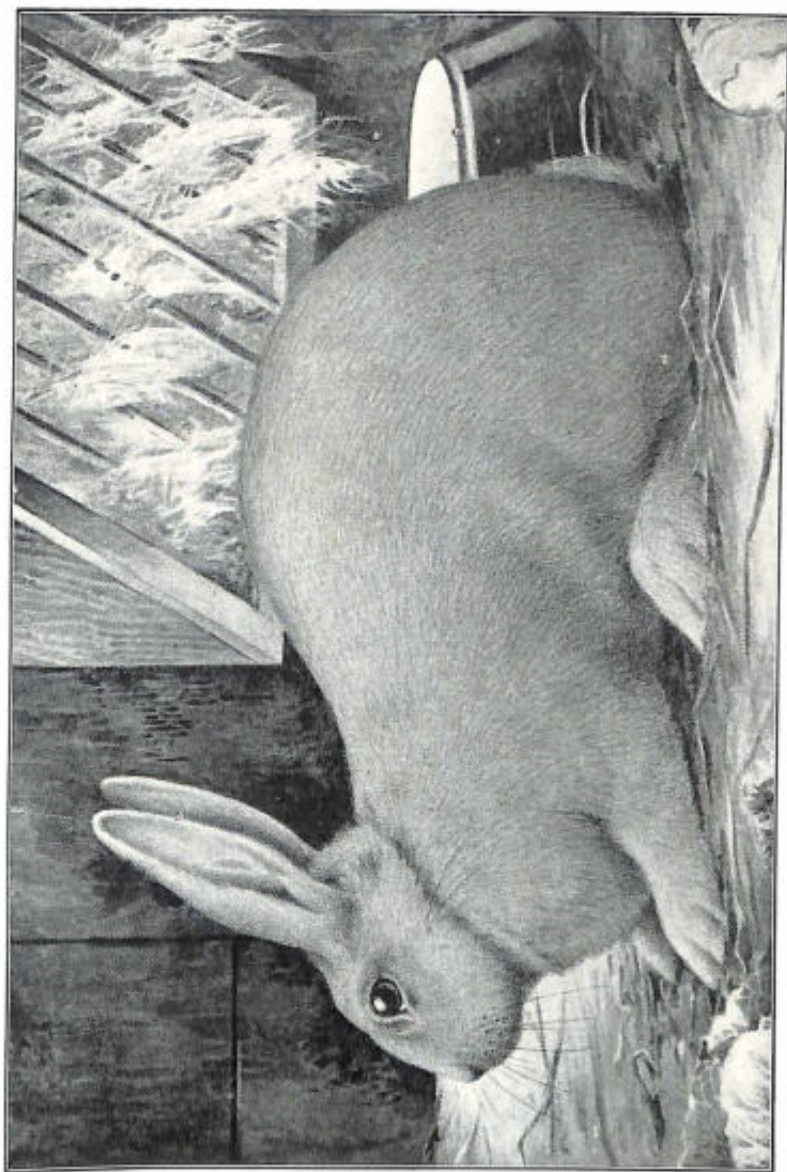
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BLUE BEVEREN

CHAPTER III.

THE BEVEREN.

By F. C. GIBBINS.

Of all the fur breeds of Rabbits the Giant Blue Beveren, to my mind, is the best for both exhibition and fur production. Articles made of the fur will be worn by ladies in preference to dyed furs in view of the possibility of dyed furs causing skin diseases. The pelts when well dressed by a furrier make beautiful coats, muffs, gloves, stoles, caps, etc. Her Royal Highness Princess Mary was so pleased with the coat presented to her by the Rabbit Fancy on the occasion of her marriage that she asked for a cap to match. Adults pelts compare very favourably with wild animal skins for wearing capabilities, and they will stand several winters of hard wear. Pelts from young Rabbits do not wear as well as adult pelts, but it is sometimes useful to the breeder to kill at four to five months. Both old and young pelts are useful for making garments for children.

A high-class blue Beveren's coat is of a light lavender blue throughout, long, silky, thick, soft, very lustrous and fine, lying loosely on the body. In appearance the Rabbit is the shape of a mandoline, with a long broad back and haunches well developed. It weighs from 7 to 12 lbs., does usually being the heavier. The eyes are large and blue to match the body colour. The ears are long, well furred, and carried erect to form a V. The fore feet are short and straight, the hind feet longer and stronger, the nails blue as possible. The size and shape of a Beveren ensures a good sized pelt, whilst the broad back and big haunches provide meat in the right quarters.

BLUE BEVEREN STANDARD.

General Appearance. —Mandoline shape; long broad back; haunches well developed, tail broad; medium length, carried close to body	15
Size. —Large as possible, but not under 7lbs., firm clean flesh, and healthy condition	15
Coat. —Long, silky, thick, soft, very lustrous, exceedingly fine, lying loosely on body	30
Colour. —Clear, intense shade of light lavender blue throughout	20
Head. —Bold, not too long; profile markedly bent down, muzzle broad	5

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Eyes.—Large, brilliant blue, iris to match body colour ...	5
Ears.—Fairly long, well furred, carried erect to form a V	5
Feet.—Fore feet straight and short; hind feet long and stronger; nails blue as possible	5
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	100

Faults.—Hair or eyes other than blue, pendant ears, coarse thin, uneven, or woolly coat; legs bent; slab sides; excessive dewlap.

THE WHITE BEVEREN STANDARD.

General Appearance	20
Size (as for Blue Beverens)	20
Fur.—To be soft, dense, and of good length	25
Colour	15
Head	5
Ears	5
Eyes.—Black or Blue preferred	5
Feet	5
	<hr/>
	100

Faults.—Colour on tail, feet, or nose; colour on body disqualifies.

Blue Beverens do well in outdoor hutches, but care must be taken to keep them well shaded from strong light or they will turn a rusty brown, which entirely spoils them for exhibition purposes and pelts until moulted through.

To be successful the Rabbit breeder must have four objects in view—exhibition, pelt production, sale of parent stock for breeding and the carcasses. The exhibition specimens command good prices alive, and the animals that do not come up to the exhibition standard can be killed and the fur and flesh sold at prices that will amply repay the breeder for the keep of the stock and his labour. Bucks, especially those not up to show requirements, should be got into perfect coat and pelted when at their best. The reason for this is obvious. Only the very best bucks should be kept for breeding purposes. By this means much headway may be made, and, pelting the more moderate bucks means more economical management.

Before you commence breeding, prepare your hutches. Does for breeding will require hutches at least two feet wide, a nesting compartment with wooden door, similar to a cupboard, and a wire-fronted run 3 or 4 feet long. This wire door, if the hutches are outside, should have a detachable wooden shutter for use in winter and bad weather. Creosote the hutches both inside and out. It

gives a good appearance outwardly and hutch floors so treated will not soak up the urine. It is also a good disinfectant and will keep flies and insects away. Interiors of hutches should be thoroughly dry and well rubbed after creosote to prevent staining. For stock other than breeding does hutches with about four square feet floor space and aft. 6 in. high should be provided. The hutch floors should be rough or have plenty of litter to give the Rabbits a foothold. If of planed smooth wood young rabbits' feet are apt to slip sideways, which means deformed and bent fore-legs. Have your hutches at least two feet high, higher if possible, as in very hot weather if the roof is close to the top of the heads it causes the Rabbit's ears to droop, and which may develop into a permanent blemish. Should you get a youngster so affected—adults do not suffer in this respect—put it in a roomy hutch in a cool spot and it will usually right itself. Use sawdust if it can be obtained for litter, and clean out at least twice a week in summer. In winter once a week will be sufficient.

Don't be tempted to buy several does and a buck or you will meet with disaster at the commencement. Start with say a really good doe, mated to a winning buck. Purchase from a reliable breeder (the one who successfully breeds his own stock) who will know best which buck to use to give the best results. Arrange for your youngsters to arrive between March and August. Keep the doe liberally supplied with soft meadow hay, and when she has the inclination she will carry this to the nesting compartment in readiness for the forthcoming family. Give her clean water daily. The day she kindles she will probably need it as they get very thirsty at this time. Milk can be given to stock of all ages with advantage.

FEEDING.

My method of feeding is as follows:—Morning: Whole oats and wheat mixed in equal parts, one handful to each Rabbit. Mid-day: Clover hay and green stuff. At night I give the principal meal. This consists of a mash mixed with water just off the boil. I have always used one of the ready mixed mashes advertised in "Fur and Feather," but quite a good mash can be made of equal parts Sussex ground oats, barley meal, "Uveco," sharps and bran, with a little linseed added in winter. Mix to a crumbly dry state, moist enough not to show any dry particles. If too wet it proves objectionable and will be left. A good plan is to occasionally mix dripping or the grease taken from the kitchen stock pot in the mash. Rub it in the dry mash before adding the water, in the same way as making pastry. During the summer a mash is not required every night for adults, if a plentiful supply of clover hay and greenstuff is given, but young growing stock and does suckling youngsters should have it every night.

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When the youngsters begin to come out of the nest and start nibbling, I give rolled oats, obtained at 2½d. per lb. for the morning meal. As the babies' teeth grow and they get stronger I gradually mix a little ordinary oats and wheat until the rolled oats are left out of the ration entirely. After a month old the youngsters will not require hay except for food and the nest can be disposed of and the compartment cleaned out.

For greenstuff I give the ordinary weeds to be found in the garden and meadows in the spring, such as dandelion, shepherd's purse, hedge parsley, groundsel, and also hedge cuttings. As the summer advances and this kind of greenstuff gets less succulent I buy green clover by the half cwt. This I find can be given without any other kind of greenstuff being mixed with it and without any ill effects, no matter how much is given to the stock. If one is interested in gardening, it is well to grow chicory, lucerne, kale, dandelion, etc., and in winter use kohlrabi, artichokes, carrots, swedes, and mangolds. (Mangolds should never be given until after the end of January, when they have ripened in the pits). All feeding pots should be kept scrupulously clean, as in summer they quickly get soured. Should you get a case of scours a few strawberry leaves or shepherd's purse will usually right matters. Ash, blackberry, or raspberry leaves are also very helpful.

Leave the youngsters with the doe for at least two months, and as long after as she will be kindly disposed to them. Should there be any fighting—and Beverens are a pugnacious breed—look for the culprit. It is usually a buck more forward than his brothers and sisters. Take him away and you may have peace for a while. Later separate the bucks. The does can usually be left together for a longer period. The most promising youngsters are best left in the hutch in which they are born, as any check affects the development, and this at a time when such is of great importance.

It is every breeder's ambition to show the stock he has bred, and for this purpose Beverens do not require a lot of preparation. After the litter has been separated have each Rabbit out occasionally on a bench and smooth it down with the hand. This will get them used to being handled on the judging table and will remove any loose hairs. Do not touch the ears more than can be helped, or they will droop and widen at the tips, thus spoiling their appearance.

Unless you have fancier friends near you follow the plan I adopted in order to find out which were my best specimens: Enter two of the litter in the same class. Exhibit the one that gets the highest card at another show with another of the litter, and so on until all the litter have been out. You then know which are the best, and these you keep for future breeding operations.



Commercial Graphic
COAT MADE FROM THE FUR OF THE
BLUE BEVEREN

THE BEVEREN.

Unless the bucks you have bred have turned out winners and you can use them to your own does, it is better to pelt or sell them and send your best does to be mated to a winning buck advertised as stud. You thus get the benefit and help of other people's judgment and years of careful breeding, and the fee charged is only nominal, and you will, without exception almost, be treated well. Probably in the next generation you will have a buck which you can use to your own does.

OUT-CROSSING UNNECESSARY.

The Blue Beveren has reached such a state of perfection that most specimens now possess all the characteristics of the breed, having plenty of coat of the required length and density. It is, therefore, quite unnecessary, in fact, and utterly futile, to introduce any outside influence whatsoever. That Angoras have been used by some breeders in an attempt to "improve" the breed there is evidence in abundance, but I doubt whether the cross has been of any advantage. It is quite possible to breed a good looking Beveren from an Angora cross, but the progeny from such mating will, without doubt, throw undesirable "woollies" and other unwanted throw-backs, as an Angora may have all sorts of material at the back of it. Should a breeder be suffering from shortage of coat, it is by far the best plan to go to other Beverens that are long coated and without any Angora ancestors.

Should you get youngsters in your litters that show white undercoat, don't imagine you have impure stock. Stick to these. They often turn out the best adults, though they are not much good for exhibition in young classes.

After a Rabbit has been out to a few shows the feet and ears sometimes get stained through wet and dirty pens. This can usually be remedied by a little soap and water. I have washed a Rabbit all over when it has come back from a show in a dirty and dishevelled condition, though I do not recommend this as a general practice. Coat and colour being the chief features, 50% of the points being allotted to these essentials, general appearance and condition go a long way on the judging table.

Procure a picture of a typical Beveren. It will be very helpful to a novice and will always be a guide. With such a guide a beginner should be able to pick out the best youngsters soon after leaving the doe, as they possess the real mandoline shape and good heads. In the change of coats from the fluffy nest coat to the young coat the head is the last to finish. This last bit, usually between the eyes, is an advantage as it will sometimes save a well-developed youngster from being turned down by a judge as "too developed"—another term for being older than the class in which it is shown. The point I have referred to is a sign of youth.

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Show when and wherever you can as it is only shows that keep interest in the Fancy alive. Enter from the classification given in "Fur and Feather." All that is necessary is a sheet of notepaper giving your name and address, the class No. and breed. a show secretary does not need a long letter for an entry. And don't wait until the day of entries closing before sending, as at this time the secretary is a busy man, and the earlier you enter the better it is for him. A few days before the show you will get a label addressed for the show. You insert your name and address for the return of the exhibit in the space provided for the purpose and send your Rabbit off. When sending by rail you send at the owner's risk rate and half rate for return. Should you get a wrong Rabbit returned from a show—and this does happen sometimes—inform the secretary as soon as you can and he will endeavour to right matters, which will probably take a few days. Before commencing exhibiting prepare or purchase good sized boxes for your stock to travel about in. Use three-ply wood, which is both light and strong. Have your boxes large enough for the Rabbit to turn round in, high enough and well ventilated. When sending to a show put a little sawdust in the box and then a layer of hay. It is also as well to ear label your exhibit with the pen number. It helps the show officials and is useful in recognising your own Rabbit when it comes home.

Join the British Fur Rabbit Society. The Secretary is Mr. E. A. C. Lloyd, The Chase, Winchmore Hill, London, N. 21, and the subscription is 10/6 per annum. The Society holds annually Young Stock and Adult Stock Shows, when many valuable trophies are competed for. Visit these shows if possible, as the best Rabbits are to be found there, and a show of this kind is a meeting place for enthusiasts of the breed. A lot of useful information can be obtained by keeping eyes and ears open.

My remarks upon the Blue Beveren apply equally to the White Beveren. Colour is of equal importance, as there are several shades of white. The ideal specimen is a pure white and any other shade should be discarded and on no account bred with. Pink eyes are not a fault but black or blue eyes are preferred. Great strides have been made with the White Beveren of late and are now almost as popular as the Blue Beveren. They are easily first in the white breeds of rabbits. The pelts are ideal wraps for evening wear.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HAVANA.

By ALICE CHAVASSE.

The Havana Rabbit has hitherto been the only self-coloured brown Rabbit in existence, or known to Rabbit breeders, but several well-known breeders are endeavouring to produce a brown Rabbit, resembling sable. It is said to have been first produced in Holland in the year 1898, and came to England from France ten years later. The ideal colour is a rich dark chocolate or liver brown, with a purplish sheen. Besides the ideal colour there are a variety of shades in existence, the commonest possibly being a reddish coffee colour, followed by a dark dull brown lacking richness and usually associated with a greyish tint on the sides and flanks.

Havanas of all shades have a pearl-grey undercolour to their brown fur, and the richness of colour in the ideal is produced by the great depth to which the brown tint extends down the fur. Undercolour varies also in shade, being much paler in some specimens than in others. I, personally, always associate a good top colour with a really grey undercolour, not with the creamy shade often seen and which perforce forms a lighter background for the brown top colour and is, therefore, bound to rob it of some of its depth. Many good Havanas have fur at the nape of their necks and on their flanks just round the tail that is brown to the root of the fur—possibly the forerunners of the Rabbit so ardently desired by many, the self-brown Rabbit, brown from the tip of his coat to his skin! But these are not Havanas true to the standard agreed upon by the National Havana Club and the National Beveren Club (now the British Fur Rabbit Society) representatives of which Clubs met in conference to draw up a universal ideal standard.

My own preference is for a Havana with great depth of brown top colour, allied to a narrow margin of pearl grey undercolour, which, in my opinion, gives this beautiful brown fur a really natural or "wild" look—an appearance so opposed to the dyed and faked effects produced by the so-called art of the modern manufacturing furrier.

Havana fur must be dense and straight and lie close to the Rabbit's body. It should be medium in length and, though glossy and of a shimmering brilliancy in first-class specimens, the standard does not call for a long silky or exquisitely soft and fine coat as the standards of certain other well-known fur breeds do. Herein lies the secret of the success of the Havana Rabbit as, in

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my opinion, the premier utility fur producer, for it is just this texture of fur which can successfully resist wear and tear, the ordinary wear and usage of every day life, which includes mixing in crowds and travelling in bus, tram and third-class railway carriages. A coat produced from pelts grown in my own rabbitry, worn for three winters in London and Birmingham by a medical student, showed no sign of "rubbing" or wear at the end of that period.

Havanas with "raggy" or "woolly" fur, or those without density, i.e. a large number of hairs to the square inch of skin, are not true to standard, and bring the breed into disrepute by their very existence. While colour and texture of fur are all important size and type are almost equally so in the exhibition Havana. The standard calls for a Rabbit not exceeding seven pounds or under five pounds in weight providing that weight shall be of secondary importance when type is maintained. The essential characteristic of the breed is cobbiness, achieved by broad loins, well furnished hindquarters, short necks and heads broad rather than "snipey" or narrow, furnished with neat, straight, narrow ears carried erect and not more than four inches long. All this desirable cobbiness can be obtained in the six pound Havana, the weight indicated as ideal by the modern standard. Extremes should be avoided by the exhibition breeder, as the Havana that weighs over seven pounds is not less beautiful than the more commonly seen diminutive specimen, weighing four pounds or even less, with fine bone, narrow loins, wide ears and snipey muzzle.

The following is the standard of excellence for Havanas, adopted by the National Havana Club and also by what was then National Beveren Club:—

Type. —(a) SHAPE. —Compact, cobby body, very short neck and back, with markedly broad and rounded loins, wide and well-developed hindquarters	30
(b) HEAD. —Short, but not coarse, rather broader in bucks	5
(c) EARS. —Well furred; short, straight and pointed; fine in substance, carried upright and close together	5
(d) EYES. —Same colour as body, glowing ruby red in a subdued light	5
(e) LEGS & FEET. —Short, straight and fine in bone, brown toe-nails	5
Colour. —A rich dark chocolate or liver brown, with a purplish sheen; the colour to go well down the hairs, with a pearl grey undercolour	25
Coat. —Of medium length, thick and very glossy, lying close to body	25
Total	100

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Size.—Weight about 6 lbs., a latitude of about 1 lb. either way permissible. Weight to be of secondary importance provided type be retained.

Faults.—Dewlap; white hairs, but a few not to handicap unduly.

Disqualifications.—Excessive dewlap; ill-health.

The amiability, gentleness and docility of Havanas is famous the world over, and makes this breed the ladies' Rabbit par excellence. They are particularly hardy, and thrive in outdoor hutches all the year round, not only in the Midlands and North of England but also in Scotland. They breed freely even in winter with just a little extra protection from extreme cold in the shape of a movable wooden shutter for the wire portion of the hutch door, or even a sack thrown over the hutch at night.

ESTABLISHING A STUD.

It is essential to success that the intending Havana breeder should start his breeding operations with first-class stock, preferably purchased from a successful exhibitor with a real reputation for honest dealing. Happily there are many such, and careful study of show reports in "Fur and Feather" and the year books of the two specialist clubs catering for the breed will reveal their names to the uninitiated. The buyer of modest means should buy a doe in kindle, leaving the selection of the stud used to the vendor, who should know the sire best suited to each particular doe. Those able to start on a larger scale may purchase a trio of breeding does and a suitable stock buck from the same vendor explaining that he or she desires a suitable quartette to provide the foundation of a stud.

Don't be tempted to buy from various sources. Buy all you need from one breeder and don't mix the strains. Only the really experienced breeder can venture to do that with some particular goal in view, and even he often has to pay dearly for the experiment. When choosing breeding stock, select rich coloured Rabbits free from white hairs, with feet and ears that match the body colour.

It is only possible to produce and maintain the production of the best coloured specimens of the richest and darkest type, by mating together individuals with the desired characteristics. It would be wiser to buy one high-class pair of Havanas, keeping the best youngsters to add to the stud and mate with the parents, and so work up to a high-class in-bred stud, than to spend the same amount of money on a larger number of mediocre specimens. Always remember that scientific in-breeding is the mating of suitable and essentially healthy related specimens, not the indiscriminate pairing of animals closely related without reference to type, colour or stamina.

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MANAGEMENT.

Havana does that have been properly fed are quite ready to breed from at six or seven months old and are excellent mothers, capable of rearing large families without the aid of foster mothers, though milk daily is a great help if the family exceeds six in numbers and cannot be counted an extravagance. Remember that the milk must be in addition to and not instead of water, which must always stand in clean pots in every hutch. Don't dole water round once daily, shortly afterwards removing all water pots. Let them remain in the hutches, and fill up again if necessary. Breeding does are particularly thirsty creatures.

Leave the youngsters with their dams for eight or nine weeks. Does will live together peaceably until old enough to breed themselves. Havana bucks are wonderfully amiable, and I have kept brothers together until five months old. It is, however, safer and wiser to separate them at fourteen weeks, as if quarrels arise pelts are quickly spoilt and likely winners rendered unfit for the show pen.

Havanas are small eaters and thrive on a daily mash of best bran, Uveco with a little Sussex ground oats, or barley meal in extremely cold weather. Clover or clover hay must be provided in liberal quantity daily. Green food or roots are essential to good health and economic feeding. Take notice of the individual Rabbit's preference in food. It pays to maintain contented happy stock. Such stock grows rapidly, and is always in good condition. A lump of rock salt should find its place in every hutch for the Rabbits to lick.

Place a deep layer of sawdust in the nest compartment with soft meadow hay on top, taking care that does in kindle have a really good supply of hay for nesting purposes, as many does make and re-make their nests daily for a fortnight prior to actually kindling. Some mothers in their anxiety to protect their young pile the contents of the hutch on the nestful of youngsters, completing the mound with their food pot! It is essential that these does should be kept particularly clean and dry, because very young Rabbits are quickly killed if smothered in wet sawdust and pellets.

UTILITY CHARACTERISTICS.

Havanas are essentially triple-purpose Rabbits. Firstly, their flesh is of excellent quality, fine grained and white, while their broad loins and fine bone ensure the maximum of meat with a minimum of offal. Secondly, their pelts make coats and wraps of great beauty and of lasting wear. Thirdly, as an exhibition Rabbit the Havana has certainly arrived. Classes are provided at all good shows, while both adult and young stock shows are held annually. At these shows handsome silver trophies are competed for by the Havana alone. Many fancy Rabbit lovers argue that

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there is no "sport" or difficulty in breeding self-coloured Rabbits, an idea that I find quite incorrect in the Havana's case. The attainment of just that ideal rich chocolate brown, with the elusive purplish sheen is sufficiently difficult for the most devoted lover of problems, while the theme of colour has never lost its interest throughout the ages, among the primitive savages as well as the classic and also modern peoples, for it is the visible, vital essential to all beauty, be it in animal, human, or even inanimate objects.

When fur production is the breeders main object he can rely upon the Havana to produce also a high-class saleable carcase of the size desired by the big London buyers, who willingly pay from 1/2 to 1/6 per lb. for regular weekly consignments in winter. It is a well-known fact that many of the chicken creams, chicken soufflés, chicken rissoles, etc., figuring so frequently upon restaurant menus, are in actual fact made from the succulent white fleshed hutch Rabbits, so different to the native wild Rabbit in flesh, colour and flavour. Summer pelts and pelts of four months old Rabbits are worth less than adult pelts, so it pays to grow on as many youngsters as possible. This is a comparatively easy matter with Havanas, who are so good tempered that even bucks can be housed together during the winter months, though certainly not in Spring when the natural breeding season begins.

Sable, natural musquash and mink are the three brown wild furs known to the furrier and world of fashion, so that as natural rich dark brown fur is rare in nature, there is a wide field of usefulness open to Havana fur—the natural coloured Rabbit fur that really does wear well and long, that does not "rub" or look shabby or woolly after several seasons constant use, a statement that cannot truthfully be made about all Rabbit fur, or indeed about all "wild" fur.

Dark brown is becoming to blonde and brunette alike, and looks well with the dark clothing usually worn in winter as also with the more delicate shades of fawn, beige ecru and cream, often used for special occasion toilettes in winter in England, and more generally in the South of France and Italy. Those who have seen the live Rabbit only, and have admired it, are amazed and delighted when shown a really well matched, well made Havana scarf wrap or coat, and I have many times been annoyed by the remark, "Oh, how lovely it looks! Just like REAL fur," a remark meant to be the highest form of praise, though exactly why rats, moles, monkeys, and the evil smelling skunk should be credited with "real fur" and the Rabbits deprived of it I have never been able to see.

Havana fur always looks "just right." It can be worn in a Rolls Royce car when calling upon a duchess, or attending the opera, equally as well and in as much good taste as it can be worn in a third-class railway carriage or a London bus. An added

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advantage lies in the fact that its colour and texture are suitable for men's wear as well as for the more general use by women and children.

It is a most successful glove fur, suitable for both sexes, and of the colour most in demand for gloves. Indeed, Havana fur is the fur for every purpose and all occasions.

PROFIT POSSIBILITIES.

As with all breeds of Rabbits in this and Continental countries the best specimens command remunerative prices when sold to found new studs, or to those who require a ready-made show specimen. Fortunately for those who possess the "breeder's eye" there is a large army of purchasers who do not, and they are willing to pay for the expert selection and stock of those who do. Exhibiting pays its way if second prizes can be gained, while consistent first prize winning shows a profit even in these days of high railway charges, while success at shows is the finest advertisement a breeder can get, besides which it enhances considerably the sale value of his individual exhibits and advertises his stock in all parts of the country to the visitors to the shows and the purchasers of show catalogues. In the case of the best agricultural shows these catalogues often go to America in addition to European countries.

Mass production of Rabbit pelts, with sales properly organised by large societies or companies, will doubtless be the method of the future. Meanwhile breeders will profit most if they can sell their wares direct, either as dressed pelts to the tailor or dress-maker, or in the ready-to-wear article to friends to the shops in their own town or by advertisement, gaining for themselves by their own energy and enterprise the profit otherwise absorbed by the middleman. As much as seventeen shillings and sixpence and twenty-one shillings each have been paid for first-class matched pelts to my own personal knowledge, while fifteen shillings per pelt is a usual price for good quality dressed pelts in parcels of fours or six to match. Vendors of air dried pelts have demanded and received, I know, prices varying from two shillings and sixpence per pelt. With increased and regular production doubtless prices asked and paid will become stabilised, and we may even hope to see them regularly quoted, as the prices are to-day of all other farm stock and produce.

EXHIBITING.

All Havanas need to be shielded from the fiercest sun light, and this is easily done with movable wooden or canvas covered shutters. Stock bred and reared in out-door rabbitries excel the

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indoor bred ones in density of fur and freedom from disease. While protection is necessary when the sun is shining directly upon a hutch, shutters must be removed when the sun has passed as semi-darkness produces moping and ill-health.

Havanas pay well for grooming, which adds additional sheen to the natural gloss. Use a very soft brush at first, following with brisk hand rubbing from head to tail, and finishing off with a selvyt or piece of old silk.

As Rabbits' ears are sometimes slow in growing fur, and stale fur on the ear does not usually match new fur on the body, an occasional application of vaseline to the ears is helpful to the growth of new fur. Rub it in gently with your finger tips.

Keep your hutches clean, for damp sawdust, or worse still pools of urine, spoil the feet and bleach the flank fur to a disagreeable red rust colour, which means ruin to even the best exhibition stock. Linseed, molassine and cod liver oil condiment are all excellent aids to the super condition required in the keen competition of to-day.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARGENTE DE CHAMPAGNE.

BY B. DE H. PICKARD.

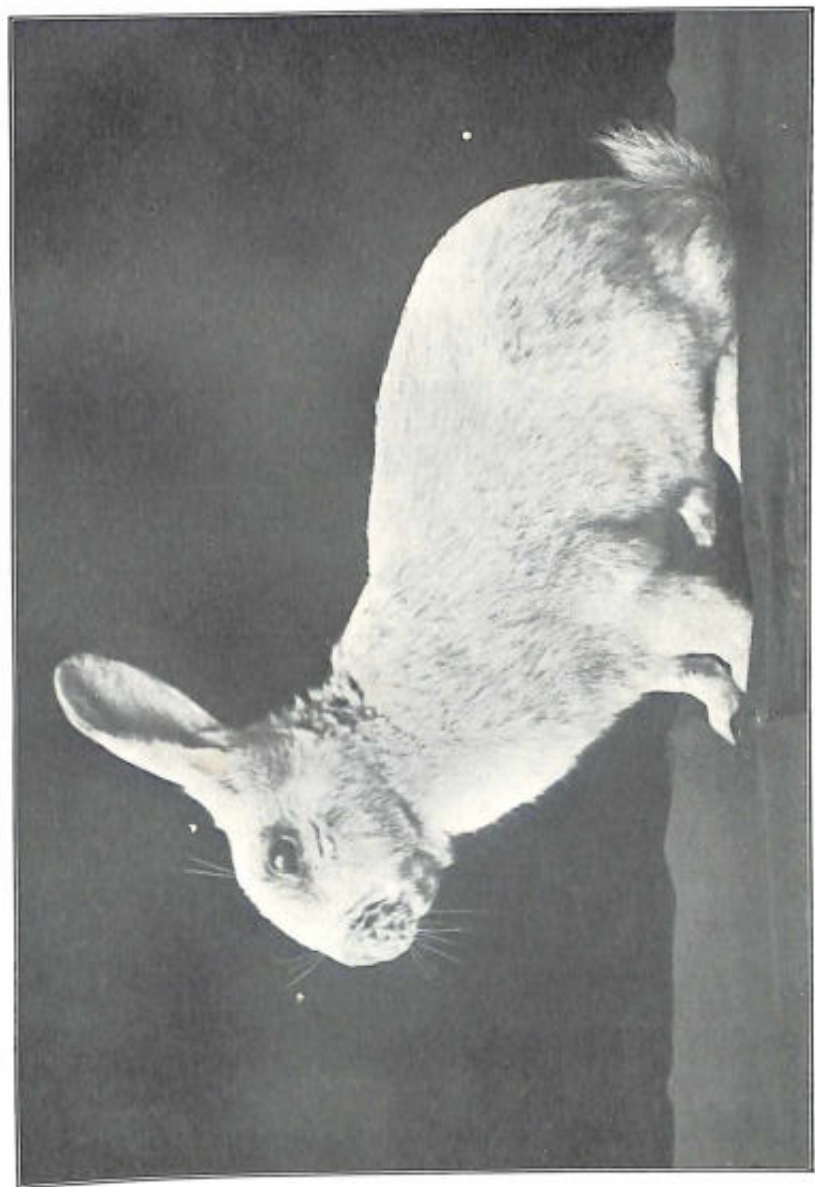
The Argente de Champagne, during the past two years, has in England, at any rate, been steadily making its way in the Rabbit world, both as an exhibition and pelt-producing Rabbit. It is only since the war that this variety has come to be recognised by British breeders, although some fifteen years ago an attempt was made to popularise them, but it was unsuccessful. Previous to September, 1924, they were fostered by the then Beveren Club, but at that date, several bold spirits desiring a Specialist Club to look after their interests, the National Argente Club was founded, and of which Sir Samuel Faire, D.L., J.P. is President. This year (1926) the membership has passed the eighty mark, and is still extending. The popularity of the breed is going up by leaps and bounds, and steady progress is being made all round.

Though practically a new fur variety in this country, the Argente de Champagne cannot be described as a made variety, in comparison with most of the fur varieties that have appeared since the war. Although it is often described as a French breed, this is hardly correct, as nothing definite is known of its origin owing to the fact that it has been bred in Europe for generations, and probably came from the East of that Continent.

The French and Belgian peasants consider it the oldest domesticated Rabbit, and breed it in such large numbers that markets are held regularly for the sale of the pelts, particularly in Lyons and Troyes, buyers coming from all parts to participate. Its name does not refer to its colour, but to Champagne, the district of France in which it is mostly bred.

Most of the original stock imported into this country, came, I believe, from France, although amongst these importations there were mainly two types—one is known in France as the Grande Race, and the other, a slightly smaller type, which, in my opinion, is the correct type of Argente de Champagne.

When commencing to breed live stock of whatever species, it is necessary to study with the greatest care the standard for the ideal, as laid down by the Clubs, or Authorities catering for the breed. Many men know by heart the standard or standards of the breeds they keep. In breeding fur Rabbits, whether for exhibition purposes or for pelts, this also applies, and before dealing with the standard for the Argente de Champagne Rabbit, a few words explaining what standards are for, is not out of place.



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In nearly every walk of life, one should have an ideal or an ambition to aim for—the same thing applies to the breeding of live-stock. The standard is a picture in words of an imaginary ideal specimen of the particular breed of the species in question. That is, in our case, the Argente de Champagne Rabbit—perfect in every detail, viz., type, colour, coat, weight, and condition; a Rabbit, in fact, that has no faults whatever. In other words, an ideal or an aim for which in all breeding operations we have to strive for, and rarely, if ever, obtain.

Standards are often made difficult to obtain. If it were not so, the object of breeders would be quickly realised, and in consequence, the popularity of the breed would soon wane. No standards are harder of attainment than the Dutch and English, and for years these two breeds have kept and held their popularity. An object hard of attainment gives the greatest zest. Standards are also made as a guide to judges, though it is recognised many interpret the standard differently, thus really making the breeding of high-class winning stock more difficult still; though it is surprising how, when any Rabbit anywhere approaching the ideal gets recognised by the majority of judges. Another reason for the standard, at any rate in the case of fur Rabbits, is to give breeders a guide as to the pelt most required by the furrier.

The Standard of Perfection.—The official English standard for the Argente de Champagne was somewhat late in putting in an appearance, breeders working to no official standard, but to the French standard which in print gave no details, and was in my experience difficult even to get hold of. However, in the Spring of 1923, at an annual general meeting of the then Beveren Club, the standard was formulated and officially passed. Well do I remember the occasion, for opinions as to what was the ideal by no means agreed, and practically the whole of the time at the disposal of the meeting was taken up by the discussion. Later, the Beveren Club amended this standard by altering one word, viz., "sparsely" to "moderately" (and I am not sure now that this should not be "abundantly") with reference to the ticking. In October, 1924, the National Argente Club brought out their official standard with slight alterations and conditions to any previously published.

I propose to go through the standard, clause by clause, and interpret it as I read it, to the best of my ability. It is not one of the easiest to understand, and consequently, is open to different interpretation by each individual breeder, and this is confirmed both by conversation with breeders, and by the different types of stock which win under different judges.

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N.A. CLUB STANDARD OF PERFECTION.

	Points
Type. —Moderate length of body, with well developed hind-quarters and slightly arched back, avoiding extremes of cobbiness or raciness. Head broad and rather long, with round skull. Front legs straight and medium length, no dewlaps in bucks, excessive dewlaps in does a fault.	10
Colours. —Undercolour, dark slate blue, body colour bluish-white, produced by a mixture of bluish-white and longer jet black hairs, evenly and moderately interspersed over the whole body. Toe-nails horn colour	25
Evenness. —The part forming the pelt to be of one shade throughout, but the nose and muzzle as far up as the smellers may be of a very slightly darker shade ...	20
Coat. —To be dense, silky, glossy, and not less than one inch in length, lying loose or open, rather than pressed closely to the body	25
Condition. —In good health and firm flesh.	10
Ears and Eyes. —Ears carried close together and upright, medium length, slightly rounded at tips. Eyes to be dark brown	5
Weight. —Not under 7lbs. and not exceeding 10lbs.	5
Disqualifications. —White patches, flesh colour, or putty noses, crooked legs, drooping ears, eyes other than brown, and any sign of cold, sneezing or canker.	
Faults. —Boney or angular shape, large paunch, fur harsh, thin, rugged, woolly or short, creamy or yellow tint, most noticeable round the neck and cheeks.	

INTERPRETATION OF THE STANDARD.

Type.—This is the word used to express the looks and general appearance of the whole Rabbit. After careful and continuous breeding on the same lines, it is often possible to recognise any particular breeder's strain. The type of the Argente is like all Continental breeds, when used for their flesh as well as the pelt. The Argente should have a moderately long body in comparison with its weight and size, its hindquarters should be well developed and have well rounded loins, and its back should be slightly arched.

I will explain this in the following manner, viz:—Place the Rabbit sideways, and taking a straight line from the back of the ears to the top of the hindquarters, the body of the Rabbit should form the bend of an elongated letter D upside down, but at the same time this should not form a small or large semi-circle. The Rabbit has to be neither extremely cobby or short-backed,

nor has it to be extremely long or racy; in fact it must be compact but in conjunction with the rest of its body. The head must be well set on a fairly short neck, and the part between the eyes down to the muzzle should be broad and slightly curved or rounded. The forehead, between the eyes and the roots of the ears is also broad and slightly rounded. The front legs must be quite straight and well formed, though they must be of a length to compare with the size of the Rabbit and not ungainly. Dewlap should be avoided in both sexes, though in a doe it should not unduly handicap.

Colour.—Of all breeds the correct definition of the colour in Argentés has created more controversy than any I know. The original French standard merely states the colour to be old silver, or the colour of a well-worn coin. This is far too vague, and can mean almost anything—silver coins varying greatly. Several breeders have tried to express it in words, but even now, I think no one has arrived at a suitable expression in words for it. *This is on account of the fact that the colour is a blend of several different shades, which look different when seen closely, or at a distance. In getting the correct colour, the undercolour, which should be dark slate-blue plays a very much more important part than many think. There are three colours in the Rabbit, slate-blue, black and white. The main body hairs are white, the undercolour (owing to the fact that the coat lies loosely on the body) shows through them, and makes them (the white hairs) appear to have a bluish or greyish appearance. Growing through all these hairs are the very much longer jet-black ticking hairs, which must be moderately and evenly interspersed over the whole body. It is a lack of or superabundance of these hairs, that makes a specimen either a light one or a dark one. The middle course is correct, and fortunately it is fairly easy to ascertain when you have the correct amount of these. Place the Rabbit in a good light, and stand three yards away from it, and if you can then see these individual black hairs, the Rabbit is either too light or too dark; if the whole merely looks a misty greyish colour, neither too light nor too dark, then you have the medium shade, and a likely winner. Toe-nails are to be horn colour, that is not black, but a slightly brownish tinge.—25 points.

Evenness.—The whole of the Rabbit, i.e. the head, ears, nose, legs, feet, and parts forming the pelt, must be of one shade throughout, but this is modified with the words that the nose and muzzle, as far up as the smellers, may be of a slightly darker shade. This modification is for several reasons, viz. :—(1) Because of the extreme difficulty to breed a Rabbit with a nose and muzzle the same colour as the pelt. (2) The hairs are shorter round the muzzle and therefore the undercolours shows through more. (3) When you have a Rabbit with a light muzzle, in nine cases out of ten, it has too light an undercolour. My contention

is that it will have to be bred for, and that it is possible to obtain this qualification. It is a minor point, I know, for those only breeding for pelts, but in the show pen, eventually, it will often make the difference between a first and second prize.

Coat.—Throughout all the fur varieties of Rabbits now known, no variety can approach within measureable distance, the texture or length of a pure-bred Argenté in its bloom. This may appear a strong statement to make, nevertheless, it is a fact, and what is more, its coat has been obtained without any addition of foreign blood, such as the Angora—it is an indigenous production. In a good one, it must be dense, silky and glossy, and no less than one inch in length. None of the above points are difficult to obtain. The coat of a good Argenté has also one difference over other fur breeds, in that it lies quite loosely on the body, and this may be one of the causes of the misty bluish effect in colour, when seen at a distance. As many points are given for coat as for colour—25 points.

Ears and Eyes.—The ears should be medium length, that is, in comparison with the whole size of the Rabbit. Spoon-shaped ears must be avoided. The tips of the ears should be slightly rounded. The eyes must be always dark brown (I may say I have never seen an Argenté de Champagne with any other colour of eyes)—5 points.

Weight.—The ideal weight is about 8½ to 9 lbs., and though many people think the present-day Argenté is too light in weight, you will find that they weigh extraordinarily heavy for their size. An Argenté over 10 lbs. in weight would be far too large, and those past that weight are, in my opinion, nearing a slightly different variety of a similar breeding. Space here is too limited to go into this, but in passing I would say that these two varieties have, in some cases been inter-bred in England.—5 points.

Disqualifications.—These are not difficult of interpretation, and I only wish to emphasise the fact that canker to which Argentés seem very subject, is a disqualification in the show pen.

Faults.—These are easily picked out on the Rabbit. A bony or angular frame, the undercolour will show through too much, and a yellow tinge shows up very much more, particularly on the too pale sort, a further sign that they have not enough ticking.

Making a Start.—To those wishing to start the obtaining of a good breeding stock need not be any obstacle. There are now, numerous breeders with stock generally for sale of their own strain, or other well-known strains. At one time, to get going with this breed was not easy, unless one imported stock from the Continent, price mating would be extra—10/- to 30/-, according to the was a buck to mate it to. This is now all changed; in the breeding season, there are always several bucks at public stud, at moderate fees. My advice is—Obtain one or two good



Commercial Graphic
WRAP MADE FROM THE FUR OF THE
ARGENTE DE CHAMPAGNE

THE ARGENTE DE CHAMPAGNE.

breeding does, fairly large does in their maiden year, and get them mated from the vendor or send them to one of the advertised bucks. Now as regards the price to pay for these does. You cannot buy good stock under 2½—3 guineas per doe, and at that price mating would be extra—10/- and 30/-, according to the quality and wins of the buck used. Occasionally, a breeder is overstocked, and is compelled to sell at a lower price, but he does not often offer his best stock, on these occasions.

Another way of starting is to buy in early summer, a pair of youngsters from some well-known breeder (at about three months). Neither the breeder nor you know exactly how Argentés, at this age, will turn out, and they are often offered at a cheaper rate, say, 25/- per pair, buck and doe; these might turn out big winners in the end.

We will assume that you have bought two does, mated to a good buck, and that you have them comfortably housed. These does should be well fed and given milk a week before kindling. Here, let me say that when buying, be sure you get the correct day when the does were mated. The young will appear after thirty-one days, so that a Rabbit mated May 7th should kindle June 7th, but a Rabbit mated February 3rd should kindle March 6th. The morning after the day your does are due to kindle, examine the hutches, and if you notice a lot of fur about, in most cases the doe will have brought her family into the world. Give the doe some greens to eat, and carefully examine the young. They will be born black, and no other colour. In rare instances you might get one or two pure white. These are not Angoras, but Silver Himalayans, which means that one of your parent Rabbits carried this character, and it is nothing to worry about, most Continental breeds being the same in this respect; it could be bred out by the use of tested bucks, albeit, some bucks will throw them when mated to some strains of does and not to others.

If it is very early in the year do not keep more than about four in the litter, the resultant litters making finer specimens; also, they are not such a strain on the doe. At six weeks, the eye-lashes and fore-feet will begin to turn white, and from now on, in varying degrees, the youngsters will silver rapidly, but in patches, not evenly. Some will silver in six months completely, others take nine months, and those that take nine months, all things taken into consideration, will generally be the best Rabbits. During the silvering period, the youngsters must be extremely well fed, as the process appears to take a lot out of them, and makes them thin. The fore feet often silver very rapidly, and if level to start with, generally keep so. A barred-footed Argenté is unsightly, and is useless for exhibition. I omitted to say that when picking out a litter, destroy any with white feet. I have found this failing certain to appear in resultant litters, if the parents are so marked.

MANAGEMENT.

Housing is much too big a subject to be dealt with fully here, suffice it to say that before purchasing any stock, have your hutches ready. There are excellent types of hutches on the market, at varying prices, to suit all. The Argente is accommodating, and can be kept in indoor or outdoor hutches, but for the comfort of the attendant an inside building is more desirable. If only a few, say up to twenty Rabbits are kept, sugar boxes for single Rabbits suit the purpose well, but if more Rabbits are to be kept, tiers of hutches, joiner-made, are preferable, and these should be 2' wide x 2' deep x 1½' high. With a few hutches, 4' or 5' long, the same depth and height, for breeding does and rearing youngsters. When in tiers, the doors can be made to open three or four hutches at once, to save time in feeding, etc. If youngsters are in these hutches, a small piece of wood 6" deep, should be placed across the opening inside the door, to prevent their falling out. Give as much of the front, as possible, to wire-netting, but do not have the door space narrower than the shovel used for clearing out, or you will find it difficult and that it takes a long time to do the job. Hay racks should be provided, and the floors should be at least 1" thick. Wire-netting should be ½" mesh for preference. Hutches should be lime-washed once a year. Certain hutches now on the market combine all these points and are advertised in the columns of "Fur and Feather."

Everyone has his own ideas of feeding, but certain rules can be laid for feeding Argentés. One most important point is—Do not over-feed. Argentés are small eaters and thrive on very little. As a general rule, the following dietary will bring any Rabbit to perfection:—**Morning:** Seed clover, hay, and roots in winter. Mixed green stuff in summer. Water to drink. **Evening:** More seed clover and mash of sharps, bran, and barley meal, and a little fish meal in winter. In summer mash could be discarded, except, say, two nights a week; as a change, whole oats could be given on Sundays. The chief thing in feeding Rabbits for exhibition or pelts is the observation and handling. Some eat more than others, and some like what others would not touch. This is the reason why some people cannot make a success with live stock. Unless a person is really fond of and can understand animals that are under his care, he had best leave them alone.

There are several varieties of Argentés, viz.: Crème, Bleu, Brun and Clair, and of all these, the Crème alone has a future before it. So far, though rarely seen, they are wanted. Now is the time to get in on the ground floor with them, and breeders are few and far between, and stock more so. The Argente Crème is a considerably smaller Rabbit, about 5½lbs. in weight, and very much more cobby in type. It is altogether a dainty and

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charming Rabbit, and has a big future. Its colour is made up of undercolour deep orange, body colour creamy-white, interspersed with longer orange hairs, but these do not show up much, and the whole effect at a distance should be a creamy white colour—in fact, I have seen them looking almost white. I do not consider this is what is wanted, as to get this shade the undercolour was practically “non est.”

The Standard for Argente Crème is herewith appended:—

	Points.
<p>Type.—Small and neat, with well-developed hindquarters, and slightly arched back, but at the same time avoiding extremes of cobbiness or raciness. Head broad, legs straight and short, no dewlaps in bucks, excessive dewlaps in does a fault. Toe-nails horn-coloured</p>	20
<p>Colour.—Undercolour orange, body colour distinct creamy white, the whole sparsely interspersed with longer orange hairs</p>	20
<p>Evenness.—The part forming the pelt and extremities to be of one shade throughout</p>	20
<p>Coat.—To be of medium length, silky, dense and lying fairly close to the body</p>	20
<p>Condition.—In good health and firm flesh</p>	10
<p>Ears and Eyes.—Ears short, proportionate in breadth, moderately rounded and carried erect. Eyes to be dark brown and bold</p>	5
<p>Weight.—Not under 4½lbs., and not exceeding 6½lbs.</p>	5
<p>Disqualifications.—Putty noses, white patches, drooping ears, eyes other than brown.</p>	
<p>Faults.—Bony or angular frame, large paunch, fur harsh, thin, woolly, or short, crooked legs, dark ears, or too dark muzzle.</p>	

CHAPTER VI.

THE LILAC.

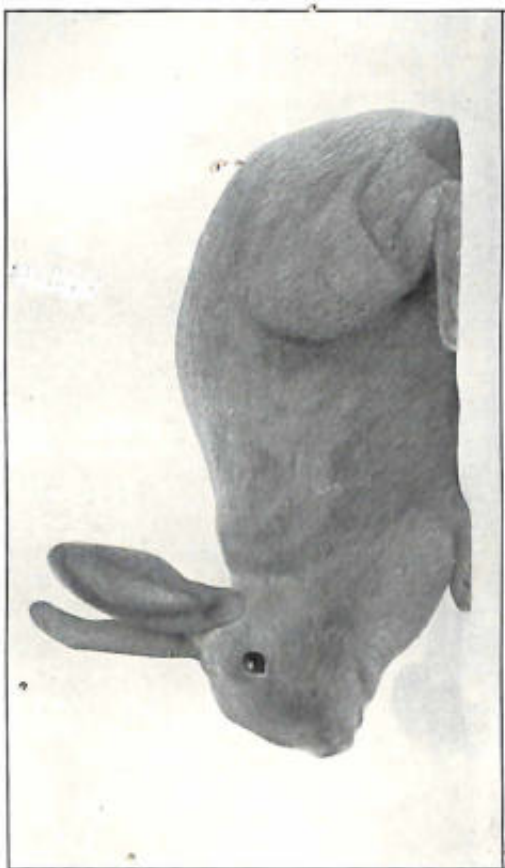
By CHAS. L. SMITH. M.B.C.

I sincerely hope these lines on the Lilac may prove useful, not only to present breeders of this variety, but to our future breeders, be they specialists in other varieties or beginners in the Rabbit Fancy. I was once a beginner at the bottom of the ladder, climbing rung by rung, nearing the top by patience, hard work which became a pleasure, kindness to my stock, ever seeking advice from fellow fanciers, and at all times ready to obtain sound knowledge. So I am always willing to assist beginners.

"Fur and Feather" is our weekly adviser, and no Rabbit fancier can get on without it. It is full of interesting news, advice, show reports, show advertisements, expert opinions on different subjects, and finally the advertisements of fanciers who have stock to sell. So if the reader is not a subscriber, or has not an order placed with his newsagent for this weekly paper, I would advise him to rectify the omission without delay.

I have made a very careful study of the Lilac since its introduction in 1922. I am more than pleased to be able to say that this Rabbit is entirely British. It originated in this country through some experienced breeders experimenting in crossing self-coloured fur Rabbits of different colours together. They found that by crossing a Beveren and Havana the offspring were black. Curiosity perhaps enticed them to mate the blacks of two separate or unrelated litters together to see what would be the result. The litter produced was not all blacks but a percentage of blacks, blues, browns and a dove-grey colour. Such a colour was unknown to English fur breeders so they set out to produce more and find a name for them. They decided to call them "Lilacs," as they resembled somewhat the colour of that spring bloom.

Further experimenting by mating two of these dove-grey Rabbits to see what colours would be obtained astonished them somewhat as they bred true to the same colour. Therefore, it became evident that if a standard of excellence could be drawn up, and adopted by a Club, a new fur breed of self-colour had come into existence. I could describe exactly how to produce good Lilacs in this way, and the points to watch and avoid, but it is unnecessary, because Lilacs have since 1922 been so much improved by careful mating and selection, that most beautiful and reliable stock can be obtained from good breeders.



LILAC

THE LILAC.

THE STANDARD.

The Beveren Club (now the British Fur Rabbit Society) adopted the following standard on July 12th, 1922, when they recognised the Rabbit as a fur breed, to be called the Lilac. The same standard is in use to-day. It reads:—

Colour. —An even, pinky dove colour down to the root of the fur	25
Coat. —Exquisitely soft, fine and dense, lying close to the body; not a fly-back coat	25
Shape. —Compact cobby body, broad haunches (similar to the Havana type)	15
Eyes. —Colour to match fur, glowing ruby red in the dark, large and full	10
Head. —Short, but not coarse, broader in bucks than in does	5
Ears. —Well furred, moderately short and straight	5
Legs. —Short, straight, with colour of body carried to toes ...	5
Weight. —Not to exceed seven pounds	5
Condition. —In good health and firm in flesh	5
	100

Disqualifications.—White patches on body, eyes which do not glow ruby red in the shade.
Faults.—White hairs. Eyes which do not match the body colour. Brown tint on feet.

Important items in the standard are the following:—

Colour: Breeders should pay great attention to colour and recognise its great importance. It states: "An even pinky dove colour to the roots of the fur." Alas! some breeders and fanciers are at a loss to define the colour that is required by the standard. Nevertheless, although it is difficult to describe on paper the real colour, I will endeavour to do so. "Pinky dove" is a grey colour, what people may term dove grey. But there is just a slight difference between them. I do not mean by the dark and light tones of colour, but by their appearance. Actual dove grey is a dull grey, without lustre and contains little or no pink. It contains these colours in its making:—White, black, and prussian blue. French grey is pinky dove. It is a brighter colour than dove grey, and contains lustre. The colours used in its making are white, black, burnt sienna, and a dash of blue. French grey when light in colour contains the pinky tint that we require. So breeders will do well to picture this colour in their minds, or mix the above colours in paints to show them what is wanted.

Precautions must be taken to avoid stock with white hairs or hairs that tend to whiteness, as in breeding these will tend to

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FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS.

multiply and eventually spoil one's stock. I have found some good coloured Lilacs at first sight, but on inspection closely they have been found to be subject to white hairs in their coat. Some carry bunches of white hairs under fore-leg or armpits, others on chest. Avoid these for really reliable breeding.

Coat: The quality of the coat includes its length of fur, depth of colour, density, combined with that warm even look of softness and fineness, together with its texture. The combination of these give us that silky fur which not only feels exquisitely soft to the hand, but can be seen by the human eye. Therefore, where good length of soft fur and thickness of coat are maintained, no breeder need worry about the fly-back coat troubling him. Short coated and harsh-furred Lilacs should be avoided. Nevertheless, do not get too long a coat, otherwise it will tend to wooliness.

Shape: Most fanciers think type and shape are one and the same thing. Personally, I do not absolutely agree, as a good typed Rabbit may not carry altogether good shape, and vice versa. With Lilacs a compact cobby body is the required shape, combined with broad haunches, short neck, head to match size of body, with short ears, and finally short legs. Slightly larger than the Havana is the size of an adult, and a good Lilac, from my point of view, should resemble the Havana closely in type. Broad haunches will give the cobbiness of body at the hind portion of a Lilac, and short fore and hind legs keep the body compact. Avoid at all costs long legs, particularly the front ones or your Lilac will look long in body. "Type" means the way the Rabbit carries its whole body, etc.

Eyes: The iris should resemble the colour of the fur as near as possible. Therefore, these will differ in different Rabbits with the shade of colour. The pupil will look black, but in a subdued or shaded light it must glow ruby red, like a ball of fire. A good definition is the setting sun on an autumn evening.

Head, Ears and Legs: The head must be neat and short, and in proportion to the body—not a big clumsy head on a cobby body. The ears should be moderately short, neat, well furred, and carried together. For preference, they should be carried at an angle of 75 to 80 degrees. Avoid those clumsy thick-set ears. As to the length of the legs, see "Shape." They should be well furred and the colour of the body carried to the toes. The legs must be straight, and kept free from brown-tint. Fanciers may find it very difficult to keep the fore feet on the inside entirely free from stain, because these are used by the Rabbit in the cleansing process of the head and ears. Therefore, a slight discoloration on the inside of the feet should be but a little disadvantage.

Weight and Condition: Weight must not exceed 7 lbs. "Condition" demands the following requirements: General appearance—shape, type, size, maturity, quality of fur, combined with good health. Probably this is somewhat a lengthy descrip-

THE LILAC.

tion of the standard definition, but it is necessary for all who keep or intend to keep Lilacs to know the above facts, and keep them in their minds.

Since their introduction as a fur breed in 1922, Lilacs have made great headway in type, quality, length and density of fur, etc. A lot of fanciers are keeping them for exhibition as well as for producing pelts. More shows are providing classes for them, and some excellent specimens are being exhibited.

THE STUD AND ITS MANAGEMENT.

However good the management of a stud may be unless the foundation is firm and sound, the results will never fully satisfy. Nevertheless, any intending fancier will do well to decide whether the stock is to be kept in a rabbitry or in hutches out-of-doors. In each case proper housing of the stock is most essential for the comfort and health of the Rabbits. Hutches should be large enough to allow of full freedom for the inhabitants. They should be well constructed, free from damp, draughts, and extreme cold. Indoor hutches in a rabbitry need not be quite so thick in choice of timber as those used for housing stock out of doors, and which are subject to all weathers. Indoor hutches will be protected by the shed or other construction. Our-of-door hutches must be of thicker timber and protected from driving rain, dampness, moisture, and sun rays. An all-round hutch for indoor and out-of-doors use can be made of 1" timber on a framing of $1\frac{1}{2}$ " x 1". The only difference in out-of-door hutches is that the roof must be protected from rain. The size of the hutch should be at least 2' 3" long, 2' back to front, and 1' 9" high. This is plenty big enough for Lilacs. Bigger ones can be used if desired, but use them no smaller. The arrangement of hutches, etc. is best left in the hands of the person who owns them, because individual tastes differ somewhat.

The fancier must build or purchase his hutches before the purchase of the stock. In fact, he must have everything in readiness for the arrival of the Rabbits.

I advise that the foundation stock be bought from a breeder with a reputation. Avoid at all costs dealers and cheap stock. Most breeders use their weekly friend, "Fur and Feather," to advertise their stock. Their advertisements appear weekly in large numbers. How and what to buy depends upon the money to be laid out. The best and safest way is to buy one or two good does and get them mated to suitable bucks, leaving this in the hands of the breeder.

With regard to the actual management, remember cleanliness, thoroughness, carefulness, thought and kindness make all the difference in the world. Assuming a good doe has been bought, when she arrives handle carefully. Place her in her

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hutch, the floor of which should be covered with sawdust, and above that a layer of straw. Give her some food and keep her quiet. Four days before she is due to kindle, cleanse her hutch thoroughly, and give plenty of hay so that she may make her nest. Keep some water in her feeding pot at kindling time. The litter having arrived, do not worry or interfere with the doe or the babies. Just feed her carefully and keep her quiet.

When the babies run about, then only should you handle them. When six weeks old, pick out the different sexes. Having done this pick out those which follow the standard and return them to the doe. Put the others in separate hutches, does in one, bucks in another. If not required, these can be disposed of by selling. Those left with the doe should be finally sorted at eight weeks and placed in separate hutches.

BREEDING.

Keep the best buck for stud purposes and show, and the does for show and breeding. Does when ready for breeding should be returned to the breeder of the adult for mating to an unrelated buck, and of the offspring from such matings the does should be mated to your buck from the first litter, providing the colour, type, etc. are all right. But do not inbreed or you will weaken your stock. Colour always demands attention. Remember that light to light produces lighter colour, and dark to dark produces a dark or brown colour or a washed-out lavender colour. Always pair a light buck to a dark doe, or vice versa, to obtain and keep the original correct colour or the youngsters will be washy in colour.

Other matters requiring attention when breeding are eyes, ears, legs, shape, and length of fur. If the following points are watched good results will be obtained: Avoid brown dark eyes, long flappy thick ears, long legs, short harsh fur, snaky shape or long bodies. Keep all stock cobby in appearance. Length of fur and density of coat will be maintained by selecting for breeding the longest and most silky-coated stock. Avoid any stock that shows white hairs, as these will multiply by breeding.

A few words of warning, based on experience: Breed only from sound healthy stock, and only when firm in coat, free from moult and in good condition. Spring litters are the very best. By this I mean litters born in late February, March, April and early May, my experience being, unless one owns a rabbitry that is capable of keeping out severe cold, no maiden does should be mated to produce litters until mid-March. Old does having experience of good covering of the babies should be used for this purpose. In the rabbitry and hutches cleanliness is most essential for the health of the stock. Therefore, keep all hutches and their surroundings clean and tidy.

THE LILAC.

FEEDING.

This is another important item. Feed to keep health and obtain good results. Feeding must be regular and sufficient. Don't think you can get a Rabbit into show condition on green food, oats and hay alone. Oh! dear no! Although I do not wish to lay down any rule on feeding, there will be little harm done if I tell you how I feed my own stock. I don't wish to have any secrets. I feed twice a day on good sound rations—oats in the mornings to breeding stock, mash to all stock intended for exhibition; in the evenings abundant hay and green food. The mash I advise consists of bran, barley meal, Sussex ground oats, and linseed meal. I used fish meal until I found that this was the cause of scours, so I left it off, and I don't think I shall ever use it again.

EXHIBITING.

Rabbits intended for exhibition should be watched to see how they develop. I do not advise grooming Lilacs to get a good coat. Feed for that. I advise handling of the Rabbits daily at least once, and just giving a brush over with the hand lightly in the same direction as the fur, that is, head to tail. Show advertisements are found in "Fur and Feather," and classes for Lilacs are in some of these. When sending to a show, use a large enough box. Otherwise the chance of the Rabbit will be spoilt by its coat getting damaged, etc. Always despatch the exhibit to the show in good time, for the convenience of the show promoters.

PELTING.

Rabbits for pelting should be kept separate from the general stock if possible. Kill when firm in coat and in good condition. I do not advise curing skins oneself unless competent to carry the process out properly. I advise having them cured and dressed correctly by one of the skin or fur dressers, and who advertise in "Fur and Feather."

WHAT TO AVOID.

Brown eyes, thick ears, white hairs in feet, armpits, and ears. Rabbits carrying longer grey hairs than coat, which looked ticked, and appear mostly on flanks and chest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHINCHILLA GIGANTA.

By C. WREN.

The Chinchilla Giganta is one of the very few fur breeds that have been produced in this country. The ambition of the originator was to produce a large graceful Rabbit, of a type and colour entirely its own, so that it would not come into competition with other varieties when properly established. I am pleased to say that has now been done, resulting in a beautiful variety, which is being bred extensively.

The old and experienced fancier was the first to grasp the great possibilities of this valuable fur breed. It has been produced by no haphazard method. Much time, thought and experience, coupled with scientific research, were employed in its production. Some have been bold enough to infer that the Giganta is a cross-bred Flemish Giant. Others have described it as a cross-bred Chinchilla. Neither are right. Several and various crosses have been used, and many colours have been introduced. Both out-crossing and in-breeding have been resorted to. The result is considered by the best fur experts to be one of our most valuable fur-bearing Rabbits. Generally speaking, the variety will breed true to both colour and type.

It is a variety that can be made to return a profit. The does can rear six to eight youngsters but it is advisable to let them rear four or five, as the youngsters benefit greatly by the extra amount of milk and one great advantage is that the does are extremely good milkers. They can stand extremes of climatic conditions, do just as well in outside as inside hutches, are very docile, and have no vice. And they are great favourites with our many lady fanciers and their children. The possibilities of the breed are so great that within a few weeks of its introduction a national specialist club was formed, and the same year classes were put on at the Crystal Palace, Olympia, and other leading shows.

It is well known to the great majority of Rabbit breeders that the wild Chinchilla pelt is in great demand, although the supply is very limited, and the cost is almost prohibitive except to the very wealthy. Without doubt it is an exquisite fur, although it be only of very small dimensions. The Chinchilla Giganta is not an imitation of the wild animal, but it is a beautiful and lustrous pelt in its natural state, and many times larger than that of the wild Chinchilla. The Chinchilla Giganta is not, as may be supposed,



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a large example of the breed known by that name. Each of these breeds have their own standard of merit which when truly interpreted are as far apart as the poles.

STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE.

<p>Colour, Length and Quality of Fur.—The fur must cover the skin very closely and thickly, being neither woolly nor bristly, but of a decidedly silky texture, soft and pleasing to the touch. The Colour shall be a deep blue from the skin to at least half its length upwards, and a clean pearl grey following on far enough to form a distinct ring or band of the pearl colour when the fur is blown, finishing upon the surface in alternating blue and bright silver tipplings intermixed with black tipped hairs. The tipplings must show through bright and shimmering, and be carried well down to the belly, on which the surface of the fur shall be white, except the two groin streaks, which shall be of the same shade as the undercolour of the body.</p>	
<p>Feet, Head and Ears to be of the same uniform shade of colour as the body. Ears to be carried erect and have black lacings.</p>	
<p>Eyes to be the same shade of colour as body, or brown, but both eyes must be of one colour, bold, bright and sparkling 60</p>	60
<p>Shape.—Long graceful body, with head, ears and limbs all in due proportion, forming one symmetrical whole. Dewlap permissible but not desirable.</p>	
<p>Adults should not exceed 11 lbs., and youngsters in young classes not to exceed 7 lbs. 40</p>	40
	100

It will be quite readily seen that the above standard is very clearly defined. Before it was approved it was the subject of much discussion. One outstanding feature is the clear definition of the colouring that goes to make up the whole. These colours and tickings should not on any account merge. Each should have a distinct edging of its own colouring. The brighter and more pronounced these colours are, the more pleasing is the effect. Colour of fur nearest the skin, as the standard says, must be a deep blue. The kind of blue to give the best effect is the very deep shade of a damson, if this can be called blue. At times this colour is described as blue-black. On a windy day—and furs are generally worn in such inclement weather—when the wind blows the fur apart and shows this deep undercolour the effect is amazing. The pearl or centre colour is that which is on top of the undercolour of a bright lustrous first-class gem of that name. It must

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be from one-eighth to a quarter of an inch in width and show up brightly. The tickings and top colour are a mixture of pearl, sky-blue merging into deep dark blue, and vice-versa; intermixed with coal black polished tipped hairs, with some outstanding long hairs of the same colorization, the whole forming a very beautiful, bright shining mass.

The standard has laid down no particular length of coat, but extremes are not wanted. The average length of most other fur breeds can be taken as a fair guide. Extremes also are not wanted in texture. It must not on any account be harsh, what we term bristly. Neither must it be of a woolly texture as seen in the Angora. Again, extremes in top colour should not by any means be cultivated. We do not want dark and light shades, as in Silver Greys. In colorization of the whole top there should be just enough of each of the respective colours to give the whole that bright appearance, with those brilliant silver tippings so much desired by buyers of fur garments, who appreciate something beautiful and unique and will go to really good prices to have their desires gratified.

Do not continually mate together those possessing harsh coats and black ear tips, although those with black tips can be included in the breeding stud if suitable arrangements are made to counteract the fault. These black ear tipped Rabbits are usually extra good in foot colour, so where they lack in one direction they may be found to excel in another. As the exhibition pen is such a great attraction to the average fancier, I wish to make this quite clear.

The eye colour need cause no qualms. It is only of minor importance. The eyes may be either brown or of a colour to correspond with the body colouring. Good specimens of both kinds have done well in the show pen and they are equally suitable for utility purposes. Odd eyes, however, will not be tolerated. Wall eyes and blindness will be turned down by any judge.

The standard says, "Dewlap permissible, but not desirable." Thus must we strive to breed Rabbits without this property. We know the dewlap is a very choice piece of fur, but, truth to tell, the pelt with a dewlap does not command a higher price than those without it. Certain it is that the dewlap robs the Rabbit of its graceful appearance.

At the foot of the published standard there appears "Faults to be penalised." This does not necessarily mean that Rabbits carrying those faults will be disqualified. It means that judges should take careful note of exhibits that have those faults and penalise them accordingly. Do not by any means take it for granted that it is a huge proportioned Rabbit that is required. No adult should be over 11 lbs. in weight, and it should only reach that weight when in good condition. Certainly it should not appear fat. Its appearance should be neat and graceful. It should carry absolutely no belly.



Commercial Graphic
STOLE MADE FROM THE FUR OF THE
CHINCHILLA GIGANTA

FOUNDING A STUD.

It has been truthfully said many times that there is only one way to found a satisfactory stud, and that is to start right. To do this it is advisable to always read "Fur and Feather," as all the shows are reported in its columns. You will see the judges' awards and the list of exhibitors, and the names of the owners of the winning studs will soon be familiar to you. Visit or write to a reputable fancier, who consistently does some winning or to one who constantly breeds and sells winners. Tell him just what you require. Put your money in as few Rabbits as possible. Even if you can afford only one good one, it will give much more pleasure and satisfaction than two or three of only ordinary merit. If it is only one you start with, let it be a young doe of about eight months, or a doe in kindle. For preference try the latter method, as you will get a well-bred doe mated by the owner for his own purpose, and at one stroke you will get the value of his material and experience.

It is advisable when the expected litter arrives to sort them out as soon as possible. Remove the doe first and place her in a box. Any off-colours, or others not desirable, should be destroyed. If the youngsters can be safely left with the doe and run along on the right lines, they should make rapid progress. The young bucks should be removed at the age of 10 to 12 weeks and put in separate hutches for pelts. But the best should be set aside for stud purposes. At the same time, it would be advisable to get the best two young does mated when of age, one by the owner of your first doe, putting the other to the best winning buck of the year. When the next litters arrive one should be sufficiently far advanced in knowledge of the breed to know just what is required, and with increased experience and enthusiasm there should be no difficulty in founding a good stud of one's own. Until one has had a lot of experience the best and safest plan is to mate the best specimens together, and trust to like producing like, taking great care not to mate together those with the similar failings.

Experimental breeding should not be resorted to unless one has the room to follow it out to the end and an inclination for that phase of live stock breeding. Gain your knowledge by practical breeding methods. When you have become a practical breeder give scientific research and scientific breeding your attention, if you so desire. Attend good shows where classes are provided for the breed. If possible, see the judging. This is a great education. You will learn thereby just what is wanted.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNGSTERS.

When the young appear in the nest those of a good strain are the colour of very dark blue or slate, with a pink or flesh coloured belly. Thus one can always pick out the off or self-colours at birth

as these are the same colour on the belly as on the other parts. At 10 to 14 days one can safely decide what the litters contain. It should be your ambition to breed clean-backed youngsters—those that show their true colouring from 14 days old. Those very-cloudy-merging-into-brown coloured youngsters are termed brown-backed youngsters, and in time I hope they will be placed in the same category as the off-colours, although I admit that some of these do clear up at five months and make up into winning adults. But the clear-backed youngsters are much more valuable, and show their worth much earlier.

At five weeks old the litter will be found to be very interesting. You may have two dark, two lighter, and one brown backed. It is those of the darker shade that generally catch the eye first at this period, and very beautiful they are. But alterations take place. Those of lighter shade become promising. The brown-backed ones shed their baby fur and take on a grand Chinchillated jacket. Thus the three shades run along neck and neck, giving the breeder a very educational and interesting time, and he wonders which will be the best at five months. If the requirements of the breed are kept in view, he should not be long in doubt. At 14 weeks it will be seen that some will break into the moult, the others quickly following suit, soon to become bundles of ragged fur. It is remarkable how soon the majority come through the moult. Generally all are in perfect trim at five months. It is advisable to part the young bucks at 10 to 12 weeks. At times I treat the does likewise, although I have known occasions when youngsters have been left with the doe until she has bred to one of her sons! Of course, such a thing should never be allowed, but the incident prove that Gigantas are not unneighbourly.

PELTS.

There is a great future before the Chinchilla Giganta as a triple-purpose Rabbit—pelt, carcase, and exhibition. The pelt is the best paying proposition. In the first place, the size of the pelt is a great consideration, the Flemish Giant being the only rival in this respect. Many of the adult pelts can be made up into various fine garments, and even after undergoing the cutting process, the adult pelt is much larger than those of the smaller varieties, and much more easily matched. In fact, it is in the matching that the Giganta excels. Any good strain of Giganta will breed to colour and shade most truly, and if care be taken in breeding, colour and shade will reproduce themselves. I have had extremely good prices for my pelts by getting into touch with the furriers. I have also made profitable prices for pelts that have been supplied by me to private advertisers in "Fur and Feather."

My advice to those who are growing for pelts is to feed the Rabbits fairly well. Kill after the Rabbit has fasted at least twelve hours, and skin while the carcase is warm. Straighten out on a

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board. Remove all fat when they are thoroughly dry. Send them to the dressers, and add to them until you have a parcel of a dozen really good pelts. If your stock is of a good pelt strain and mated in the best of coat and condition, your pelts need no grading. They simply grade themselves, and unless damaged or torn are all first-grade.

The winter is a good time to take off the pelts, but I disagree with those who claim that the winter is the only suitable time. I have taken off beautiful pelts in summer and autumn, which have realised very high prices; and these pelts have been bought by some of our leading furriers who have handled many of my winter pelts. Winter pelting has the advantage of being distinctly nearer the fur selling season.

Not long ago I showed a parcel of Chinchilla Giganta pelts to one of our leading fur dressers, who handles a large number of both tame and wild skins, and he was loud in his praises. Chinchilla Gigantas are a fine paying proposition. The lowest price I have received for pelts of this variety is more than the highest price now being paid for the pelts of some other breeds. I have satisfied a customer who bought a five skin stole and a two skin muff for 17½ guineas, and another delighted customer who gave 13½ guineas for a five skin wrap. The ambition of the pelt producer should be to secure the interest of those who admire something natural and beautiful. When shown Giganta pelts they are fascinated, and seldom can they resist showing their friend one of nature's products. There are always discriminating ladies who set the fashion and are willing to pay nice prices for garments that have a beautiful effect. Fur garments as articles of fashion are not on the wane, and no doubt the years to come will see our variety at the pinnacle of fame as a fur-bearing Rabbit.

The exhibition Rabbit should always be in your mind's eye. Good fanciers who like to win are always out to pay for a winning specimen. In fact, some will pay really more than a specimen may be worth in order to gratify their desires in the show pen. So if good exhibition animals are produced, there is always a ready market at many times the value of the pelt. The sale of one, in fact, may bring in enough to keep a small stud for a whole year.

I will not dwell at any length on the Giganta as a table Rabbit. It is as good as any variety of tame Rabbit, and that is saying a very great deal. It is extremely fine grained, white and juicy in flesh, and is a great improvement on the pre-war Ostend Rabbit. In fact, any hutch-bred Rabbit produced in this country is superior to the Ostend Rabbit that was considered a luxury by many in the days of yesterday. The market people of London can still do with many more tons of Rabbit flesh every week, and the prices are an inducement to Rabbit breeders to made up the deficiency.

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HOUSING.

The Giganta does not need a very large hutch, unless it be the intention to run the litter with the does for a long period, say 15 to 17 weeks. What are required are large hutches or old out-buildings parted off, so that two or three litters can be put together (after sorting out the very best) and which can be run along successfully for their pelts. The best can remain on the doe a couple of weeks longer.

These hutches should be as large as space will allow, 5 to 6 ft. long, 2 ft. high, and 3 ft. from back to front being an ideal pelting hutch. The other hutches should be 5 ft. to 6 ft. long, 2 ft. high, and 2 ft. 6 in. back to front, with a movable partition in the centre. This will make a large breeding hutch, and where room is at a premium it is plenty large enough. It is only necessary to remove the partition when the litter are four to five weeks old. A hutch 3 ft. long and 2 ft. 6 in. back to front is ample for the doe and litter up to that age. They will do well in the half section in the cold months up to two months old. At this period hay should be used liberally; in fact, Rabbits should never be without hay for any length of time.

Regarding a nesting place, I find a margarine box—about six inches deep—is ample. The Giganta is an extremely good and watchful mother and does not generally resent interference. Hutches with newly-born litters have been continually moved about from inside to outside positions with no bad results, although, of course, I do not advise this moving of hutches unless circumstances compel.

Rabbits of any breed do not like, and do not require, the very strong sun, and the hutches should be made secure against strong sunlight by partly covering up the hutch fronts. Limewash should be liberally used in the summer on the hutches and all outside buildings. Gigantas can stand any amount of cold weather, but they dislike those excessive and sultry hot days. I favour creosoting the hutches outside, and on the floor of the hutch I recommend a thin covering of coal tar, painted on hot and dusted with fine sand.

It is not necessary to clean the hutches oftener than once a week, and chips from planing machines or sawdust can be utilised. The hutches can be stood on each other in tiers, or they can be made in a range of fixtures. Either method will be successful. For those fixed I advocate a cement floor with a layer of cement ($1\frac{1}{2}$ inches) up the back and ends, so that mice cannot get through from one hutch to another. Many I know do not favour cement bottoms, but I know they are successful, and if

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a fair supply of litter is available they are quite as warm as a boarded floor with open joints, and you have an ideal floor covering for the very hot months of the year. The inside of the hutch should on no account be painted. A material should be used that enables the wood to remain porous and absorbent.

FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT.

The feeding and management of the Chinchilla Giganta are amongst those things that even those of less than average intelligence cannot go far wrong with. They are so hardy that they will thrive on what many other varieties would practically starve on. In the first place, they do not require concentrated or stimulating foods to any great extent. Good plain living is all that is required. A handful of good whole white oats should be given as the morning feed, with a drink of water. Mid-day, hay and green food or roots, and in the evening another handful of oats and green food if plentiful. All house scraps should be collected and scalded with as little water as possible and made crumbly moist, with the addition of coarse middlings (two parts), and one part bran on alternate days. If the stock is not in really good hard condition, add one tablespoonful of Sussex ground oats to the mash for each head of stock. After a few weeks of this feeding, should any specimens lack the desired condition give in addition a little linseed cake about once or twice a week. For those fanciers who fortunately live in the country where a liberal supply of green food and good sweet meadow hay are available, the stock can be fed successfully on that diet, with the addition of a handful of good oats per head each day. Potato parings, beetroots, swedes, in fact, anything of food value need not be wasted, but can be given to the stock either in a raw state or scalded in the mash, except bread which should be fire or sun dried.

The Giganta must have enough food to cause it to be quiet and contented, hence bulk food must be given in really large quantities. Fresh food that can be gathered in our country lanes in spring will help one to keep his or her stock at a minimum cost, but care must be taken not to give young stock very succulent food or scours will be the result. It is a trying time for the doe when she is suckling a litter. It taxes her strength and lowers her vitality. These are occasions when a milk sop can be given twice a day with advantage, but I do not advocate the use of milk sops for youngsters after they are eight weeks old. Only when youngsters do not come along favourably should this be resorted to.

All backward youngsters should be pelted and none included in the stud for breeding purposes. When the breeding season

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approaches, on no account must breeding be resorted to with stock that have not a good constitution and well able to stand the changes in weather. Sickly youngsters should be shunned as a plague.

It is a wise plan to feed the doe when in kindle on similar green food when possible to that which one is prepared to feed the youngsters on from the very first. By this means, if hay is fed a couple of hours beforehand, scours will be practically unknown unless the complaint be hereditary. When I have had a litter I have set much store upon, I have fed them wholly (so far as greens are concerned) on coltsfoot that has not been gathered by the roadside, from the day of mating until the youngsters are well past the danger of 10 to 11 weeks, when I have gradually introduced changes with no dire results.

THE FLEMISH GIANT.

CHAPTER VIII.

By J. E. JEFFRIES.

The Flemish Giant is, as its name implies, a giant. It is really the giant of the Rabbit Fancy, many winning specimens weighing 17 lbs. and being of huge proportions. The greatest weight recorded of recent years was a specimen weighing over 20 lbs. As is usual with all established breeds, a national club governs the Flemish Giant, and the following standard has been issued by the Club for the guidance of breeders:—

Size and Weight. —Bucks shall not be less than 11 lbs., and does not less than 13 lbs.; size shall be considered irrespective of weight	20
Colour. —Shall be dark steel grey, with even or wavy ticking over the whole of the body, head, ears, chest and feet alike, except belly and under tail, which shall be white upon the surface of the fur. Any grey, steel, sandy, or other shade on the belly or under tail, except a streak of grey in each groin, shall disqualify	30
Body. —Large, roomy, and flat, broad fore and hindquarters; does shall have a dewlap, evenly carried	15
Legs and Feet. —Shall be strong in bone, large, and straight	15
Head and Ears. —Head shall be large, full and shapely; eye shall be bold, and dark brown in colour; ears shall be erect and moderately thick	10
Condition. —Full short coat, firm in flesh and free from cold	10
	<hr/> 100 <hr/>

The above standard gives a good description of what is wanted from an exhibition point of view as to size and weight. One point you must always keep in mind and that is, length and depth of body. It is far easier to get the extreme weight on a long and deep Rabbit than on a short and shallow one. The body colour should be a deep, dark, lustrous mixture known as steel grey, whilst the undercolour which is that nearest the skin, should be a dark blue. The intermediate (or the colour between the tips of fur and the undercolour) should be a bright black, like a wide band parting the undercolour from the tips and free from any

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rusty tinge. The tips of the fur should be alternately black and a bright steel grey, with a number of longer black hairs sweeping over the whole of the body. Those Rabbits which carry a large number of these black hairs are termed "wavy ticked," which means that there are waves of black over the whole body. Those of greater uniformity are termed "even ticked." Both are admissible in the exhibition world and should receive equal treatment when being judged. Particular attention should be given to the extremities as regards colour. The uniform specimen is that which gives most satisfaction. A good Giant is a large and noble animal, and is always a great attraction at our shows.

I may say that though this Rabbit is named the Flemish Giant it is in no way connected with Belgium, being a purely British production which has become very popular, not only in England but in many other countries. It has also been very useful in the production of some of our standardised fur breeds on account of its great size and the fulness and exquisite texture of its fur.

THE IDEAL COMBINATION.

The breeding of Flemish for exhibition alone can be made a very profitable hobby, but it is a great advantage to combine exhibition, fur and table. Many youngsters of four months make up to 9 lbs. live weight if from a good heavy strain. One of the great benefits of keeping Flemish Giants is that those Rabbits which are not fit for the show pen can be utilised for table purposes. If you wish to combine show with utility, always select the longest Rabbits. The young from these will be found to contain a smaller percentage of offal in proportion to weight than if bred from short and cobby parents.

Self black youngsters will make an appearance in your litters, and occasionally a blue will turn up. These were used in the making of the Flemish and have not yet been eradicated from the breed. Many fanciers of repute contend that these black and blue youngsters are as valuable, or even more valuable, from a breeding standpoint than those of steel grey colour. Apart from that fact they are certainly valuable as utility Rabbits both for fur and meat. It should be no trouble to dispose of any surplus Rabbits amongst your acquaintances locally for food, as the exquisite flavour and juicy tenderness of the Flemish youngsters are a fine recommendation, and orders are usually repeated.

If the accommodation is limited and one is satisfied with a small pelt—and at times there is a demand for small Flemish pelts—kill your young stock at about 17 to 19 weeks, which is generally the age when they are clean moulted. The Rabbit should weigh

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alive from 6½ to 8½ lbs., which is a fair average. This age is ideal for killing off all young bucks unless of exceptional merit, as very often after this age bucks do not grow so rapidly as the does.

PELTING.

After killing, the best method is to prepare the carcase in the Ostend style by leaving a little fur on the tips. Press the carcase between two boards with a weight on top until it is cold, and tuck one hind foot through the other leg sinew. This is a method which generally meets with the approval of purchasers. It is also advisable to kill the Rabbits in batches of three or four at a time, as much can be saved in carriage by this method. Twenty pounds of meat is a fair parcel to send to the wholesaler or into a centre for collection.

It has been quoted by fur experts that the Flemish pel is par excellence, and carries a fullness unknown to many other Rabbits. It has been styled "the accommodation pelt," and is a good representation of Australian Opossum in its natural state and colour, while the black Flemish are utilised in their natural state to represent seal. Both colours are adaptable to be dyed and represent seal, sable, beaver, and mofe. Flemish pelts are, therefore, a profitable source of income in the hands of a thoughtful fancier.

Always kill for the pelt when the coat is at its best and free from moult. This is generally in the cold months, when Rabbit meat is fetching the best market price. The pelt should be taken off the carcase soon after killing. The chest and legs should be cut open down the middle, the head and tail cut away, and the pelt lightly stretched out on a board, with the fur to the board, using tacks to keep it in position. On no account over-stretch the pelt either in length or width. You may then remove any fat from the flesh side, but take great care not to cut or remove any skin. By so doing that particular place will become thin and will not stand dressing and the pelt deteriorates.

After the skin on the board has become quite dry and all fat removed, it can be taken off and put aside in a box with a supply of carbon balls to keep the moth away, or sent away to the dressers. When it arrives back home the above treatment should be again resorted to. The Flemish pelt is adaptable for the making up of all articles of heavy winter clothing. Flemish furs are much in evidence at the Continental winter sports, which is bound to make them popular. For home use one adult pelt makes a very serviceable and unique perambulator rug and can be made easily in your own home.

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You can either dispose of your pelts dressed or undressed. It is often possible with a small stud to have the pelts dressed, and dispose of them locally, either as furs or as a made-up garment. The Fur Board has a centre, run on co-operative lines, and which caters for both the large and small fur producer for pelts either dressed or in the raw state. This organisation will grade your pelt and furnish you with full instructions, so that the beginner should not go far wrong. By this means the home producer should be well able to compete with the Continental trade in furs, of which they had a monopoly before the war.

Furs, we know, are expensive articles of wearing apparel, but even with the working-man fancier who keeps a few Flemish Giants, he is in a position to supply his own household with first-grade furs of his own production at very small cost. In fact, the disparity in prices is startling. The Flemish Giant carries the largest pelt of any breed of Rabbit, many full-grown pelts being in size equal to three or even four of the smaller varieties. When this is taken into consideration along with feeding and housing accommodation, the Flemish Giant proves itself to be one of the most economical varieties to take up if you wish to combine exhibition, fur, and table properties.

The Flemish Giant can be made very remunerative if a small stud is run on the right lines. Those anxious to make their stud pay its way and return a balance should combine utility with exhibition. In the first place, breed for show specimens. When the litters are at the age of 10 to 13 weeks the youngsters can be sorted out. Those with extremity failings and of a good body colour could be run along for their natural coloured pelt; blacks, if any, can be kept for their natural pelt; bad coloured ones can be used for dyeing. It is a very bad pelt, I am told, that the furrier cannot do anything with. The best of the litters should be left with their respective mothers to grow on. Many will keep growing and remain kindly disposed to each other up to 18 weeks, but it is always advisable to take away all young bucks and place in separate hutches when they are about 13 weeks old. The meat from those set aside for furs can be eaten, sent to the markets, or sold to the local butchers or to your neighbours. One firm in London that I could name—and there are many others (see Introductory Chapter)—handles many tons of Rabbit meat annually.

VILLAS FROM RABBITS.

Those Rabbits which you have set aside for pelts can be fed very economically; all they require is good hay and the waste vegetation from the garden, such as Brussels sprout stalks,

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broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower trimmings, and suchlike. It all means good money in the end. For instance, there stands in the Southern Counties a small row of villas which were built entirely from the proceeds of a rather large stud of Flemish Giants. This only goes to prove what can be done in the Rabbit Fancy when determination and grit prevail. This stud was built up on methodical lines, strict attention being given to the production of the ideal for exhibition purposes. Only the best were bred from, with the result that the record price of £60 was paid for one individual exhibition specimen from this stud.

The best and surest way of establishing a stud is to start carefully and slowly. Make yourself fully acquainted with a good representation of the breed, such as a coloured plate to be obtained from "Fur and Feather." Don't start with stock of inferior quality just to get your hand in. Your labours would be in vain and no pleasure accrue from this source. Start with no more than one or two does from a reputable stud which you will find advertising in the columns of "Fur and Feather." Secure spring-bred stock for preference, and have them mated up to the best buck in the stud from whence they came. It is a good plan to leave yourself in the hands of the owner of the stud, as he will mate them just as if they were his own. Thus you will get the benefit of his experience. If the does are large, roomy, well grown, and forward, they should be mated at 8½ months, but they must be in good coat and condition. If they are on the small side for their age, wait until they are 10 months old. It is always advisable to see that the stock you start with is of good type, which means that their make and shape and general characteristics must be to the standard. Let type be the foundation of your stud and get it firmly fixed in your mind; in fact, type is the very essence of the breed and will always breed true when fixed.

With a stud of from six to eight breeding does it is advisable to keep two breeding bucks of as good quality as possible, unless you rely on the big winning bucks advertised at stud. Bucks will not always be in good coat at the desired date, and a second buck will save a lot of time and avoid having to resort to an outside cross unless considered desirable. But on no account must bucks be used that are not suitable for the purpose required. So much depends on the male, if for the only reason that he will be the sire of more youngsters in one season than the dam can rear in her lifetime. Hence the buck is practically the foundation of the whole stud, and he should only be used when at his very best. Only by these means can success be obtained.

It is, perhaps naturally, the small stud owner's ambition to keep his own stud buck, but do not keep a stud buck of only

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ordinary value unless you have a strong reason for so doing. There are so many good bucks of extraordinary breeding value placed at stud regularly, and at a modest fee, that those of only ordinary merit should be killed for their pelt and meat. These stud bucks have been scientifically bred for many generations, and on many occasions new beginners have come right to the top from only one or two services.

Do not mate together those Rabbits which possess the same failings. You must keep the past generations firmly fixed in your mind to be successful. To those able to follow the track of putting the best together, irrespective of any relationship, success will come sooner or later. My advice is, use the best bucks obtainable until you have your stud firmly established, and only keep the best for future breeding. Always have an observant eye on the size and robustness of your stock, and on no account use any ~~stoutly~~ or stunted stock.

As I have already said, blacks and an occasional blue turn up in litters. The latter are very seldom met with when steel grey is mated to steel grey. They will, in most cases, breed true to colour to the numbers of seven greys to two blacks, unless black has been used in the strain recently. And my opinion is that by using blacks one is going too far round to get to the desired object. If your stock is deteriorating in colour, use those Rabbits of greater density. There is a vast number of Giants too dark for the exhibition pen, many being next to black greys. If these are of good type they make ideal stud Rabbits, as they are naturally a mixture and have a white belly colour. Seeing that it is a mixture one is aiming to produce, it is travelling the shortest route to use them instead of self blacks.

Do not on any pretence whatever use brown or wild Rabbit coloured greys, as those of this colour will upset a whole stud. It is surprising how faithfully they reproduce themselves. This was the colour the breed originated from, and it has taken years of careful breeding to eradicate the failing, which no judge will tolerate.

A stud of Flemish Giants need not necessarily be a large one to ensure success. Small studs have always been fairly successful, one of the reasons for which is that the owner can concentrate his time and energy on a few and "do" them more thoroughly. Again, in dry seasons green food can be much better proportioned amongst a few.

When selecting stock for breeding see that those selected are bred from does that had good milking properties, those with an abundance of milk for preference. By so doing one can perpetuate this quality. Some does are bad mothers, which is generally due to them not having a good flow of milk to enable them to carry out their maternal duties.

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The use of foster mothers is considered good in any stud, large or small, to take part of large litters, but on no account would I continually resort to foster mothers for the fostering of litters that the natural mother did not mother properly. Some does after littering will on occasions lie on the young in the nest after birth, what is generally known as "sweating." If a foster doe be in readiness, this is one of the occasions when she can be used with great advantage. Should no foster be available it is a good plan to take the doe from the hutch, place her in a box in the rabbitry, cover up the nest, and leave her for (say) eight hours, when she should be returned to her hutch and left to carry out her suckling duties for an hour. If she still persists in "sweating" the young, take her out, place her in a large box with her usual food, and put her in the hutch morning and evening until she has suckled the youngsters. After three or four days she can safely be left with them, and a valuable litter will have been saved. It is seldom that does suckle their young any more often than every twelve hours.

There is absolutely no art in changing a litter of youngsters from one doe to another. It is advisable on every occasion to take the two does out of the hutch and put them in separate boxes, in the early evening for preference. Take in your hands those youngsters that are about to be changed and blow off as much nest fur as possible. Place them in the nest after you have abstracted those that are not wanted. Gently cover up the nest. Put the usual evening meal in the hutch. Put back the does from their two hours' confinement in boxes. With me this system has very seldom failed, but do not get anxious and upset things by looking again at the nest. Leave matters just as they are and trust to Providence, which will in almost every instance be kind to you.

HOUSING.

Flemish Giants need no special housing or feeding. They can be kept in either outside hutches or in an enclosed shed, old outhouse or wooden rabbitry. If outside hutches are used they should be free from draught and the fronts closed except for six inches of wire work at the extreme top. It is essential to keep them away from strong light, but not in darkness. A subdued light enables them to keep their colour.

Sawdust, peat moss, dry leaves, and soft hedge litter are all valuable for bedding, if hay or straw is considered too expensive.

There must be no overcrowding in inside buildings, as I consider air space and ventilation absolutely essential in the breeding of healthy specimens. Nesting boxes are a matter of opinion;

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many swear by them, while others are equally against them. It is just a matter of what one is used to. Flemish can be reared either way successfully.

The hutches should be large and roomy, 3 ft. by 3 ft. and 2 ft. in height being an ideal hutch for large specimens and breeding does, while smaller does and bucks can be accommodated in hutches 4 ft. by 2 ft. and 2 ft. high. It is an advantage to have height in this respect, as low-roofed hutches have a tendency to spoil the carriage of the ears in very hot weather. It is a good plan, if hutches are out in the open, to use white-wash very plentifully on the roof, sides and back to counteract the hot sun.

Ventilation is a necessity, and all inside buildings should have ample. It should be at the extreme top in a lean-to rabbitry. Two inches all round will meet the requirements. Small two-inch shutters can be used to close up the air space in the winter in the windward direction. The south and westerly portions seldom want closing even in the coldest weather. The Giant is a variety that needs no coddling and no artificial warmth. Dark underground cellars are not ideal places in which to keep Rabbits unless under exceptional circumstances. Most of these places are damp and badly ventilated. The stock can be got into perfect condition either in inside or outside hutches with an equal amount of attention, but certain it is that the inside building is more suitable, as it protects the stock, and during the winter evenings artificial light can be resorted to when feeding. Thus the whole stud is always under the supervision of the owner, and feeding and cleaning can be conducted more comfortably.

It has been said it is cruelty to keep live stock of this description in the dark, and rightly so, but if the front of the outside hutches be boarded up, even to within three inches of the top, plenty of light can be seen by the occupant of the hutch. It can be likened unto one being in a dark room with a small window. Naturally, the eyes follow the rays of light from that direction, although the person can be in complete darkness. Strong light on Flemish Giants is to be avoided, but such extremes must not be resorted to as will cause discomfort.

The cleaning out process should be undertaken at least once a week, but during the summer months twice a week is desirable. While a hutch is being cleaned the occupant should be placed in a box. A little dry slaked lime shaken from a tin canister into the wet corners will help to dry those places. Does in kindle during the last week should not be handled or taken out of the hutch for cleaning-out purposes. If a nest be in preparation, it should not be disturbed unless it be in a wet or filthy

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corner. Always provide suitable flanged water vessels for the drinking water, or make them secure in order to avoid their overturning and making the hutch into a quagmire.

Elaborate hutches do not make exhibition specimens, neither do they make the stock pay their way, but this fact remains: Single hutches with decent fitments and a nice coat of paint, some really good occupants in them, bedded on pine or deal sawdust, with a light layer of straw in the winter, go a long way to make the Rabbits look at their best when prospective purchasers pay a visit.

Hutches should not be permanent fixtures unless it is absolutely unavoidable to have them otherwise. Single hutches, stacked on each other so as to ensure a current of air getting through, should be used, each being raised up from the other to allow a cat to keep the place free from mice. If the cat is brought up in the rabbitry, it will soon get used to the Rabbits and the Rabbits to her. I firmly believe that many valuable litters are lost annually through mice getting into the nest of newly-born youngsters. Many does resent the intrusion and scratch out the whole nest, the young being starved with the cold.

It is always advisable to give water to Rabbits winter or summer, as no matter how much green-food is available the moisture derived from that source is not like clean water. Punctuality in feeding is one of the keynotes of success. It is best to clean out the Rabbits at least once a week, and preferably twice, unless the bedding is very absorbent.

FEEDING.

Feeding plays a very prominent part in the rabbitry. All stock should have quite enough food to achieve the purposes for which the animal is intended. There never was one particular way of feeding Rabbits. Those who achieve success all swear by their own methods. But many of us have found out by practical experience that oats need not be the staple food. Good, sound Scotch or English wheat is much better and possesses a greater feeding value. Thus wheat, in my opinion, should be the principal grain, with oats (one part to six) as an occasional change.

For the stock set aside for the show pen I advocate a change of feeding, which I have found necessary to enable the stock to stand the strain of travelling about the country. Some may deem this expensive, but as the exhibition Rabbit gives such a vast amount of pleasure, the little extra outlay is well worth while.

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Flemish for exhibition should have the same morning feed as is given to those set aside for pelts (described above), except I advise new milk to drink instead of water after five months. Milk and an equal part of water should be given up to that age from the nest, and as great a variety of green food as possible. Some take quite readily to milk, others the reverse, so it may be advisable to make the evening mash a little more than salt to taste; but do not on any account go to extremes with salt. I have on many occasions used sour milk in the mash of my adult stock with the best of results. Milk, either sour or skimmed, can be used to great advantage in mixing the mash, but it should not be boiled and used instead of the usual water.

The evening meal for exhibition Flemish should be as varied as possible; in fact, all Rabbits relish a variation. A really good meal is: Two parts broad bran, one part coarse middlings, one part Sussex ground oats, $\frac{1}{2}$ part ground linseed oil cake, one tablespoonful white fish meal for each three Rabbits.

Either scald the bran with boiling water or hot skimmed milk, if easily obtained. If water is used, a good plan is to add a tablespoonful of milk powder for each three Rabbits or mix it up with the boiling water. As a change a teaspoonful of black molasses included in the liquid of the mash for each five or six Rabbits is appreciated, but the above feeding should not be resorted to unless the stock are really good specimens. Although one's ambition is to get the stock large and massive, stuffing should not be resorted to. The animals should have an appetite for every meal. Milk is not so essential in the very hottest months of the year, when water can be used to greater advantage.

This feed of grain should be given at least once in twenty-four hours. It is the usual practice to feed twice a day, morning and evening, although Rabbits can be successfully fed once every twenty-four hours, providing the meal is given at the same hour daily. With the hard grain there should be given a good handful of sweet meadow or clover hay and a pot of clean water.

It has been proved time and again that Rabbits of any and every description that are domesticated require water both winter and summer. Green food of any variety can be given at this meal, although I prefer to give the green food a couple of hours later. See that your feeding brings contentment. Only give as much food as will be eaten up by the next feeding-time. The only surplus food to be tolerated is a few sprigs of hay left over from the previous meal. Always see to the feeding troughs or pots being quite clean and the water vessels free from slime. A pinch of salt to taste in the water is greatly appreciated, as are also

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bread and crusts, sun-baked or dried hard in the oven, with the morning meal. Your eye must be your guide as to the amount of food required for each Rabbit, as some eat much more than others, but a gill of hard grain is considered a fair meal, and on this ration both exhibition animals and those set aside for their pelts do exceedingly well and grow rapidly.

The evening meal, if hard grain be fed in the morning, at least five times a week, should consist of a mash made crumbly moist and consisting of household scraps, such as potato waste, parsnip, turnip, and beetroot (either parings or what is left over from the table). They should be boiled in as little water as possible until soft, as excessive boiling is detrimental to the feeding value. To the above should be added—2 parts middlings, 2 parts broad bran, 1 part Sussex ground oats, and a tablespoonful of white fish meal for each three adult Rabbits. When mixed up the whole must not be at all sticky. It should be like damped bread crumbs.

A good change for pelt Rabbits, and one of the very cheapest feeds, is the following:—Scald six parts of short-cut clover chaff. Strain off all surplus water, and lightly dry off with equal parts of barley and Sussex ground oats. The usual boiled vegetable scraps can be included. This is an appetising bulk food.

If the stock do not appreciate a little salt in their drinking water, it is a good plan to salt the mash to taste. Hay, fresh water, and greens or roots should again accompany the evening meal, which for the other two evenings consists of the same as the morning meal.

I consider it an advantage to let the stock of all ages above ten weeks go without their Sunday morning feed, as this gives the intestines a fair chance to get completely empty, which is of distinct assistance to health. But the evening meal on Sunday can be brought a couple of hours forward.

When getting stock ready for show, the following herbs have their respective values:—Sage, parsley, thyme, fennel, worm-wood, mint, holly and elm shoots. These are very seldom refused and should be grown by every fancier who has a small garden. If one has an allotment, enough can be grown to mix with the other green food in small quantities. Chicory, the kale family, dandelion, green clover, plantain, etc., are all good. Do not despise the cabbage family, as I have found the Brassica tribe to be a very welcome change. Many fanciers do not give the cabbage enough consideration in their feeding.

When litters are about a month old it is advisable to see that there is a little mash to spare after the mother doe has had

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her fill. The litter may not be satisfied with suckling and can take to the soft food if necessary. Should one care to go to the trouble, a milk sop will help along a doe that does not provide an abundance of milk. Also a little boiled rice, tapioca, macaroni, or other milk pudding left over from the table will be greatly relished. Barley water made according to the directions supplied with patent prepared barley, thinned out with a little milk in summer, is greatly relished. A very little sweetening matter can be added. Nothing but good can come of large quantities of barley water being given to the stock. I have known a fancier put such faith in this for growing his stock that all exhibition specimen were made familiar from tender ages to the artificial teat. Pint bottles were used for this mixture. The teat was inserted through the front of the hutch, and all the occupants imbibed with gusto!

Some are great believers in the extensive feeding of greens, but I have not found it to be a great advantage, enough being as good as vast quantities. Therefore, the town dweller competes more equally in this respect with the country fancier than he might imagine. A nice handful, once a day regularly, is quite sufficient.

EXHIBITING

It is not an intricate matter to prepare Flemish Giants for exhibition. Nature and careful attention play the major part. For show a Flemish must be in good tight coat and clean moulted, and, above all, it must be healthy. Rabbits stuck in their moult or ill are heavily penalised by all our judges, no matter how good they may be in other points. Send them to the show in a large, roomy, well-ventilated package, either box or basket, but if a box the ventilation should be at the extreme top and the package of a depth of not less than 15 inches, 2 ft. long and 1 ft. wide. The box should have a little sawdust in the bottom, a handful of sweet clover, and a ball of mash put under the hay for the return journey. Keep the nails cut short. This is not faking.

I am not a believer in a lot of grooming with brushes. Polish that should be on the Rabbit in the shape of bloom can be taken off on the brush. A wipe over with a chamois leather before the show is all that is necessary. Should one not come up to your expectation in bloom, a little stewed linseed in the mash will help matters wonderfully. Do not tamper with or remove any surplus hairs from your stock, as all fair-minded fanciers and our judges are against these malpractices, and stern measures are resorted to. If the condition is not all that is desired, give a tablespoonful of soaked maple peas at mid-day in addition to other feeding.

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It is well known that large exhibition specimens do not, as a rule, take a great amount of exercise when kept in a hutch of the usual dimensions. If one has the convenience a run in the garden or yard, or a turn on a small grass enclosure where the Rabbit can get out of the sun, causes them to keep their correct shape, whilst lack of exercise makes them become listless and baggy.

When one has made up a strain and got type fixed, it is surprising how often large specimens periodically turn up. Many may be of only ordinary size and weight at time of first litter, scaling anything up to 12 lbs. at 11 months. They are set aside for breeding. And then when they have successfully reared their litters and are put aside to get into good coat again for mating, it is a surprise to see how some grow and make up. I have known Rabbits of both sexes continue growing up to 20 months. Does should always be bred from at a fairly early age, or they may lose their maternal instincts.

The Flemish Giant is not as a general rule subject to any particular illness and is not more delicate than any other breed. Colds we shall always have in our studs, and if not attended to they will develop into that dread complaint, snuffles. On the first sign of cold or sneezing I advise injections up the nostril of Glycerine Thymol. Use these remedies on an adult Rabbit in the same quantities as are recommended for humans. Treat once daily. They will, in the majority of cases, effect a cure after a few days. There are several other remedies advertised from time to time in "Fur and Feather," which have been proved successful by many Rabbit-keepers.

In conclusion, I must add that the novice is apt to think that breeding Flemish Giants is somewhat intricate. Such is not the case. They are most easily bred and reared, but it is generally the little things that matter and which go a long way towards success, each successful step bringing one nearer the desired place at the top.

CHAPTER IX.

'THE SILVER.

By ALLAN WATSON.

In view of its undoubted attributes from a fur standpoint, it is more than surprising that the Silver Rabbit is not being bred more extensively for fur production. It possesses a beautifully soft coat of rich colour, and there is no getting away from the fact that furs made up from the pelts of Silver Rabbits look splendid. The three colours in this variety—grey, fawn, and brown—offer a wide scope of selection, and I feel confident that there is a market awaiting the fur of the Silver Rabbit if only pelts can be produced in sufficient quantity to warrant the furriers pushing the variety. As a matter of fact, a very well-known furrier some time ago was shown a selection of pelts of the Silver Fawn Rabbit, and the opinion he expressed was a most flattering one. He holds the view that the only thing needed is for the pelts to be put on the market in quantity, and, of course, of first-grade quality, then the future is assured. The same remarks apply to the Silver Grey and, in a lesser degree, to the Brown.

Despite this undoubted opening for Silver Rabbit furs, the leaders of the Silver Rabbit Fancy—when I say fancy, I mean the exhibition side of breeding Silver Rabbits—have so far held aloof from the fur-production side of Rabbit keeping, they being most apathetic, nay, almost antagonistic to it. Whether it is that they fear the encouragement of breeding for furs would detrimentally affect the variety from the show standpoint I know not, but if that is the case, I am convinced they are wrong. As it has done with the Chinchilla, the breeding of the Silver Rabbit for fur would give added interest to the variety and induce a great many more people to take it up. It would provide a market for the pelts of that vast number of Rabbits which are not quite up to show pen quality, and of these there are a large number in Silvers, as in all varieties. One great advantage, however, is that in Silvers the failings that are most detrimental to the Rabbit in the show pen are immaterial to the furrier. I refer to such things as faulty ears, cheeks and feet, perhaps the most common failings to-day. The fur at these points is of no use to the furrier, so the value of the pelt would not suffer, providing the body fur came up to the standard required.



SILVER FAWN

As I have said above, we have three colours of Silver Rabbits grey, fawn and brown. The two former are a mixture of two colours, but in the brown we have four colours. The grey is made up of black-and-white, the former being the ground colour, and the white hairs furnishing the silvering. This silvering should be even all over the body, the ideal shade being the medium, which is an even mixing of black and white hairs, without any blotchiness or dark patches anywhere. It is the same in the fawn, except that the ground colour here is a deep, rich orange fawn. The top colour of a Silver Brown is a mixture of brown, black and white, in even quantities, whilst we have an undercolour, when the fur is blown aside, of slate blue, this extending down to the skin.

The coat of the Silver Rabbit differs from that of most fur producing varieties in that it is short and lying close to the body, and when rubbed the wrong way it instantly flies back as though it had been released from a spring. This is one of the great features of the exhibition Silver Rabbit, it having been carefully preserved and strengthened for a great many years. It is this coat that helps to give to the Silver its bright, sparkling appearance, and which adds much to its beauty. It is probably the fear of losing this coat characteristic that prevents leading breeders of Silvers from taking up the fur side of the question, but I think such fears are groundless. The furriers have seen the Silver Rabbit's fur in its present state and have expressed themselves as highly delighted with it, so it is foolish for those interested in the variety to withhold from the breed the great possibilities which are undoubtedly lying dormant to-day.

The Silver pelt is one that can be used for almost any kind of article of feminine wear, one or other of the three colours being certain to suit people of any complexion. Moreover, Silvers breed very true, there being no such thing as foreign blood in them. This is all in favour of the breeder, who thus knows what to expect, and how to control his breeding operations to attain his objective. Further, the variety is a hardy one, and it will thrive in the most primitive surroundings. It will do equally as well in outside hutches as in an elaborately equipped rabbitry, thus the man of small means, who cannot provide expensive housing accommodation, has an equal chance of success with the more favoured breeder.

Good stock can be easily procured, there being always a good supply of reliable material available, and at quite modest prices. For the breeder who wishes to aim only for pelts it is not necessary to purchase expensive breeding stock. At the same time the beginner would be well advised to couple together the breeding for pelts and the show pen. Good Silver Rabbits are very valu-

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able, and, what is more, they take no more time, trouble, or food to produce than does moderate stock, yet the result is much more satisfactory and profitable. In breeding for exhibition the fancier has two strings to his bow, in that his exhibition stock will realise high prices, whilst those not good enough for the show pen can be utilised for their pelts.

For the benefit of the uninitiated, let me here say that Silver Rabbits are but one colour when born, viz., black in the case of the Grey, and Fawn and Brown in the case of the other two colours. The white hairs which compose the silvering do not commence to make an appearance until the Rabbit is a few weeks old, they usually being first seen on the nose and on the toes. After first appearing these white hairs gradually grow in quantity, spreading up the face, down the chest, up the feet and over the body, until the whole is one level colour and shade right from nose to tail. This process of development is most interesting, and the breeder who once takes up Silvers and breeds them on right lines will never tire of the game, as there is always something to look forward to in the development of the youngsters.

There is nothing difficult to understand in the make-up of a Silver Rabbit, whilst no variety requires less time and trouble to keep it in the best condition. It will thrive and do well on the plainest of fare, whilst it is a most economical eater, having quite a small appetite when compared with some varieties. Its two greatest needs are green food (or roots in winter) and hay, to which a few good oats may be added. It will, however, eat any kind of scraps that can be fed to other varieties, and it does not require coddling.

CHAPTER X.

THE SITKA.

By F. GERTRUDE LATHAM.

In this third edition of *Fur-Producing Rabbits* the Sitka can no longer be described as the "Cinderella of the Fancy," for Prince Appreciation has arrived and turned her into a popular princess of the Rabbit world. Considering the youth of the breed the change in the Sitka outlook is remarkable, for the ready demand for these beautiful black creatures embraces not only the home market, but far-lying countries, including the Argentine, British Columbia, and California. Further, the breed is no longer cup-less. The British Fur Rabbit Society has promised one cup to be competed for at their autumn adult show, and a second one, for young stock, should materialise soon, from funds in hand, if augmented by further generosity on the part of Sitka breeders. Besides these marks of progress, classes at shows in this year 1926 promise to be as plentiful as blackberries.

It was not until 1919 that Mrs. Ker, of Heathgate, Bucklebury, Reading, produced her first Sitkas from a dark Blue Beveren and an ordinary large black Rabbit. Called at first the Black Beveren, the name of the breed was soon changed to the Sitka, after the beautiful fox fur it really does resemble. In 1922 Sitkas were sold without a guarantee, as the breed was then known to throw both blues and Angoras, but both these throw-backs have been bred out in the best strains long ago. It is due to an Angora amongst its ancestors that the Sitka owes the present length and texture of its fur.

APPEARANCE OF THE FUR.

The early Sitkas had almost white undercoats and although this would have been a guarantee against imitation by dyeing, and was very attractive in itself, it was deemed wiser to insist on as dark a blue undercoat as possible, so as to avoid that moth-eaten appearance which fur with a light undercoat presents when the top hairs are worn down with wear. The undercoats of all Sitkas now are blue, some a really dark shade. This dark blue also prevents imitation, as all fur dyed brown has a brown undercoat. For the Sitka, though a black Rabbit in the flesh, furnishes, when dead, a rich sepia brown pelt, which to most people is even more attrac-

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tive than the live Rabbit. It is a remarkably rich looking fur, resembling fox. Alive a Sitka shines like a well polished boot, and dead the pelt retains this wonderful gloss. It is the longest and densest fur of all the fur breeds. The usual length at present is $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches for the long hairs, but already Sitkas with fur 2 inches long have been bred. This, no doubt will be the usual length in the future. Sitka fur does not look like Rabbit. "That's not Rabbit!" "What a rich looking fur!" "It's like fox!" are some of the remarks made-up Sitka has already called forth. Being brown it is becoming to all, and, as no one can pass down a crowded thoroughfare without being struck by the prevailing tone of brown in women's attire, it should, when better known, be in great demand. It is for just this reason that seal and mole coney are such universal wear; and how tired one gets of them! Sitka also does not soil, and although Sitka Rabbits turn rusty in the moult (a convenient danger signal when not to kill) the fur itself seems indifferent to sun or sea-air.

Besides the advantage of possessing so beautiful and so useful a pelt, the breed has other excellent qualities. It develops very quickly and thrives on meagre fare. Two ounces of dry grain in variety in winter, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces in summer, with green or roots in the morning and a handful of meadow hay alone at night, produce portly Sitkas. Being bred through the Beveren it is an excellent table Rabbit; but being cobbier in shape and very wide across the haunches it even surpasses its blue ancestors in this respect.

The Sitka is a very amiable Rabbit and although big in size is very docile and easy to handle. The dosing of five Sitkas would not leave the scratches—those hall-marks of the fancier—on the owner's hands that the wrestling with one Argente would. But it is not a dull creature. All Rabbits are intelligent, but Sitkas seem remarkably so. The writer found that a Sitka buck had climbed on to the roof of the wood shed as the only way of surmounting a five foot fence that separated him from a hated rival in the Rabbit yard, and the litter sister to one of Mrs. Ker's noted winners is more like a dog than a Rabbit.

Having so wonderful a pelt the Sitka lends itself to improving the coats of the shorter-furred breeds. And an Argente-Sitka cross seems to have produced a Silver Giganta!

Possessed of such natural beauties, backed by such a rapid growth in popular favour, the future of the Sitka seems assured. Their very blackness helps them, for there are many who have a special love for black in bird and beast on account of the beautiful lights on their glossy coats. To those who think Minorcas the

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best possible of hens, Black Cockers the best possible of dogs, Sitkas will also make this especial appeal of blackness as the best possible of Rabbits.

STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE.

(As approved by the British Fur Rabbit Society).

Type. —Shape fairly compact, not quite so long in body as the Giant Beveren, fine in bone, slight mandoline arch to back, and stout hindquarters, dewlap small as possible in does, none in bucks	20
Colour. —Glossy jet black on surface, going well down into the fur, undercoat dark blue	25
Fur. —About 1½ inches long, very soft, silky, lustrous and dense	25
Head. —Very bold and broad in bucks, comparatively small in does, set on short neck	5
Eyes. —Bright dark brown, rather almond shaped, and not too prominent	5
Ears. —Well furred and rather small in proportion to the Rabbit, to be carried erect in a narrow V; the large spoon-shaped Flemish type of ear to be avoided	5
Feet. —Fine in bone; legs straight, forelegs short, black toenails	5
Adult Weight. —Eight to ten pounds	10
	100

Disqualifications.—White hairs on body, short fly-back coat.

Faults.—Thin, or harsh coat, rusty colour, excessively pale undercoat, flat-sided or lanky shape, small white tip to nose or toes; these are to be discouraged, but are not as serious a fault as bad colour or quality of coat on body.

NOTE.—The breed is to be judged primarily for fur. The difference between it, and all other black breeds being in the exceptional length and silkiness of the fur, which must be insisted on.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GRIS PERLE DE HAL AND ALASKA.

By LADY LAYLAND BARRATT.

The Gris Perle de Hal is another very valuable fur breed. At present it is little known in this country for various reasons. It is in appearance an unassuming looking small grey Rabbit, very nervous and retiring, and in its gentle, timid disposition as unlike the vigorous Black Alaska, as these two breeds are dissimilar in the colour of their pelts.

Many Rabbit breeders have attempted to discover the secret of their production, but their originator, Monsieur Veervoort, of Hal, near Brussels, has maintained his policy of silence. This silence may be due to the fancied security of definite knowledge or to an uncertainty occasioned by the perception of various possibilities sensed but not defined. Biology owes a debt of gratitude to that now famous monk, Gregor Mendel, and it was by following the simple laws of heredity laid down by him that the genetic factors for the creation of the Gris Perle de Hal were discovered.

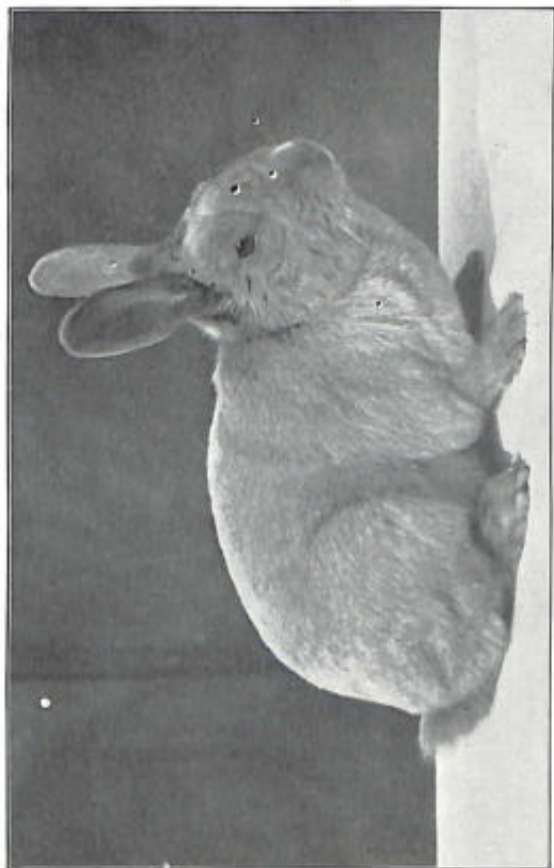
ORIGINATION.

The Gris Perle strain has been produced by the crossing of the Continental Havana with the Continental Argenté Bleu, hence the ticking of the pelt, which is not only distinctive but protective, making it impossible for the dyer to exploit this natural fur by cheap imitations. The real Gris Perle pelt is a soft grey in colour, with an even, white ticking all over, similar in appearance to the ticking of a good English Silver Grey.

The Gris Perle strain at present at The Manor House Rabbitry at Torquay (my own) has been produced from stock imported direct from Monsieur Veervoort, some six years ago.

In appearance these Rabbits are small and cobby. The bucks should have pronouncedly broad, bold heads, with large red brown eyes, like the eyes of a Havana. The heads of the does should be fine and not broad. Ears small and erect; feet, fine and straight.

Too much importance must not be placed on such really unimportant details as the ears and feet matching the pelt. The first essential is the colour and quality of the pelt; the second that the ears be small and erect and the feet fine but straight and strong, as an assurance of health and stamina. An off-coloured nose matters nothing if the pelt is good.



GRIS PERLE DE HAL

There is a decided tendency among a certain class of furrier to prefer large Rabbit pelts rather than small. This can only be because in making up into wearing apparel a large pelt covers so much more ground than a small one, and consequently so much less labour has to be employed. It is not possible for an animal like a Rabbit to grow a light weight pelt of dense quality in a large size. It simply cannot be done. If a Rabbit grows a large pelt of durable quality it will be heavy—too heavy for ladies and children to wear as coats and cloaks. This is a fact all experienced furriers, accustomed to handle first-class quality pelts, such as sable, ermine and chinchilla, know beyond all argument.

BREEDING AND FEEDING.

To successfully breed Rabbits for fur is a skilled occupation, and requires a patient attention to detail and close observation exercised only by the few. The absolutely first essential is sound health. It is waste of time and money to breed from weak or sickly stock. Snuffles and vent disease should be avoided like the plague among humans. Sufferers from either evil should be killed and everything which has been near them disinfected in the same drastic manner as the Ministry of Health advocates for smallpox. These are facts all wise and thoughtful breeders will do well to face and recognise and observe. With really sound and healthy stock the manifold difficulties which beset the average small stock breeder will disappear. Rabbits bred for fur must be properly fed. Quality is more important than quantity. Fur Rabbits confined in hutches must receive the correct proportion of ingredients necessary to promote health, growth, stamina and physical vigour. It would be quite possible to give Rabbits quantities of bulk food, such as stale greens, musty bran, or bran of poor quality, rotten roots and poor quality hay, and for them to literally die of starvation.

Climate must be taken into consideration in feeding Rabbits. A mild climate does not demand the same stimulating diet as a cold and bracing one. Age must also be taken into account. Adult Rabbits should never receive as much food as growing stock. A nursing doe may be given absolutely as much food as she will consume—she will never over-eat—but a doe in kindle, while requiring ample and generous diet, must not be fed on fat-producing articles, otherwise there will be difficulties at kindling time and an almost certain loss of youngsters.

In the Manor House rabbitry no oats are given. Close observation showed that it was impossible with a large number of youngsters to prevent some out of each litter gorging themselves at feeding time and gobbling down the oats whole. This practice led to violent digestive trouble, generally ending in floods of diarrhoea and speedy death. Altering the oat diet to a nourishing mash

FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS.

immediately lessened the percentage of deaths in a marked degree. It was also noticed that the quality of the Rabbit flesh improved. Oats or corn tend to make the flesh hard. Fresh, wet greens will never harm young, healthy Rabbits, but stale or frosted ones will. Sound roots, such as carrots, sugar beets, ordinary beetroots, parsnips, turnips and (after January) mangolds are all good for youngsters. They all like apples. The adults can be given with advantage, sound pears, sunflower leaves, strawberry leaves and raspberry canes. An excellent mash is one part best fish meal, which should be white in colour and not smelling strongly of fish, mixed with one part best middlings and two parts best bran. For a change Spratt's Rabbit Food is excellent. Crushed linseed cake is a good conditioner if given twice or three times a week. Boiled potatoes mixed with bran are useful for thin and growing youngsters and every Rabbit appreciates toasted bread as crisp as possible.

In the case of pet Rabbits, or Rabbits not bred for fur, the feeding can be more varied. Many love sugar and cake. Some will eat all kinds of scraps—bits of clean fish, innocent of sauce, fried plain pudding and fried potatoes, and many garden plants not generally considered suitable for Rabbits.

All Rabbits should be given fresh water daily in clean utensils. An immensity of suffering must be caused, in many instances unwittingly, by withholding water from these helpless caged animals. Of course, giving them water increases the labour of the owner or stock-keeper!

HOUSING.

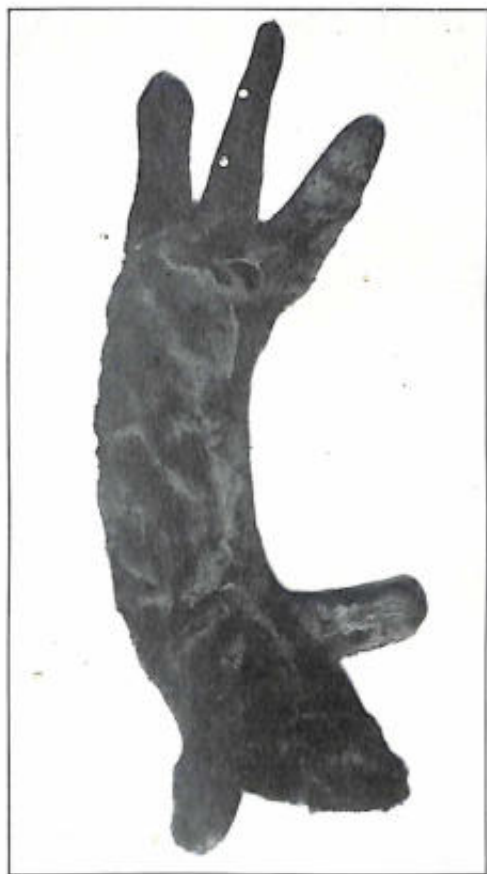
The question of suitable housing for Rabbits is simpler than it appears. To make them happy and contented they require a hutch sufficiently large to exercise themselves in—it should be sufficiently open to allow of fresh-air at all times—and they must also have a snug dark corner where they can hide and be warm as they would do "in the wild." It also follows that this snug corner must afford them ample cool shelter from the heat of the sun. These simple requirements carefully observed, combined with strict cleanliness, will soon reward the Rabbit breeder who desires to treat his livestock in a humane manner, by his Rabbits being healthy and in good condition at all times.

THE BLACK ALASKA.

The Black Alaska, in my opinion, has the most valuable pelt for self-coloured fur of all the present-day fur Rabbits. The country of its origin is a matter of dispute among Continental breeders. Some say it originated in England, having been evolved from crossing black Dutch with the beautiful English Silver Grey,



BLACK ALASKA



SHOULDER WRAP MADE FROM FIVE BLACK ALASKA PELTS

and that from England it was exported to Germany. There is some reason for thinking that France deserves the credit of its production, because in 1870 there were some beautiful black Rabbits exhibited at Le Jardin d'Acclimatation at Paris, under the name of, *Russe Noir*, and these are considered by many to be the forerunners of the Black Alaskas.

There is, however, no question as to the origin of the Black Alaska Rabbits exhibited for the past five years in this country. The first two were imported from Brussels for The Manor House rabbitry, and they have been an unqualified success.

They are small Rabbits of an unassuming appearance. Their pelts, when the Rabbit is in full coat, are of an intense black, with a brilliant glossiness rarely seen in any other black Rabbit. A true Alaska is black all over; the ears small and carried erect; the eyes brown and sparkling; weight from 4 lbs. to 5 lbs. The bucks should have bold heads, broad across the eyes, and possess shapely, cobby bodies. The heads of the does should be finer and narrower, and their bodies slightly longer than the bucks. Black Alaskas are extraordinary healthy, small eaters, and mature rapidly. The does are excellent mothers, but resent the slightest interference with their nursery arrangements. They should never be interfered with nor the nests examined after the does have kindled. Their method of showing resentment is direct and decisive. The majority promptly kill the youngsters, even those of fourteen days old. They are, however such efficient mothers that this peculiar idiosyncrasy need occasion their owner no alarm. All they desire is a comfortable, dark nesting-box, tranquillity and a little food and water, and, these simple necessities provided, they will conduct their family arrangements to a successful conclusion. The number of young in the litters varies from five to seven, but they cannot safely be left together after two months old, as they are very pugnacious.

The Black Alaskas at The Manor House are a genetically pure breeding strain, and those persons fortunate enough to have some in their rabbitries should never be tempted to cross them with any other strain of Alaska Rabbits. They cannot be improved on and are too valuable to spoil.

There is a constant market for their pelts. The beautiful glossy black of the majority sometimes shades to a soft, deep brown and is most becoming to wear.

The pelts should be taken off the Rabbit directly the first adult pelt is fixed. The wise breeder for fur should use every endeavour to keep the Alaska a small sized cobby Rabbit, to prevent the pelt becoming heavy in weight. The ideal to aim at is a small pelt of great density, carrying as many hairs to the square inch as a sable pelt; the texture very silky to the touch and an even colour all over.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TAN.

By F. G. WOODGATE.

The Tan Rabbit, though one of the older breeds, having been produced in Gloucestershire some forty years ago, has not come to the front so rapidly as some of the newer fur breeds. It is now becoming more prominent and should be in demand as a pelt producer, seeing that the furrier is prepared to take many times more than those now available. There is always a demand for the pelts, and they are only a few shillings in price behind the leading variety.

The present difficulty seems the lack of pelts to create a demand. This is a question which entirely rests with the producers, for the fur trade buys in hundreds, and parcels must be graded. With low production there is no inducement for the furrier to make a special line of them. The uses Tan pelts may be put to are varied, amongst them being the making of gloves, trimming toques, collars and cuffs of coats, linings, wraps and stoles. If the rabbit is opened up the back when the skin is taken off it leaves a wide margin of tan, on the other hand, if opened down the belly it leaves a two-inch margin of tan which is of a pleasing contrast against the black.

The Black is in greater demand than the Blue, as the contrast between the two colours, *i.e.*, black and the tan, is greater than it is between the blue and the tan. The Chocolate is gaining ground much faster than the other colours and is in greater demand as a pelt producer. A recent addition to the family is the Lilac, which is the colour which its name implies, but like the Blue it does not contrast so finely as does the Black.

Some furriers state that the pelts would be of more service to them if the brindled hairs on the flanks were carried all over the body. At present this is in contradiction to the standard laid down by the Tan Rabbit Club, therefore to become a dual-purpose rabbit it would be necessary to come to some adjustment, if it became essential. At the present time furriers seem quite content to purchase the pelts as now produced.



BLACK AND TAN

THE TAN.

No breed can compare with the Black-and-Tan for beauty, density of colour and sheen on the coat, a good one almost appearing as though the coat had been oiled or polished.

As with other breeds, it is essential, if good results are to be obtained, to breed from good parent stock. The better the stock bred from, the better the possibility of obtaining top prices for the pelts. If the raven-like sheen so desirable on a Tan is to be obtained, the breeding stock should carry it also; it cannot be obtained from dingy, rusty-coated specimens.

The feeding and management are no different than with other breeds, and the housing accommodation required can be on the small side, as the rabbit is small (4½ lbs.), and, being a very small eater, has two points in its favour, especially where space is limited. Litters are usually from five to eight in number and are hardy and easy to rear, and the adult stock are very docile. From the exhibition standpoint no special preparations are necessary, if judicious feeding is resorted to. By this I do not mean pampering, but good sound food, given regularly. A well-balanced ration combined with regularity will do all that is required.

In the management of a stud there is nothing difficult or complicated. They do equally well outside as in, but if kept in the open it is advisable to keep the direct rays of the sun from them, otherwise the Tan is liable to bleach. The does are good mothers and need no assistance in rearing their families.

In the Tan we have a breed which offers good possibilities to those wishing to start in fur production. From the pelting side there is a ready sale, and from the exhibition side there is always an opportunity for the beginner, as it may be seen from the show reports that new names are often among the winners. If you are looking for a pretty breed combined with possibility of commercialism, try the Tan.

STANDARD OF POINTS.

Colour.—Dense and sound	10
Tan.—To be deep and rich	15
Triangle.—Clean cut and rich tan	5
Hind Feet.—Clean cut and rich tan	10
Front Feet.—Free from brindling	5
Chest, Flanks and Belly.—Rich tan	10
Nostrils, Eyes, Jowl.—With clean cut tan markings	5

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Ears. —Short, black outside, and well covered tan inside	10
Shape. —Dutch	10
Eye. —Full	5
Condition	...	...	...	...	...	10

PENALTY POINTS.

Brindle, white or grey hairs among body colour (except on side of body where long tan hairs should be plentiful)	...	...	...	5
White ear edges, badly covered ears, white or brindled hairs outside ears	...	...	...	5
Smudgy nose points	...	...	...	5
Brindled front legs, black bars, pencilling or spots on hind legs, an indistinct line of division on same	...	...	...	10
Putty nose, white toes, white tufts in armpits or Rabbit over weight to be passed.				
Weight, 3 to 4½ lbs.				

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SELF BLACK ENGLISH.

By EVA WALLER.

Although despised by the orthodox English breeder, whose aim is spots, smuts and saddles, the Self Black English is worthy to rank among the fur breeds, as it possesses a beautiful coat. The fur is very dense and of the short fly-back type. This shortness is not a drawback. It is a mistake to think that all furs are required to be long in the hairs. The popularity of sheared and plucked furs shows that there is also a market for short-haired fur. Pulled and sheared fur is less warm than untouched fur, as all the outer protective part has been removed. The short thick coat of the Self Black English supplies a fur which will look neat, not shaggy, and at the same time be warm, while for hard wear a short dense fur is better than the longer haired type.

The characteristics of the breed are those of the English Rabbit. The ears are neat and erect: there should be no dewlap in show specimens, but as an appendage to a fur breed, a small dewlap is not a drawback, as the fur of this makes very attractive hat pins. The standard weight of the English is 6-8 lbs. The does are good mothers, and can rear large families if properly fed. Disposition is "lively and unaggressive." It is an excellent table breed. It is also hardy and does well in outdoor hutches.

English Self Blacks breed true to self, but if they are black and blue bred, blues are likely to appear in the litters. These should not be thrown out, as their pelts are useful for purposes for which the longer-haired Beveren is unsuitable. Sooty fawns are liable to appear if the Self Blacks are black and tortoise bred. The sooty fawn pelt is also useful, as it would make up well into gloves.

The colour of the Self Black English is not dead black, but black with a red glow in it and with a wonderful gloss upon it.

There should be no white hairs, but it will be found that most Rabbits have at least one or two. One lady to whom I showed a dressed pelt said that she liked the one or two white hairs. "They

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make it look so rich." A matter of taste, of course, but stock with many white hairs should not be bred from.

There is a ready sale for natural Self Black fur. I have found that everyone to whom I have shown the Self Black English pelts has admired them, some people preferring them even to first-grade pelts of the leading fur breeds.

In breeding no attempt should be made to lengthen the fur. The short, dense, glossy coat is the characteristic and the beauty of the breed. To lengthen the fur would make it like that of the Black Alaska, which is not desirable.

At present the Self Black English is not recognised by any Club as a breed. The English Club disowns it, while neither the British Fur Rabbit Society nor the Self-Coloured Rabbit Club will take it in. But I hope that in time the beauty and usefulness of its fur may induce some club to take it up and recognise it for what it should become, a popular fur breed.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW ZEALAND RED.

By MRS. E. SHIRLEY GRANT.

Some years ago it is since a well-known Zele breeder, of Californian fame, wrote to the writer, extolling the virtues of the New Zealand Reds. This, according to his account, was the first appearance of the Red Zele in the British rabbit world. Since then it has appeared at shows, it has been "fathered" by the National Self Club, though not strictly a Self Rabbit; it has had its enthusiastic supporters, its ups and downs, and now it has come into its own as one of the popular fur breeds. The B.F.R.S. has lately included the Zele in its schedule of fur varieties, whilst classes are now guaranteed, so the future of this beautiful breed should be assured.

The Zele is a compact, squarely-built rabbit, weighing about nine pounds, and hails from California, the name New Zealand Red being a misnomer. As a table rabbit it has few rivals. It fattens quickly on very little food and is a spare eater. Its fur is unique in colour and thick in texture, and it cannot be dyed or imitated. A young Zele in the sunlight, with its golden red foxy hue, is a beautiful creature.

As a business proposition, the Zele has, until lately, been a problem. None but those who have tried can realise the uphill work and prejudice to be overcome in starting a new breed. But now the furriers have awakened to the possibilities of red fur for dark beauty, and indeed, it is evident that those who can wear red fox can wear Red Zele, which lends itself to almost everything, from fur coats and sets to motor coats and linings.

Up to now the difficulty has been the supply. The does are rather shy breeders, though good mothers, and care has to be taken in introducing new blood to avoid the self red Belgian type, which though correct in colour will produce bad shape and dark ticking. Now the difficulty has been overcome, and a good unrelated strain has been introduced, which will infuse new blood and vitality.

A word of warning is needed. Furriers do not require sandy fawn pelts. The redder they are the better, and they prefer youngsters or those pelted in their first adult coat. The colour

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must be reddish, must go well down to the skin, the texture must be thick and springy, yet soft, and the hair short. Given that, my furrier assures me that the Zele should soon fetch as much as the Chinchilla.

Such is the true Zele, a delightful rabbit, and now promising to be a sound pelt investment. In the recent words of a fancier, "We can't all wear grey, or black, or blue—some of us like red"—and to those the Zele will appeal.

STANDARD.

Head.—Medium, full and shapely.

Ears.—Erectly carried, medium thickness, 5 to 5½ ins. long, free from black lacing.

Eyes.—Large, bright and hazel, with as small white circle as possible.

Colour.—Even reddish buff, darker on saddle, free from black hairs, carried well down to skin, undersides and hind-quarters, cream white belly colour (a reddish tint desirable).

Shape.—Body medium, broad fore and hindquarters; adult does to have even dewlap.

Weight.—Seven to nine lbs.

Legs, Feet and Tail.—Strong and straight legs, medium boned, all four feet, same colour as body, tail straight.

Condition.—Full in coat,, somewhat harsher in texture than other breeds.

CHAPTER XV.

A BROWN RABBIT EXPERIMENT.

By E. BOSTOCK SMITH.

"Maraaka" is the name I have given to the new breed of brown fur Rabbits which I originated with a view to producing what might be described as a Sable Rabbit. That there is a demand for pelts of this kind is undoubted, and I am only one of the many breeders who are endeavouring, more or less successfully, to produce a Rabbit to supply this demand. One can safely say that there are more brown furs (natural or dyed) sold than any other colour, and until quite recently the Havana was the only recognised fur Rabbit to come into this category. But there are many shades of brown, so obviously there is room for more than one breed, and much as I like the Havana, the appeal to make a new breed of a much darker and different shade of brown was irresistible.

Amongst all live stock many new breeds have originated from "sports," but I determined at the outset that my new breed should not be built on such a slender and elusive foundation. The breeds to be used in the making were decided upon after many hours of deliberation between Mr. Ralph Blake (my Rabbit manager), and myself, and fortunately we have not found it necessary to deviate from our original selections, except where, as I shall mention later, we added another breed. We have, however, from time to time had to vary the proportions of these selections to get the desired shades of colour—luminosity, density, length of coat, and also the velvety touch which is so essential in a high-grade fur. Disappointments have been many—but life is full of compensations—and as a set-off against reverses we have obtained unexpectedly good results in other directions. What we have now definitely established is a breed-entirely unlike any other and which is breeding true to type remarkably well.

Although we originally started out to produce a pelt which would resemble the Sable, Mr. Blake and I discovered that by taking a slightly different line we could produce something which, while still on the dark brown side, was quite distinct from sable. This appealed very strongly to both of us, and we persevered in this direction, with the result that Maraakas are a type of their own

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and will take their stand as a distinctive pelt and not an imitation of anything.

It may save some misapprehension if I state here that this article is not written with any idea of boosting the Maraaka with a view to sale, for I shall have none for sale for some considerable time to come. It may, however, help other breeders, who have a similar goal in view, if they know that such a Rabbit can be bred. The colour of the Maraaka is a very dark brown (almost black) on the back, gradually shading off to sepia brown at the flanks, to white under the belly. Richness of colour and fineness of fur have been aimed at right from the start. I am convinced that in almost all breeds of fur Rabbits there is room for considerable improvement in these directions. Colour is by no means everything. Rabbit pelts have to face competition not only by the natural furs which are imitated, but chiefly by the dyed and faked specimens which can be produced so prolifically and so cheaply. "Buy British" is a good slogan, but "Buy Quality" is a better one. In Maraakas I have the desired colour well established, although, even this, I am endeavouring to make still better. Their wonderful qualities have been the subject of almost universal praise, but I consider there is still some little room for improvement—which is one of my chief reasons for delay in putting the breed or the pelts on the market. It is quite possible that other breeders will in the meantime reach their desired goal of perfection, in which case they will receive the glory and financial reward awaiting the first who places on the market high-class brown pelts with graded effects, such as I have described. There is, however, room for many more such breeds than one, providing the quality is there, for we may not all have quite the same ideas with regard to colour shades. But I do most strongly advise that all different varieties which are produced should be distinctive, also separately named—preferably with names which do not suggest that they are imitations of any existing furs. Sooner or later these wild animal furs will become so scarce as to be unobtainable except at almost prohibitive prices. Consequently manufacturers and dyers will produce quite sufficient imitations. That is why I suggest distinctive pelts and distinctive names; and with the many clever and successful Rabbit breeders we have in the Fancy this should not be difficult.

The successes of the Maraakas on the show bench, on the few occasions when they have been shown, have proved that they are a type which appeals to Rabbit judges, and arouses the admiration of visitors and also of the general press—all of which tends to show that there is a great future for this type of Rabbit. That was particularly so at the Crystal Palace last year. Frankly, I consider some of the praise was overdone, but it indicates the

A BROWN RABBIT EXPERIMENT.

degree of interest they excited. One particular paragraph in a journal which I will not mention is worth reproducing, and is as follows:—

There is said to be a coat in America made of skins of the beautiful and rare Maraaka Rabbit. It is valued at no less than £10,000. Who can be the woman who owns this costly garment and, what is more to the point, what have other women to say about her?

It seems a pity to spoil such a journalistic effort, but unfortunately it loses point by the fact that there is no coat of Maraaka skins in existence, either in America or elsewhere!

UNLIMITED DEMAND.

I have not given the foundation breeds in the making of Maraakas for obvious reasons, but even if I did it would be of little help to other aspirants, for it is only certain strains of these breeds which give the desired results. Further, I am convinced that it is far better for all breeders, even if aiming for the same goal, to carry out their own unadulterated ideas. By this method the most unexpected effects are often obtained with particularly valuable results. All who are aiming to produce such a Rabbit as I have outlined can be assured of substantial reward, if successful, for the demand will be unlimited. They will have the further satisfaction of knowing that this will not be gained at the expense of any existing breed of Rabbits. On the contrary they will be helping the other breeds by adding kudos to British Fur Rabbits.

Originally my intention was to produce a Rabbit with a dark brown back, shading off to a lighter sepia on the belly. I was successful in my attempt, but must confess that the finished article, though unique, did not satisfy me. I decided that my production must be of a more striking appearance—something that it would be almost impossible for even the skilled hands of the dyer to imitate. I knew it would be fatal to the success of the breed if I sacrificed the coat properties, i.e. density and texture, and, therefore, much forethought was needed before introducing another breed.

However, I decided upon a breed, which fortunately gave me the desired result without losing the texture and wealth of coat. This took time, of course, but I was fully compensated when the beautiful white-bellied Maraaka eventually made its advent.

Practical furriers who saw pelts of both the light and dark-bellied Maraakas, immediately selected the former, this convinc-

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ing me that I had decided wisely. The shading in the light-bellied variety is much more gradual, whereas in the dark-bellied Rabbits the variation of colours was inclined to be patchy, especially in the adult coat; and the older the Rabbit grew, the more patchy it became. I am not for one moment depreciating the value of dark-bellied Rabbits. For their brown pelts they will always have their value, but I consider that white-bellied Rabbits are far more captivating to the eye and much more difficult to fake.

As I have already stated, the true-type colour of the Maraaka, which I have now fixed, is very dark brown (almost black) on the back, gradually shading off to a light sepia-brown on the flanks, to white under the belly. The face is of the same dark shade as the back. Briefly the markings of the Maraaka are the same as those of the Tan, but where the latter has tan colouring, i.e., chest, eye circles, inside the ears, the belly and inner portion of the hind feet, the Maraaka has white. Also, the flanks are laced with longer white hairs, just in the same manner as the Tan is laced with hairs of that colour. In type, the Maraaka is a cobby Rabbit, very similar to the Dutch, and its weight rarely exceeds $5\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.

QUALITY BEFORE SIZE.

From the very beginning I have carefully avoided producing a Rabbit of giant proportions like some of our other fur-bearing varieties. The value of a pelt is governed not by its size, but by its quality; therefore, it can be of no advantage to breed giants. Large Rabbits require larger, and consequently more expensive hutches. This means too, that where the Rabbits are kept in sheds, more of these will be required. Further, a large breed is usually accompanied by a large appetite, and, therefore, not only are big Rabbits more expensive to house, but the food bill is considerable increased. Again, to maintain excessive size in a breed, it is necessary to employ foster-mothers, or to reduce large litters by killing. For these reasons I have concentrated my efforts on a medium-sized Rabbit with a coat of super-quality. The Maraakas are splendid mothers, and exceptionally quick growers, reaching their full, adult size and coat in six months—a fact which in itself will particularly commend them to the commercial pelt producer. While my main object has been to produce a pelt of great beauty and utility, I have at the same time kept table properties in mind. The Rabbit with a large frame and little flesh will never realise in the market the price commanded by the small-boned, meaty Rabbit. The Maraaka is a small-boned Rabbit, carrying an abundance of meat, and an exceptionally small amount of offal. Therefore, quite apart from the high value of

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its pelt, the carcase may be relied upon to realise the best price for table purposes.

As is the case with many other varieties, the Maraaka does not assume its full beauty until it has attained about four months. In the nest they are almost mole coloured at first, and later the difference in colour from back to flanks may be seen. When they leave the nest, strange to say, many of them show no signs of this difference in colour. Very shortly, however, as they lose their baby coat, the back and face darken, and the flanks get lighter until you see the beautiful shading from one colour to another, such as I have previously described. Breeders of Chinchillas, Silvers, and Argentés know what a wonderful fascination there is in watching this gradual development from the rough to the finished article. This, apart from its wonderful utility prospects, adds charm to the breed, whose beauty must appeal to all whether they are Rabbit breeders or not.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ANGORA.

By J. B. McDOUGALL, M.D. (GLASG.), M.F.C.P. (ED.).

For those who are in search of a hobby, a pastime or an industry, the Angora has potentialities that are denied to most other varieties. The perfect Angora is something rather different from the point of view of the outside critic from the perfect Dutch or the perfect Chinchilla. In fact, the new-comer to the Angora, when inspecting the first-class show specimen for the first time, might well be excused if he were to exclaim, "Where is the rabbit?" for so well covered is the animal in wool that it is only with some difficulty that it is possible for the beginner to determine, without close examination, the different anatomical parts of the animal. It is this perfect specimen which has given to many men and women a joy in life previously denied them. The great fascination of the show Angora to its adherents is that there is always something to be done, other than mere feeding and general management, to enable it to pass in the aristocratic company of the show bench. A famous judge once told me that the man who kept show Angoras must always be considered a real fancier, for there is not the slightest doubt that the Show Angora of to-day can only come from the rabbitry of an enthusiast.

Let us endeavour to visualise this remarkable creature. The Angora is usually, though not always, a white rabbit; more correctly speaking it is an albino. The eye is pink because one is looking directly through the eye into the retina, which is rich in small blood-vessels. Hence the red or pinkish colour. Angoras, however, may be blue or smoke coloured, or fawn or black, but the vast majority in this country at present are white. The animal is, in temperament, docile and amenable. Some are even playful and a few almost intelligent!

But by far the most outstanding feature of the rabbit is its coat. In the perfect show animal the coat may be ten inches long. Usually the coat is longest on the back and sides, but on the front, under the chin, it is possible to get as much as six inches in length in the best specimens. On the under surface of the rabbit there is also wool, not so long as on the back or sides, but still of quite appreciable length. Even on the legs, head and ears there is wool—important sites from the standpoint of the fancier, but not of paramount importance from the mere commercial aspect.

If we come to a closer examination of the wonderful coat we shall find it to be remarkably dense. There are, literally, thousands of fibres to the square inch. Further, the coat is very soft



THE TYPICAL ENGLISH EXHIBITION ANGORA.
(From the coloured plate of Lady George Carter's "King of Fashion,"
presented with *Fur and Feather*, March 26th, 1926).

THE ANGORA.

and silky in texture and has in its composition a large variety of fibres differing very materially in their microscopic and naked-eye appearances. Some are so fine in texture that, when isolated, they become wavy on account of their elasticity; others, especially near their tips, are stouter in consistency and are, no doubt, older fibres. Between the very fine and the more harsh there are all gradations in texture. Broadly speaking, the ideal Angora for show purposes should have a very long coat, as long as possible; there should be as much wool, *i.e.*, density, as possible all over the animal; it should have the ears, feet and head well woolled, and its general condition should be firm and robust. The eyes should be bright, and altogether the rabbit should have the appearance of alertness which always betrays careful attention, proper feeding, and as a rule, good breeding.

Before discussing the more commercial side of the Angora's function, let us very briefly trace the history of the rabbit from the time of its birth. At birth the tiny rabbits are devoid of wool, but it is one of Nature's many triumphs that in the course of a fortnight this mite has grown to something like eight to ten times its size at birth and has a distinct covering of wool, sometimes quite half-an-inch long. The eyes are now open for the first time and the little rabbits make their exodus from the privacy of the nesting compartment into the other part of the hutch and lead a life of comparative freedom. From this time until the rabbits are six weeks old they continue to grow in size and keep on growing wool at a great pace. As is the case with most varieties of live stock, the fewer youngsters the mother has, the bigger and, other things being equal, the better they are. When they reach their sixth week of life it is customary for a separation from the mother to be effected. This is a simple process, but it is of profound significance, for it means that henceforth the young ones are to be deprived of the one and only food which we know to be the best, *viz.*, the mother's milk. The breeder who uses that fraction of common sense which counts for so much in all that appertains to the breeding of live stock, will soon discover that it is a good thing to take advantage of the elixir of life which is to be found in the milk of the doe rabbit; he will not be in any hurry to wean a backward litter, and he will take the fullest advantage of the fact that a specially good baby will become even better if left in the mother's care for that extra week or so. Some breeders go so far as to leave the youngsters with the mother for eight weeks as a matter of course, and there is a good deal to be said in favour of this arrangement. The great drawback to it is the loss of time when one comes to discuss the purely commercial side of things. But it cannot be too strongly emphasised that it is better to have a relatively few big and strong rabbits than to have an army of weeds which in the course of time will propagate their like, as weeds do.

FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS.

When the young rabbits are weaned they may be kept in twos or threes, according to the size of the hutch, and left in this way until they are some three and a-half months old, when they should be separated and given the privilege of a single "room."

SHOW OR UTILITY?

Now the new-comer to the Angora world must be in some doubt as to the destiny of the wool in the case of these babies. He himself must decide this point. If he is going to go in for the show animals then he must not on any account interfere with the growth of the coat. In fact, he must do everything possible to encourage its growth and development. This is done by judicious feeding and grooming every day. In the year book of the Universal Angora Rabbit Club there are some excellent photographs showing the various manoeuvres in the somewhat delicate operation of grooming, and the reader is referred to that book for further details on this point.

If, however, the breeder is "out" for wool for the market, then he must do as the spinners demand, and get the wool off the animals whenever it has reached the requisite length. Now, the spinners have said quite definitely that it is not necessary for the fibres to be more than two and a-half to three inches in length. And it is this important pronouncement which has made Angora wool-farming even remotely possible. From the description, however brief, which has already been given of the perfect show Angora, it will be obvious to the merest novice that it would not be a practical proposition for any breeder to aim at having *all* his Angoras with coats six to ten inches long. The detailed and sometimes tedious grooming for each specimen would soon eat into all his overhead charges and wipe all profit from the balance-sheet. I have said so before, and I repeat, that it is a physical impossibility for any one person to do every operation satisfactorily on a "farm" for show Angoras only. Those who specialise in the show Angora are the pioneers of Angora breeding; it is they who produce the perfect specimen. Others attempt to follow them, but they merely make the attempt. Only rarely do they succeed. But that the show Angora is absolutely necessary must be apparent. It is the ideal, and the best show animal must always be the best wool grower. But the point which the potential wool farmer must realise is that, in order to get the best wool for commercial purposes, it is *not* necessary to keep the coat on the animal after it has attained the length regarded by the spinners as sufficient for their requirements.

A casual examination of the young Angora will show that this length is attained when the rabbit reaches its ninth or tenth week, sometimes earlier. And as a general rule the wool farmer will be well advised to make a point of clipping off the coat whenever it has reached the requisite length.

CLIPPING OR PLUCKING?

The wool may be clipped or plucked. The latter method is that most frequently adopted in France, but I am led to believe that the French have some method of inducing an artificial moult, which renders the process easy. In this country we have no knowledge, so far as I am aware, of any method of inducing an artificial moult, and plucking has therefore to be done whenever the coat is "ripe"; this does not always come on at the same time all over the animal, and unless the coat is, in fact, in a state of moult the operation may be difficult, and most certainly painful to the animal. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that the most common practice in England is that of clipping.

The great advantage of clipping over plucking is that the wool can be harvested at one "sitting," so to speak. It is not, or need not be, a difficult operation, and it is simple.

There are many ways of clipping, and there is no orthodox way. Our practice is to place the rabbit on a stool, sufficiently high to reach just above the waist of the operator. The wool is then "parted" with the hand down the centre of the back, and layer after layer of wool is then cut off until both sides are uncovered. Some breeders cut the wool off close to the skin, others leave about half-an-inch or so on the rabbit. But whichever plan is adopted, the wool which is cut off should not be less in length than two-and-a-half inches. In the colder weather in the winter-time it is best to leave an appreciable covering of wool on the rabbit, for the loss of so dense and warm a coat must be felt acutely. The wool is collected and placed in a tin or box until such time as a sufficient quantity has been amassed; it should then be despatched to the spinners direct or through the official wool receiver of the club.

CLUBS.—There are two Angora clubs in this country—the Universal Angora Rabbit Club and the Southern Angora Rabbit Club. Both serve the same purpose and have the same ideals, and, so far as one can see, have everything in common except a common standard for the show specimen. In my opinion, every Angora breeder should belong to one club or the other, for (in Angora breeding) as in all things, unity is strength. It is a thousand pities that the clubs themselves do not seem to appreciate this point more than they do.

MARKETS FOR THE ANGORA AND ITS WOOL.

Markets for the Angora and its wool may be divided into :—

1. Carcase value.
2. Pelts.
3. Live stock.
4. Wool.

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CARCASE VALUE.—The carcase value of the Angora rabbit is equivalent to that of any other variety, but owing to the fact that the Angora is constantly producing wool it is not common to kill the animal at all. It is this very point which appeals to so many breeders, especially the ladies.

PELTS.—For a like reason the pelt of the Angora has never been exploited. When the wool is just about two inches long, however, and provided the coat is of sufficient density, the pelt of the Angora can be made up into a very beautiful garment. And in every stud, especially if it be a large one, there will always be a few animals which will fall behind in the matter of wool production. These are better eliminated and pelted off. Quite recently we determined to exploit local markets for garments made of Angora pelts. The number of finished garments has been small, but so much have they appealed to the eye of the public that they have found a ready sale at prices which would compare favourably with garments made up from the pelts of any of the fur breeds. There is, however, no stabilised market for the Angora pelt, and as things are, it is difficult to see how there can be one.

LIVE STOCK.—The fancier is the man who deals most in the sale of live stock. Good animals are always in request, and, provided there is time for showing, it is always a good thing for the novice to try an open combat with experienced breeders on the show bench. He stands to lose nothing more than a few shillings, and there is not the slightest doubt that the information he will gather, especially if he is able to attend the show personally, will be well worth the expenditure. The animals which are in greatest demand are those which have won prizes in open competition, or those which are descended from a well-known prize-winning strain. And in this connection let me say that to begin Angora wool-farming with inferior stock is to court disaster at the outset.

In *Angora Wool Production** I have emphasised the great importance of the best bucks. The right buck is essential. Any buck will not do. Remember that he will stamp his mark on every youngster in your rabbitry, and that the same cannot be said of the doe. Her powers of reproduction are limited to some twelve or fourteen youngsters per annum; not so with the buck. And on the question of sales, the new breeder will do well to keep hold of the buck which has proved himself to be in the first rank and not be tempted to sell him off, unless he is certain that a capable substitute is at hand. The markets for the sale of live stock are, however, distinctly limited. Some breeders do well, but the novice

* "*Angora Wool Production*," by J. B. McDougall, M.D., M.R.C.P.

cannot expect to enter into the open market against experienced breeders, whose powers of persuasion are equal to the quality of their stock—and sometimes, no doubt, a trifle in excess, as in other spheres.

Wool.—So long as the people of this country wear garments made of Angora wool or trimmed with Angora wool, then so long will there be a market for the raw material. This is a basic fact. The greater the demand for the finished spun product, the greater will be the demand by the spinner for the raw material. At the present time the price paid for wool by the spinners is 34/- per pound weight. At this price Angora wool farming is a profitable proposition. In the course of this necessarily brief article it is impossible for me to go into the details of the financial considerations, but in my book already referred to I have stated that with a stud of about 500 Angoras there ought to be a profit of approximately £220 with the price of wool at present-day values. This is after allowing for labour charges, food supplies and other items, such as rent, rates, depreciation, and interest on capital. I should like, however, to take this opportunity of mentioning that there are two vital fundamentals in connection with wool-farming on a relatively large scale. The first is that it is essential to have mass-production, and the second is that there *must* be a quick turnover. The first is attained by having a good number of adult breeding does always in use, and the second is attained by getting the wool off the animal whenever it has reached the necessary length. It is almost impossible to estimate what the exact profit should be on *each* animal, for in any rabbitry at any given time there must be an assortment of Angoras at all ages and in all stages of development. There are "strains" advertised as "one-pound-per-annum" rabbits. There are certainly some rabbits which will produce 34/- worth of wool in the year, but there are far more which will be doing quite well if they produce 10 ozs. In the chapter on "Financial Considerations" in my book I have taken this figure as my estimate.

Adult does will not produce wool at the same rate as first-year rabbits, but the reader who knows the most elementary facts about the breeding of live stock will realise at once that the value of the female is really in her capacity to produce the "raw material" by virtue of her breeding powers. I would infinitely prefer to have in my rabbitry a brood doe which kept on breeding time after time and produced healthy, robust youngsters with dense coats of good quality, than to have a doe which produced first-rate wool herself but which had a limited capacity for breeding. And it is just here that the does which have been shown a great deal fail one so very often. Not always, but very frequently, they are not the best of mothers. I believe it is well to

emphasise here the need for having, ultimately, at any rate, a good substantial breeding stock so as to attain a quick turnover in wool. I can even visualise the wool farmer of the future having his hutches occupied by brood does, his stud bucks, and nothing else but first-year rabbits which give the best quality wool and the largest amount, age for age. The reader must remember that Angora wool-farming is a young industry in this country. There are many problems which have yet to be investigated—a multitude, in fact—but from the experience which I personally have gleaned I have very little fear of the future so far as the rabbit itself is concerned. The rabbit will produce wool, without the slightest doubt. I have evidence also to prove that within the past two years there have been marked advances in breeding operations with a view to increasing the wool yield. Sound management, coupled with common sense and ordinary business methods, will surmount most of the obstacles in the rabbitry itself.

It would not, however, be trite to conclude this scrappy survey of the situation if reference were not made to the fact that there is one firm alone in England which spins Angora wool. There are several in France, but even the French are prepared to admit that the English wool is superior in quality to their own. It is this superior quality which gives the English Angora wool farmer the pull he has at present over his French colleague, and no sounder advice could possibly be given to the new comer to the ranks of the Angora than to instil into him the necessity for maintaining that high standard of quality by careful selection of his breeding stock from the best rabbitries in this country, and, once having made the selection of his stock, to breed with discrimination and judgment.

If we are in the hands of the spinners to a large extent, there is all the more need for us to study his particular requirements. Despite the fact that the production of Angora wool in this country has increased over thirty times in just four years, the price of the raw material has fallen only six shillings per pound. And at last there are signs that the two clubs which are responsible for the welfare of the Angora are alive to the fact that co-operation is in the interests of the breed and of the industry. Although the fundamentals of Angora wool-farming are easily grasped, yet the intricacies of the market for the product are bound up with the common law of supply and demand, as in every other industry in the world.

This note is merely intended as an introduction to a subject which, from a national standpoint, is at the moment almost negligible. The reader, however, can rest assured that permeating this little industry there are men and women, many of them pioneers, whose enthusiasm for the sound development of the industry is only equalled by their inherent love for the beautiful animal itself.

CHAPTER XVII.

FUR GROWING AND TREATMENT OF PELTS.

By T. BAILEY

The production of Rabbit fur is now established as a home industry, and the daily enquiries I receive from all parts of the country prove beyond doubt that the potentialities of the enterprise are fully recognised. Some people who were at first inclined to ridicule the commercial prospects of the business are now enthusiastic fur producers.

Rabbit keeping for flesh and fur is just as interesting and profitable to the small producer as it is to those engaged in Rabbit farming on extensive lines. It is a suitable occupation for both town and rural residents.

CHOICE OF STOCK.

A brief allusion to rearing Rabbits seems necessary, otherwise novices are liable to be discouraged owing to pitfalls which might have been avoided.

Beginners are advised not to start with more than one breed. They should not "dabble" with a miscellaneous collection. It would be prudent to study the Rabbits penned at a prominent show and to decide on the breed to keep. Purchase the stock from a reliable breeder. Most varieties of Rabbits are catered for by the specialist clubs who issue the "standards" for their respective breeds. These standards generally approach very closely to utility as well as to exhibition requirements. The addresses of the Secretaries of the Specialist Clubs can be ascertained from "Fur and Feather," Idle, Bradford.

The dominant feature in the paving of the way to success is the choice of the foundation stock, and to a certain extent the quality of the fur to be produced is determined by the common laws of lineage. Hence, the importance of securing pure-bred stock of a good strain.

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ACCOMMODATION.

Expensive plant is not necessary, and one will have to be guided by the funds at his or her disposal, bearing in mind that elaborate equipment would prove an unwarranted and heavy charge against capital expenditure.

If only a few Rabbits comprise the stud, the single tier system for hutches undoubtedly gives the best results. Where two or more tiers are in use, the floors of the hutches must be absolutely waterproof, otherwise the fur of the occupants underneath will become soiled owing to the urine constantly dripping from above. Hutches should be large enough to provide comfort and contentment for the Rabbits and should be designed so as to facilitate quick and easy cleaning. Deep hutches are very awkward for cleaning; while if hutches are stacked one above the other the top one must be within easy reach. The provision of partitions even in breeding hutches is a superfluous expense, in my opinion.

FEEDING.

Opinions vary as to the exact ration and kind of food necessary for Rabbits of various sizes and at different ages, but the utility Rabbit-keeper must strive to produce early maturing stock to enable him to market his pelts at a minimum cost of production. Plain, wholesome food is all that is necessary. This subject, however, is fully dealt with in "Rabbits and All About Them" (4/- post free, from "Fur and Feather," Idle, Bradford).

WATER.

If ample supplies of succulent greenstuffs or roots are being fed, water is unnecessary, but it is advisable to keep a supply of clean water in the hutches of does about to kindle or suckling litters.

BREEDING.

Tame Rabbits vary as to the age they arrive at maturity, but seven months may be taken as a fair average. Care should be exercised in using only a tip-top quality buck, full of vigour, as it is essential that both buck and doe should be strong, healthy animals, and, especially in the case of females, they should be kept in a racy condition. Super-fat does will not breed.

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A doe should produce at least three litters per year, and from the fur grower's point of view it is advisable to arrange to have litters from the months of March to September so as to be assured of a reasonable number of good adult winter pelts. Under normal conditions, the litters for killing would follow in rotation, and the killing season would commence about the latter part of October and follow on at intervals until cleared. Incidentally, the killing season coincides with the most favourable season for disposal of the flesh.

If the fur grower breeds stock during the "off" season, the chances of getting a good adult pelt at seven to eight months old are extremely remote, and as it would not be profitable to carry the stock on until the following October or November, a keen look-out should be kept for a clear fixed coat at about four months old. This is usually termed a semi-adult coat, and although thinner and of poorer quality than the adult coat, the skins could be dressed and made into articles for home use, as pelts of this description are not as a rule of much commercial value.

Occasionally there is a demand for baby Chinchilla skins taken at five weeks old, but only "clear-backed" pelts are of any value. It should be noted that the brown-backed babies give the best adult pelt.

The youngsters should not be removed from the doe until they are at least six weeks old, and if they can be left a little longer they will benefit thereby.

After weaning, the development of the progeny should be closely watched and immediately any of them show signs of being quarrelsome, the offenders should be put into separate hutches. It is sometimes possible to run a number of does together until they are five to six months old. If this can be managed, so much the better, as hutch accommodation would be relieved. In any case, bucks can not be trusted after they are four months old, and at this age they should be separated. If they are run together any longer, one would have to contend with the risk of them staining each other's fur, or their quarrelsome behaviour may suddenly develop without suspicion of such having been aroused previously. Pelts damaged by fighting can only be regarded as a dead loss, as the quality will not come right again until another complete moult has been effected, and the extra cost of keep will have taken away all the profit. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that fur producers must not allow their stock to outgrow the accommodation, and if the latter is limited, one would have to aim for the production of a few marketable skins rather than attempt to handle a large quantity which would give little or no return for labour and expenses involved.

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WHEN TO KILL.

The amateur Rabbit keeper is often at a loss to know when his or her stock is ready for "pelting." Some previous observation as to the progress of the moult is advisable, as herein lies the best possible chance of securing a pelt carrying its bloom. Once the bloom is lost, the value of the pelt is reduced. Not only must the fur appear faultless on the animal, but when the pelt is removed the flesh side should be free from coloured markings, as such markings indicate a new coat is growing. These coloured marks can usually be seen on the live animal. To facilitate this examination, the



PREPARING THE PELTS.

- 1, Killing; 2, hanging after killing; 3, lancing the skin; 4, skinning; 5, examining the skins; 6, muslin bag to protect pelt from flies.

Rabbit should be placed in a good light (on a high stool for preference) and the fur slowly stroked back. The skin should be a clear white or flesh colour throughout. If coloured markings are observed or the fur is loose the Rabbit must be put back until the new coat is completely grown, although it is a debateable point with intensive fur growers whether it is profitable to wait until the skin on the belly is absolutely clear, because, after all, the furrier is principally interested in the saddle of the pelt, the belly fur only being suitable for cheap trimmings.

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The examination of the fur must be performed very carefully, but with practice it can be carried out quite expeditiously. Unfortunately, this guide is not applicable to white Rabbits, and with these one can only be guided by sense of touch and vision for any "break," patchiness or looseness of coat, and wait until these faults disappear.

With the approach of the natural breeding season, i.e., about February, any stock still on hand, and of eight months or over and destined for pelts must be closely watched for intermittent moults that denote the falling of the winter coat. As soon as this is observed, the Rabbit should be killed, although the value of the pelt will be adversely affected, as there is only a most remote chance of securing a conditioned pelt before the following October, when the extra cost of keep and holding up of accommodation for growing stock would more than outweigh the loss in the commercial value of the pelt in the first instance.

Undoubtedly, the best pelt is the completed winter coat in full bloom, evenness of colour, length, density and texture of fur, of course, determine the grading. Naturally, from a financial point of view there is a tendency for fur growers to be too eager to kill, but patience must be the virtue for successful production.

HOW TO KILL.

There are several methods of killing but with a view to preventing damage to the pelt by blood coming in contact with the fur, bleeding should not be practised, and the following methods are recommended:—

1. Dislocating the neck.
2. Giving a smart blow on the neck behind the ears with the edge of the hand or with a blunt instrument, such as a short piece of broom shaft.

As soon as the Rabbit is killed it should be suspended by the hind feet for half-an-hour or so, when it will be ready for skinning. This operation must not be delayed and should be done before paunching.

SKINNING.

For all practical purposes the easiest methods are hereunder explained:—

1. (a) First hold the Rabbit up by the ears and press the lower part of the belly with a downward movement to empty the bladder. (b) Suspend the Rabbit by the hind feet to nails or screws stoutly driven into a rail or wall bracket, so that it hangs in a similar manner to that in which a butcher hangs a sheep for flaying and dressing, or lay the Rabbit on its back on a table or bench. (c) Make an incision in the centre of the belly (taking

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care not to pierce the entrails) and continue the slit as necessary so that it runs from chin to vent. (d) Next work the skin back until it lays in line with the hind legs. Then make diagonal cuts down inside of legs cutting round at the first joint. (e) Skin hind legs, and, working from the tail, draw skin smartly down the back, ease off at the fore feet and shoulders, and continue pulling skin over the head, helping with knife at ears and eyes. The skin of the head and tail has no value and can be cut off at this stage.

2. (a) Prepare as (a) and (b) in method 1. (b) Sever fore paws at joint. (c) Cut round hocks of hind legs and carefully make a slit down the inside of the leg, assisting the skin with the fingers of the left hand as you continue the slit across, just missing the vent, till you reach the hock of the other leg. (d) Work the skin from back of the legs across the rump, then work your hand to free both sides from under the tail. (e) Now pull firmly, and the pelt will break away clear from the tail. (f) Turn back the pelt all round the body and pull off inside out until the elbows of front legs protrude. (g) Work the front legs through and pull the skin right over the head. This method is known as the "sleeve" method and is recognised as most suitable for baby Chinchilla pelts.

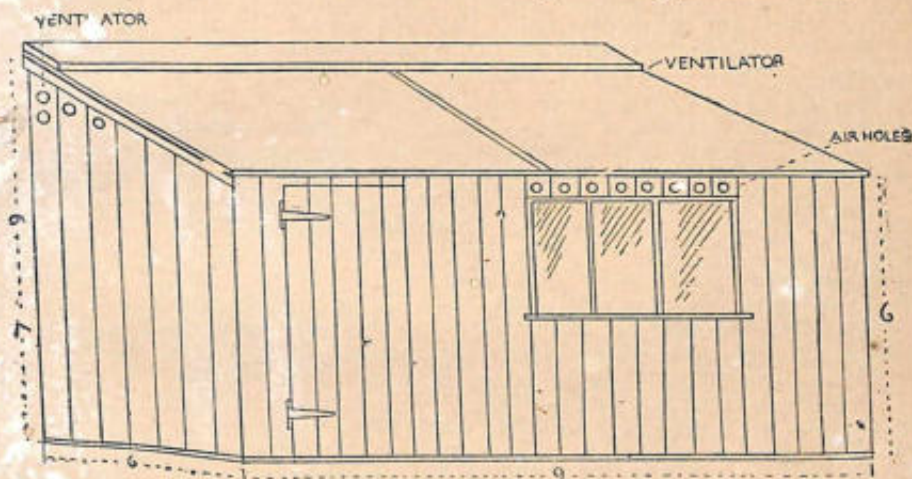
TREATMENT OF PELTS.

At this stage, individual circumstances determine the procedure to be adopted. By far the simplest plan is to send the skins direct to the skin dressers in their wet or "green" state, slightly sprinkling with salt on flesh side before packing. Many dressers, however demand that they shall be dried and stretched, and, in any case, for odd skins it is cheaper to dry them and store until several pelts have accumulated. The following is the best plan to follow in the drying and stretching of the skins.

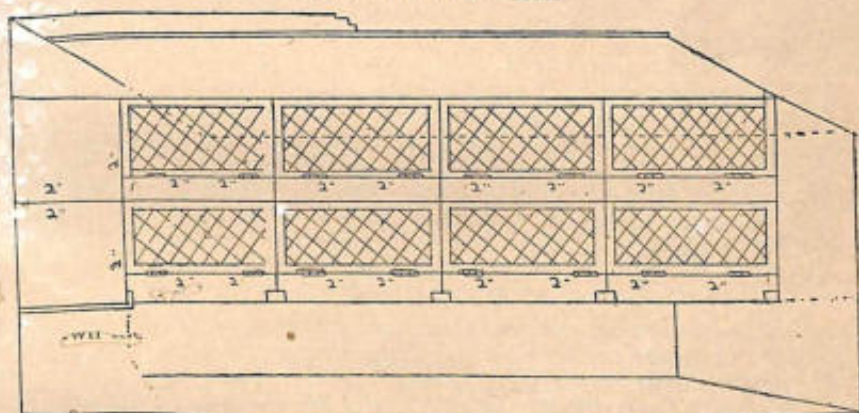
If the instructions for skinning have been carefully carried out as explained in method 1, it will be found that the white skin will lay out in a uniform shape (see fig 5) and is ready for stretching, which is done by placing the skin on a large board and pegging down with tacks or drawing pins. The pegging should be started across the hindquarters, gradually working forward and "squaring" on first one side and then the other, only very slightly stretching—just sufficient to avoid wrinkles. Without any further preparation the skin is now ready for drying, and the best results are obtained by hanging the boards indoors in a moderately heated room. The drying process should not be hastened by placing the skin in close proximity to a fire or other heating apparatus. If dried in this manner, the skin will be ready in about a couple of

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days, when any excess of fat or pieces of flesh should be removed with a blunt scraper. Beyond this treatment it is not advisable to attempt trimming the flesh side. The less frequently you handle the pelt the better. Do not worry about appearance. The



OUTSIDE VIEW OF HOUSE.



INSIDE VIEW, SHOWING HUTCHES.

The Rabbitry illustrated above was given as a prize at the Bradford Championship Show, January, 1925. It is a very suitable type of house for the fancier of small means, and who is not desirous of owning a large stud.

remaining treatment rests with the skin dresser. If the skin is to be stored it should be taken off the board, sprinkled with naphthalene (to keep away pests) and placed in a flyproof muslin bag,

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which can be made quite cheaply and used repeatedly. They should be stored in a dry airy place and away from mice or other vermin. Owing to varying climatic conditions it is not wise to keep the skins in this state for a longer period than two months. In fact, the sooner the pelts are dressed, the better.

With the "sleeved" pelt, stretching is practically eliminated, and all that is necessary is to place the skin on a skeleton frame of stout galvanised wire. The frames are easily made by cutting a piece of wire about three feet long and bending it in the centre so that it resembles a huge hairpin. A cheaper device is simply a long switch of flexible "green" twig, the springiness of which efficiently stretches the skin. On the other hand, the frame could be dispensed with and the whole skin merely stuffed with hay or newspaper. The skin is now ready for drying as previously explained. When dry the skins may be opened and stored in the usual manner. It is not necessary to split the "breeches," i.e., opening the leg pieces, as this will be done by the skin dresser.

Excepting in rare instances, home dressed pelts are not very satisfactory. Useful processes are explained in "The Home Dressing of Furs" (4d. post free, from "Fur and Feather," Idle, Bradford), but obviously better satisfaction is given if the pelts are dressed by some reputable firm of skin dressers.

DISPOSAL OF FLESH.

The marketing of the flesh now demands our attention. The small producer will probably keep the carcasses either for home consumption or for disposal to private customers, who will take them at any time. The large producer must look further afield for his market, and if he can transact business with local hotels, restaurants or public institutions it will be a distinct advantage. But this method of business means that the producer would have to kill to suit the convenience of the purchaser, whereas, if the carcasses are despatched to a firm of salesmen, the killing can be done whenever convenient to the individual. A list of dealers who are prepared to take tame Rabbits appears weekly in "Fur and Feather."

DISPOSAL OF PELTS.

Pelts can be sold either dressed or in their raw state, but if the former policy is decided on, it is important that the skins should be dressed professionally, for not only is amateur work usually detected by a mere cursory examination but buyers of skins require them all to be dressed in a uniform manner. Buyers of rabbit pelts frequently advertise their requirements in the columns of "Fur and Feather."

In concluding this article, I can only say that if fur growers work on the lines I have indicated, there will be no need for anxiety as to the ultimate financial results. There is a steady increasing demand for natural undyed British Rabbit fur, and the fur growing industry has undoubtedly a wide field for development.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT.

By E. C. RICHARDSON.

FEEDING.

The most economical kind of feeding is that which gives the best results in the shortest possible time at the lowest expenditure, and the great secret of obtaining success in these combined directions is to use, as far as possible, those materials which come most readily to hand.

In the domesticated Rabbit we have an animal which is most accommodating in this respect, for there are but few things which a Rabbit will not eat and digest. Indeed, one of the strongest arguments in favour of Rabbit-keeping, from the national point of view, is that bunny will eat all sorts of things which would otherwise go to waste. This applies more particularly to Rabbits which have passed their baby weeks—to those, say, which are about ten weeks old or more. Quite young Rabbits, like all other quite young animals, require food which is more easily assimilated.

What, then, can be utilised? What are those things which, but for bunny, might decay or be thrown away? We may perhaps classify them under two headings: (1) vegetable waste and (2) household scraps.

Under the heading of vegetable waste come all plants not actually poisonous. This includes such things as the outside leaves and stems of all the brassica tribe (cabbages, cauliflower, kale, etc.), practically all weeds such as dandelions, thistles, cow parsley, shepherd's purse, etc.—except, of course, those which are poisonous, such as deadly nightshade and hemlock. It also includes the leaves and twigs of nearly all deciduous trees, such as birch, hazel, poplar, walnut, chestnut, etc. It further includes lawn mowings, though care should be exercised in giving these in large quantities to Rabbits unaccustomed to them, and they should not be utilised if they are heated. And, lastly, it includes all manner of surplus roots, such as swedes, mangolds, turnips, carrots, artichokes, etc.

Under the heading of household scraps come those things bought from the baker, the butcher, the grocer, the greengrocer, and the fishmonger, which we are either too fastidious to eat our selves or which, if eaten, might disagree with us. They include such things as tea-leaves, coffee grounds, bread crusts (alas! too often), meat skin, gristle and bones, and fish skin and bones (best

FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS.

cooked), potato peelings (either raw or cooked), sour milk, cheese rind, orange peel, lemon peel, banana peel, etc. It will, I am aware, come as a surprise to many people to hear that a Rabbit will eat such things as, say, fish skins. Nevertheless, it is true, and all should be utilised—everything, that is, which is not actually decayed.

Having, then, decided to use up all the waste material we can towards feeding our Rabbits, it remains to be considered what will have to be added; for though I think it would be quite possible to feed Rabbits on waste products only, if they were available in sufficient quantities and if they contained the right materials in the right proportions, in actual practice there will not, usually, be enough of them, and they may fail in this or that important ingredient. For example, it is quite possible to feed Rabbits on fresh young green-stuff only during the short period of the year when there is lots of it to be had for the gathering, but during the greater part of the year it will be deficient in the necessary albuminoids (of which more anon), and Rabbits having grown accustomed to it do not take readily to other foods. So, too, to attempt to rear Rabbits on, say, tea-leaves only, or even bread crusts only, would be to court disaster. These things are only useful if, taken as a whole, they average out into a suitable diet.

FOODSTUFFS.

The foodstuffs which, over and above waste material, will have to be procured may be classified under four headings:—(1) Cereals, which include such things as oats, barley meal, bran and middlings; (2) "concentrates," such as linseed cake, fish meal, and milk in various forms; (3) vegetables grown specially for the stock (or bought); and (4) "long fodder," such as meadow hay or straw.

Now to enter into details about these four different kinds of feeding stuffs is impossible in a short article of this kind. All that can be done is to give a rough indication of their main ingredients, which should also be the main ingredients of the household waste, and then to describe a system for using them and the waste which has been found to work well in actual practice.

- 1.—The cereals. These are in the main the agents for supplying heat to the body. They are rich in what are called carbohydrates, and carbo-hydrates are to living things very much what coal is to a steam engine.
- 2.—The "concentrates" are, in the main, the sources of supplying what are called "albuminoids." These albuminoids are the things which are necessary to growth and the formation of muscle, bone, fur, etc.

- 3.—Vegetable matter, and especially green vegetable matter, is the main source of supply for those mineral salts (compounds of lime and phosphorus, for example) which are highly important to all life. Further, it is the chief source of supply for those mysterious things called "vitamines," about which, at present, not very much is known except that they are all-important to health.
- 4.—"Long fodder," in the shape of hay or straw, may or may not be absolutely necessary for Rabbits, but at least long fodder is useful, for a Rabbit has a large stomach and it is not necessary or economical to fill it from end to end with the more expensive foods. A certain amount of bulk, of no great "feeding value," seems to be desirable.

It may be admitted at once that the above classification is only of a very rough order. The cereals, for example, all contain some albuminoids, and the outside husk, of, say, wheat contains a highly important vitamine. The concentrates, too, all contain some carbo-hydrates, and green vegetables contain everything. There is also another important ingredient in food-stuffs, fat to wit. This is contained in such things as milk and linseed, and also to some extent in most other foods. Like the carbo-hydrates its main function is to supply heat. Its precise importance does not yet appear to have been worked out, and it may be more important for young stock than has, so far, been recognised. But, all the same, for practical purposes, it is perhaps hardly necessary to consider it further in an article of this kind.

And now as to a working system. I propose to give my own, which, naturally, I prefer.

Of the cereals I use bran and middlings, for the reason that they are cheap and also nearly as good as the more usual and expensive oats, so far as feeding value goes. If I could get really good bran I should use that alone. I only add the middlings to make good some of the flour which in these days is so largely extracted by the millers. Brans and middlings vary a good deal in quality, and it may be said of them in general that investigation has shown that the more finely ground kinds are usually the best. ~~But~~ contrary to popular belief, the finer brans are in these days usually better feeding material than the "broad" brans. Of the middlings, those which come from the Argentine are very good. Of the concentrates, fish meal (the kind made from the heads, bones and offal of white fish) is, I think, the best for one's money. It is very rich indeed in albuminoids, and also it is a convenient way of giving some of the necessary mineral salts, in which it is also rich.

My favourite vegetable is giant kale. This I plant in the spring and it comes into use just when the abundant supply of wild vegetation and grass is beginning to fail. I keep on pulling off the outer leaves as they grow, and they furnish a most useful

FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS.

green-stuff throughout the late summer and autumn and also through nearly all the winter. The young shoots and the flowers come in handy in the spring and early summer, if one does not object to a certain amount of "smell" in the rabbitry which the latter and the stems of the plants tend to cause. Mustard is excellent for a quick-growing catch crop.

Now as to my method of using the different kinds of feeding-stuffs mentioned:—I feed twice a day, morning and evening. I take a large bucket and in it I place bran three parts (by weight—only, of course, I don't weigh every day; measuring is quite near enough). To this I add one part Argentine middlings and about half-part best white fish meal. All is mixed up with a wooden spoon, and then all the household scraps are added and cut up roughly in the bucket with a knife (lumps of fat are best treated separately and I reserve all bones for breeding does and their young, who take to them very kindly), and the whole is mixed into a dampish mass. I do not find that the degree of dampness makes any difference. Sometimes the mash is pretty wet. Sometimes it is nearly dry. The Rabbits get as much of this as they will clear up in about an hour, with a little more for babies and nursing does.

In the evening all Rabbits get another portion of this mash, the older ones only a little, the youngsters and breeding does a full measure. They also get a liberal supply of green-stuff or roots, and also hay or oat-straw "ad lib." fed from racks. Good oat-straw has a feeding value equal to that of much of the poorer kinds of hay, but I am not claiming any particular merit for it. I only use it because it is cheap and because in actual practice I find it a useful way of filling up the chinks. Youngsters eat but little of it, but the older Rabbits eat a good deal. Oat-straw is also, I find, a useful gauge for the amount of mash one should give to the older stock. If they are eating their fair whack of the straw all is well. They are not getting too much mash. But if they are not, then I reduce the mash. No more hay or oat straw should be given than is cleared up between meals.

There only remains to be added a word of caution about the feeding of green stuff. The more green-stuff within reason you can give your Rabbits to eat, the better, but don't give tough old green-stuff or large quantities of roots to very young babies or you will have trouble, not only from scours, but also from all the internal and external parasites which are ever lying in wait to prey upon a weakly specimen. Begin by giving babies only a small quantity (say an ounce or two per head) of green-stuff, and then, as they grow older and become accustomed to it, you can quite safely increase the amount. Another point is to avoid using green stuff which has run the risk of being soiled by dogs,

FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT.

such as wayside green-stuffs. The reason for this is that dogs harbour tapeworms and pass them on to the Rabbits, via such green-stuff. The little sago-like things often found in Rabbits are tapeworms at a certain stage of their development.

I find that nearly all Rabbits do well on the above ration without any extras of any sort or kind, but, if I have a doe with an unusually large litter, or if the babies or the doe herself seem to be backward or failing in condition, I give a small quantity of some more concentrated food. Linseed, either in the form of the well-known cattle cake or (perhaps better) the whole seed is excellent for this purpose. The whole seed may be either made into a sort of jam by boiling or soaking in water, or else may simply be added raw to the ration. I do not think it matters much which. Milk, either skim or whole, is also excellent for this purpose, and happy are they who have a quantity of this available at a cheap rate. Dried milk is also good, though expensive at the time of writing.

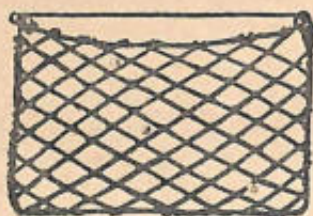
The exact amount of food which should be given to different Rabbits is a question which has not yet been properly worked out. It depends, of course, on the age of the stock and also on the individual. As a rough guide, however I find that $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of the above bran, middlings and fish meal mixture (dry), plus about 2 ounces of green-stuff, plus oat straw "ad lib.," is sufficient, daily, for a youngster of average size (say 2 lbs. weight) at about two month old. My experience also is that young Rabbits, like all young things, are apt to eat a good deal more than is good for them. It is, therefore, I think, neither wise nor economical to give them the free run of their teeth. But a little experimenting with different quantities of foodstuffs in conjunction with weighing the Rabbits on the kitchen scales once a week will teach a beginner more in a short time about this than a whole library.

Does which are "resting" during the winter months are also very apt to overeat themselves and get fat. This is harmful, for over-fat doe tends to be a sterile doe. The best remedy is not to starve such a doe and then try to carry on. For the immediate effect of starvation is to weaken the reproductive organs rather than to remove the fat. The proper course is not to let such does get too fat at all.

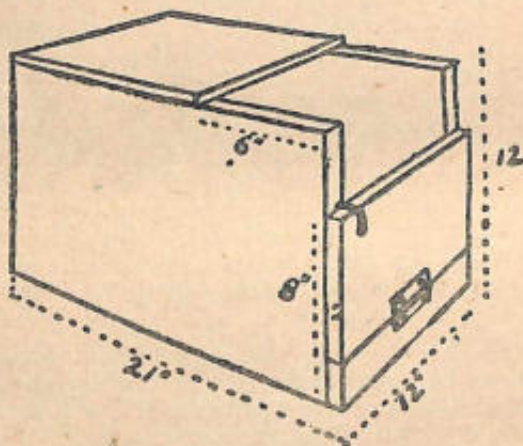
It should be understood that, at the time of writing, no really precise scientific information about the feeding of Rabbits exists. For example, it is quite unknown at present how far the stomach of the Rabbit is capable of converting what is classified as "fibre," in the usual tables of food-stuffs for domestic cattle, into material which can be assimilated by the rest of the system. All that can be said at present is that it is likely that some such power does

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exist to some extent and that most probably bacteria play an important rôle in rendering the fibre digestible. There is, however, I am informed, every prospect of serious scientific work being undertaken in this direction in the near future. Of the many, descriptions of experiments in the feeding of Rabbits which have been undertaken so far, the best I know of are those by "Steward" in "Fur and Feather" during the year 1920.



HAY RACKS.



NESTING BOX.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT.

In the space allotted to me here it is only possible to give a few hints. Here they are:—

1. Use big breeding hutches. They should be at least 4 ft. long by 2 ft. deep by 18 inches high, and if you can make them 5 ft. long by 2½ ft. deep, so much the better. The advantage of a big breeding hutch is that you can leave the whole litter on the

FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT.

doe for two or even three months without overcrowding. This is not only good for the youngsters (doe's milk is the cheapest and best food for them), but it is a great saving in labour both in feeding and in cleaning out.

2. Eschew all manner of divisions or other fixed contraptions in your hutches. They are in no wise necessary and they only get in the way when you are cleaning out. The exceptions to this rule are that a hay rack is desirable to prevent waste, and that a movable nesting-box should be used for breeding does. Sketches of these are appended. The hay rack is easily made at home by making a framework of wire and attaching wire-netting to it as shown.

The nesting-box is placed in the hutch a week or so before the doe is due to kindle. The front is let down when the babies get their eyes open, i.e., on about the eleventh day. It is removed entirely when the youngsters are about six weeks to two months old, according to the weather outside.

3.—Outside hutches, standing in a sheltered position with a roof over them (for the benefit of the attendant) are, I think, preferable to indoor hutches. But the point is that the Rabbits should be kept dry, cool and well-ventilated. No amount of ordinary still dry cold will do them any harm. On the contrary, the colder they are kept, within reason, the better, I think, is the fur.

4.—No litter or bedding is required, but sawdust, or peat moss litter, or dried leaf-mould, or even ashes or dry earth, should be scattered or spread in the hutches to absorb the urine. Rabbits which are "bedded" are apt to grow long toe-nails.

5.—Clean out once a week in winter and (if required) twice a week in summer. Throw in a little fresh absorbent over the used part of the hutch daily. The manure can be spread right away on any vacant bit of ground, and, in due course, dug in. Or it may be stored under shelter. It is a mistake to suppose that sawdust does any manner of harm when mixed with the manure, but all dressings of manure should be followed at regular intervals by dressings of lime.

6.—Examine all litters as soon as possible after birth. This disturbs them (and the doe) less than if you wait for the orthodox two or three days. It is quite unnecessary to rub your hands in the doe's excreta before examining them, and this also applies to any youngsters you may wish to foster. Kill any unwanted babies by hurling them on the hard ground. This is easily the quickest and most merciful way of finishing them off.

7.—The number of young a doe can rear successfully depends on the doe herself. Six is usually "comfortable." Eight is quite common, and a good doe will rear as many as twelve. The babies in litters of one or two (say) go ahead more rapidly at first than those in big litters, but the ones from the big litters catch up

FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS.

very largely later on. Recent experimental work has, however, shown that they do not, *on an average*, catch up completely, though some of them may. Size gained in this way is, however, purely of an individual nature. It would not be inherited. Further, the difference between litters of three and litters of seven is so very inconsiderable that it is not, except possibly for some show purposes, worth while paying any attention to it at all. Size in Rabbits is almost entirely a matter of breeding—not of feeding—always assuming, of course, that the diet is adequate.

8.—I always keep fresh clean water before my Rabbits both in summer and in winter. The older ones drink little, except in very hot weather, but the breeding does and growing youngsters drink a good deal all the year round.

9.—Slay all weakly Rabbits or any that may show any signs of illness. Weakly youngsters, or those who have had illness of any sort or kind, seldom make good. They are only a source of danger to the rest. Rabbits which are or have been in any way weakly should never be used as breeding stock. Severe measures of this kind may mean a temporary loss, but they will result in a real gain in the long run.

10.—Rabbits often gnaw the wood of their hutches. They do this because their teeth require exercise on some hard substance to keep them short. The best way of dealing with the trouble is to supply them with twigs, or even branches or logs, from deciduous trees to gnaw at and to paint the places they have attacked with creosote.

11.—Lastly, though feeding and general care and management are of importance and should be studied, they do not amount to more than, say, 20 per cent. of the battle. Breeding operations are of far greater importance. Strong, healthy, well-bred stock stands a deal of mismanagement, but no amount of the best feeding or of the most careful management will make good healthy Rabbits out of those which are born poor and feeble.

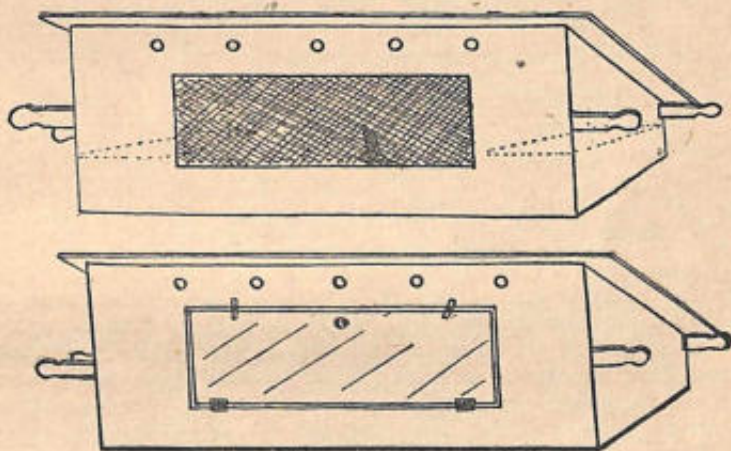
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CHAPTER XIX. THE MORANT SYSTEM.

By O. MILLSUM.

Many breeders find their activities restricted owing to the space required for rearing stock to maturity. Even where space is limited the constant addition of hutches entails additional labour for upkeep and cleaning.

The Morant system of keeping Rabbits on grass in hutches with wire-covered bottoms has been tried with varied results, and



MORANT HUTCHES.

in many instances has not met with the success anticipated. The writer believes that this is due to conditions beyond the principles involved, mainly to hutches which are draughty and exposed, and unsuitable land.

Being desirous of adopting this system, I took the drastic action of starting at the wrong end first by making the test the severest possible. My first delivery of 20 Morant-hutches was placed on the grass in the first week of October. The inmates were Chinchillas of various ages and both sexes. The hutches were moved the required distance daily, irrespective of weather conditions, except when the grass was bound with frost or covered with snow. The south-east coast (Thanet in particular) is rarely

FUR-PRODUCING RABBITS.

affected by snow. A heavy fall will clear away in a few hours, but treacherous and bitterly cold winds are most persistent throughout the winter. Often so fierce are they, in fact, that precautions have to be taken to prevent the hutches blowing over. And yet, in spite of this, not a single case of sickness or death occurred amongst those selected to pass the test.

Litters of young have been taken direct from the indoor breeding quarters at eight weeks old in the dreary month of February, without the slightest ill effects. In fact, they have made better progress than those kept in the indoor hutches.

The explanation, I believe, is a simple one—good weather-proof, draught-proof hutches. A sketch accompanies this article, which should indicate to breeders what is required. The hutches are constructed of $\frac{1}{2}$ " jointed match board on 2' x 2' frames, the roof covered with Rubberoid or tar varnish. The small wired portion of the front is covered with a hinged frame door, over which is tightly fixed some calico or sacking, which has been soaked in linseed oil to make it waterproof. A floor of 2" wire-netting keeps the Rabbits from burrowing, and yet enables them to feed with ease. The hutch is as cosy, whatever the weather may be, as any indoor habitation. On the end is fixed a shelf on which the Rabbits can rest from the damp grass, or feed from a hay rack placed there for their convenience and economy, for on this system the Rabbits consume a considerable portion of hay, and if placed loosely on the floor it is likely to become foul and wasted.

Owing to the disposal of my extensive rabbitries about two years ago, my operations in this direction came to an end, and the Morant hutches passed into the possession of Mr. T. Leaver, of Herne Bay. Mr. Leaver is in the occupation of several acres of excellent pasture land, and he has been able to carry on and greatly extend the experiments conducted by me with this system.

His pasture lies on stiff clay, and for a considerable part of the year lies cold and damp—not by any means an ideal place for Rabbits. Yet he has met with wonderful success in his enterprise, and at all seasons his runs are occupied with thriving, hardy stock, that comes to maturity and full coat quite as soon as that reared in ordinary conditions. Owing no doubt to the nature of the soil he found that Chinchillas placed out to grass in the early months of the year immediately upon being weaned often failed to develop so quickly as did their comrades inside, and he now allows all youngsters to remain in their breeding hutches until they have lost their nest coat. Since adopting this practice, their condition and development have been all that could be desired. The runs are moved at least once daily, twice if necessary, and they are allowed a daily ration of clover hay or coarse bran. On this diet he has reared hundreds of Chinchillas to maturity, and he frequently takes specimens straight off the grass for exhibition

THE MORANT SYSTEM.

purposes, and has met with gratifying success in so doing. I mention this as evidence of the splendid condition that the stock may be kept in under these circumstances.

Labour costs by this method are reduced to a minimum, and I agree with Mr. Leaver that the farming of fur Rabbits on a large scale for purely pelt production can scarcely be made a financial success in any other way. The average cost of rearing a Rabbit to maturity does not exceed five shillings per head, half of which is covered by the value of the carcase, so that even if the price of the pelt does not soar to the height of a year or two since, there should still remain an ample margin on the right side.

I am doubtful as to whether the day of the twenty shilling pelt has not gone for good, and I am inclined to the opinion that a return of ten shillings for first-grade skins is as much as can reasonably be expected for transactions of any size, and about half this figure for inferior qualities, which up to now have made up so big a proportion of the breeders' output. Even if these prices are not exceeded I consider that Rabbit pelt production can be made a sound investment, and there is every indication that the industry will in the near future assume important dimensions.

Most breeders prefer to combine both exhibition and utility, and, of course, they can obtain much better prices for stock that can win, or produce winners in the show pen, but, after all, it is by the market value of the pelt that the continuance of the Chin-chilla or other variety of Rabbit as leading fur breeds must stand or fall. Any system that will enable breeders to keep down their overhead charges must also be of material assistance, and it is only by concentration on this point that the industry can continue to grow in public estimation.

In adopting the Morant system, sufficient length of ground must be used to allow a perfectly new crop to develop before replacing the Rabbits over the same ground. Given this, there need be no fear of the ground becoming foul or stale. I worked about 20 hutches to the acre. Carefully conceived, the system is all that is desired for successfully rearing large numbers of Rabbits. Little daily attention is desired—the moving of hutches, replacing of hay, and in winter small supply of roots, owing to the slow growth of vegetation, which is naturally of less feeding value than during the season, and a little bulk of dry food, such as bran are all that is required.

Cleaning out is largely dispensed with. The excreta left behind each day serves as fertiliser for the land. The Morant system is, therefore, of incalculable advantage to the large breeder if suitable conditions exist and reasonable care is taken.

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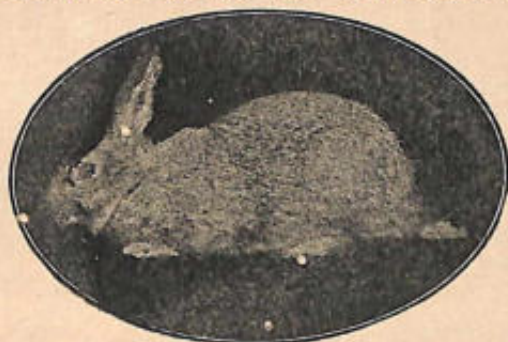
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The Principal Wins—

- 1920—Breeder's Challenge Bowl, Kingfield Challenge Bowl, and runner-up for the Sir William Ingram Challenge Trophy.
- 1921—The Sir William Ingram 200-guinea Silver Challenge Trophy, Irving Rose Bowl, Millsum Rose Bowl, Breeder's Rose Bowl, *Fur and Feather* Silver Gilt Spoon—Best Chinchilla.
- 1922—The Sir William Ingram 200-guinea Silver Challenge Trophy, Kingfield Rose Bowl, Millsum Rose Bowl, Hazelwood Rose Bowl, Breeder's Rose Bowl, Silver Trophy Best Fur Breed, Bradford Championship Show, *Fur and Feather* Silver Gilt Spoon Best Chinchilla, Silver Challenge Bowl best matched Fur Rabbits (Newbury).
- 1923—The Sir William Ingram 200-guinea Challenge Trophy, The Stanislaus-Smith Challenge Trophy, The Irving Rose Bowl, The Kingfield Rose Bowl, reserve to Ingram Cup, Breeder's *Fur and Feather* Silver Gilt Spoon best Chinchilla, Silver Challenge Trophy best exhibit in Show Canterbury, Beeston Cup best exhibit in show Croydon, The Mason Cup and Olivers Cup.
- 1924-25—The Sir William Ingram 200-guinea Challenge Trophy, the Stanislaus-Smith Challenge Trophy, the Irving Rose Bowl, the Kingfield Rose Bowl, the Kew Rose Bowl, the Lacy-Hulbert Cup (best Chinchilla at the British Fur Rabbit Society's show at the Crystal Palace), *Fur and Feather* Silver-Gilt Spoon at Leicester, Silver Challenge Trophy best exhibit in show Canterbury, Two Silver Medals at Margate, Silver Enamelled Spoon at Royal Counties Show (Portsmouth), Silver Spoon best "pair" at Leicester Agricultural Show, Silver Spoon best exhibit in Show at Islington, B.F.R.S. Spoon Islington, National Club Spoons at Reading Ashford, Canterbury, Rugby, and Islington; and the Stud was granted 3 Championship Certificates.
- 1925-26—The Sir William Ingram 200-guinea Challenge Trophy, Edenbridge Cup best exhibit, Hildenborough Utility Cup and Specials, Margate Medal, Crystal Palace Spoon, Canterbury Ditch Cup for best exhibit, Bradford Buck Bowl, and Calvert Cup for Pelts.

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"WESTWOOD" CHINCHILLAS FOR PRIZES

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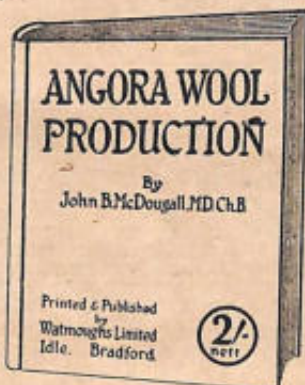
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