



Lop-Eared Rabbits.

The lop-eared breed of rabbits is, and has been for some time past, the favorite one in this country; and in the writer's estimation, deservedly so. To breed them to a high standard of excellence, and to keep all their many points of merit up to that standard through successive generations, requires skill and patience on the part of the breeder, as well as a complete knowledge of their habits and how to keep them in health and fecundity, and the treatment required in case of sickness. In breeding, great care should be taken in the selection of the parent stock; and defect as to ear-points, carriage, markings or size, that occurs in one of the parents, should be fully counter-balanced in the other.

It very seldom occurs that it is desirable to breed two broken colors together, but sometimes of necessity you are forced to do so; and it may happen that when stock has been bred self on a broken color, for a long time, it is really advantageous to so breed them, but this is very seldom, and the only safe plan for a tyro is to breed a self on a broken, *vice versa*. Of course no harm can accrue from breeding from two selfs, provided you wish to risk the almost certainty of obtaining nothing but self-colored progeny.

The great fault with most of the stock in this country, at the present date, is that they have been bred in and in, and have been put to use so young, that they have been greatly reduced in size. The weight to be desired in a lop-eared doe is in the neighborhood of 10 lbs., and 11 or 12 lbs. in a buck; but this weight must not consist of fat. You never want a breeding doe to be fat. The weight should be made up in the frame of the animal. A doe in good breeding condition that weighs 10 lbs., should when properly fattened, turn the scale at the 14 lb. notch; and a buck that weighs 12 lbs. when in use, should come very near to 15 lbs. when fatted. I say this ought so to be; but it is not, however; the usual weight being 8 or 9 lbs for a buck, and for a doe, 7 or 8 lbs. However, size is but a secondary consideration, although an important one.

The first and most important feature is, of course, that which gives name to the breed, viz: 'Earage'

and in this, even, length is not the only desired quality. A first-class, breeding doe should have her ears measure nineteen or twenty inches in length and five in width. They should be soft, thin, and flexible; should hang as if folded in two with the edges close to the corner of the eye. All these points should be taken into consideration, either in judging or buying.

If I were to judge, and allowed to use my own discretion, I should award the first premium to the rabbit fulfilling all these qualities, and whose ears measured but 19½ or 20 inches, in preference to one whose ears measured 21 inches, but failed as regards width, carriage, or texture, other things being equal.

The disposition of color is a very important and essential consideration, no matter how long or fine a rabbit's ears are; if it is poorly marked it cannot hope to gain a prize for general excellence. In a broken color, no matter what the color is, the main or body color should spread evenly and richly over the back, hips, and loins, extending as far up towards the head as the shoulders; here it should be broken by an irregular line of white dotted with the main color, forming the fancied resemblance to the links of a chain, and it consequently has been given the latter name. This is a great beauty, and to have the chain nicely and distinctly marked will add much to the value of the specimen. This chain should extend downward and backward, forming an edging of white, while the animal is in repose, between the main color and the floor, and should extend to a point about three fourths of the way between the fore and hind leg. The hind legs, from the second joint to the toe, should be pure white; the belly and breast should be white, also, covering the under side of the jaw, with a narrow strip reaching almost, but not quite, to the bridge of the nose, about one-eighth of the way between the nostril and forehead, leaving a dark patch on both sides of the upper lip, and on the end of the nose, very like the extended wings of the butterfly, and consequently called the 'butterfly smut.'

There should be a narrow blaze of white on the forehead; this, with the fore legs and under side of the tail, completes the list of points which should be of the virgin color; more than this destroys the coloring of the animal, by giving a speckled appearance to its coat, and spoils the beauty of the shadings and gives a too uniform sameness to our pet.

In a self-color the only requirement is that the color should extend the same all over the subject, without any shadings whatever, and have throughout a beautiful gloss, which, in the blacks and dark colors, shines like the finest silk. In light fawns and yellows, it is almost impossible to prevent a