

Rabbit Handbook

Breeds

Here are a few of the 45 recognized breeds. For a complete listing and description, contact the American Rabbit Breeders Association, P.O. Box 426, Bloomington, IL 61702. Phone: (309) 664-7500.

Commercial Breeds

White New Zealand, an American creation that appeared after the Red New Zealand, is one of the best all-around commercial breeds. It is an all-white rabbit whose fur can be dyed many colors for use as garment trims. The ideal weight of bucks is 10 pounds; does, 11 pounds.

The **Californian** breed is another American creation. After experimentation and crossbreeding, this rabbit was produced in 1923. It was bred as a meat rabbit to have broad shoulders, meaty back and hips and a good dressing percentage (percentage of edible meat). This rabbit is white except for ears, nose, feet and tail, which are a dark gray or black. The ideal weight for bucks is 9 pounds; does, 9 1/2 pounds.

The **Champagne d'Argent**, also known as French Silver, is probably one of the oldest breeds known and has been raised in France for more than 100 years. A well-known commercial breed, its fur is useful in its natural state and is still one of the leading furs used in garment manufacturing throughout Europe. This rabbit is born black. At about 3 to 4 months, it takes on the adult color, a silver or skimmed-milk color with a dark slate blue undercoat. The ideal weight for bucks is 10 pounds; does, 10 1/2 pounds.

The **Satin** is an American breed that occurred as a mutation in a litter of Havanas. The Satin mutation affects fur structure and sheen, which are determined by a recessive gene. This means that if you breed a Satin with another breed, the babies will probably have the other breed's fur structure and sheen. Therefore, it is best not to breed Satins with rabbits that have normal fur. Nine colors are recognized. The breed is popular for two reasons: Its type and size make it a good commercial breed; its sleek coat with commercial properties, brilliant sheen and rich, vivid colors make it an excellent show rabbit. Mature bucks weigh 9 pounds; does, 9 1/2 pounds.

Fancy Breeds

Silver Marten fanciers have a choice of four colors: black (the most popular variety), blue, chocolate and sable. Choose a compact animal with a well-filled back and shoulders to bring out the desired type of the breed. Never stray from proper body shape. The basic color is as jet black as possible. Blue is a medium shade. A dark chocolate color is the standard, while the sable blends into various shades. All colors should be free from white hair, molt (shed fur) or stained fur. Proper color contrasts vividly with the silver-tipped guard hair, which adds much to this breed's beauty. Silver-tipped guard hair should be evenly distributed along the sides and rump. In weight, bucks range from 6 1/2 to 8 1/2 pounds; does from 7 1/2 to 9 1/2 pounds.

Polish is a neat, cobby (stout or stocky), sprightly rabbit with well-furred, short ears. The first Polish were all white with ruby-colored eyes. Although their origin is unknown, they probably were bred from Dutch or Himalayan stock. Polish are recognized in four colors: ruby-eyed white, blue-eyed white, black and chocolate. Polish fur is short, dense and soft, resembling the Himalayan. For this reason, it was known in Germany as the Ermine rabbit, because its coat is white like that of the ermine, a member of the weasel family. Polish have become so popular in this country that in most shows they rank among the top 10 breeds in numbers exhibited and they weigh 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 pounds.

The **Himalayan** rabbit came from the Himalayan Mountains in Asia. One of the oldest breeds, it is distributed more widely throughout the world than any other rabbit. Thousands of these rabbits are sacrificed annually in China to the gods of crops and fruits of the earth. The Himalayan characteristics are distinctive: a trim, well-built body covered with short, sleek white fur, ears erect and black, a black, egg-shaped nose with the small end coming well up between the eyes, black front and hind feet, a black tail and ruby red eyes. One peculiar characteristic of the Himalayan is that weaves its head from side to side when sitting at ease. Mature animals weigh up to 3 1/2 pounds.

The **Dutch**, said to have originated in Holland, was improved and developed for exhibition purposes in England. One of the most fancy popular breeds, it rates tops with rabbit fanciers. This breed has six varieties: black, blue, chocolate, tortoise, steel gray and gray. Because it is a small rabbit, weighing from 3 1/2 to 5 1/2 pounds, the Dutch is ideal for fanciers with limited space. The Dutch is cobby and compact with a well-rounded body, smooth in every respect. Markings of the Dutch, sometimes difficult to achieve, should be clean cut, clear and sharp.

The **Mini Lop** originated in Germany as the "Kleine Widder" but the exact origin is unknown. It has a massive, thick-set body and good depth and width from the shoulders to the hindquarters, which are slightly heavier. The body color may either be patched or have blanketed markings. The ideal weight for bucks is 5 1/2 pounds and for does, 6 pounds.

The **Rex**, meaning king, was named for its short hair by M. Amedee Gillet of Coulange, France. Rex have medium-length bodies with good depth, well-rounded hips and a well-filled loin. They come in several varieties and have excellent meat-producing qualities. The ideal weight for bucks is 8 pounds and does, 9 pounds.