

Evaluating the Sterling Breed

By Tom Schubert

Judging Inconsistency

First: I am not a judge nor do I want to become one. I have raised Silvers all three varieties for almost 30 years. I feel sorry for new breeders as they try to assess their animals. Therefore I suggest that as a new breeder that you read the Standard for Silvers and breed to the standard as best you can. Look for balance in type worth 30 points. Enough said.

Now to the nuts and bolts: fur and color 65 points. Twice as much as Type and three times as important. Without fur and color you have a rabbit with white hairs. Let's talk about Black Silvers.

First, color. There is black and then there is Jet Black. Very important is depth of color. How far down the hair shaft does the black go? The deeper the better. Now the under color the closer to slate gray the blacker the surface color will look. The fur should have a snappy flyback not just fly back. Molt lines really show up on a silver coat and take away from evenness of color and silvering. Evenness is very important. Evenness on blacks includes the belly. I like to lay the ears down on the back. They should blend in with the same evenness as the body.

Now lay the rabbit on its side check to see that evenness is the same back to side to belly and the legs to the very tip of the toes and tail. Now onto brightness of silvering.

This is where the blacker is better contrast with the white hairs. The more contrast the better off you will be. Too much silvering takes away from contrast to the surface color of black. Too little silvering lets the black take away the brightness of the silvering in most cases. Color Evenness of silvering and brightness of silvering all hinge on one another to make that outstanding animal. Believe me when you see that animal there won't be a doubt in your mind.

Brown Silvers: Fur very snappy fly back very important. Rich chestnut color almost red. The darker the under color I find the richer the chestnut. Also the orange band in fur the brighter the better as you blow into the fur. Now evenness of silvering and black ticking. Don't drown out the chestnut the brighter the silvering will contrast. Check under color on belly it should be dark slate gray. Some animals have a white under color on belly. This is a fault from a carry over from Browns and Fawns being crosses. Browns with a coat the color Sandy Flemish seem to lack dark under color, again could be Brown Fawn crosses from years back. Again ears to back to sides to legs check for evenness of silvering and ticking.

Fawn Silvers: Broken record, snappy fly back of coat. The word fawn in most judges minds is wheat straw Flemish color. But the fawn standard is bright orange!! Orange color as much of hair shaft as possible with a white under color. Silvering not to take away from orange surface color. Brightness of silvering again contrast with orange color. Lay ears on back to check blending in also side and legs to blend even.

New breeders: get to know your animals and do your own assessment. Remember you are raising a rare breed and judges haven't seen many and even less have raised them I hate to be rude but as soon as judge says " I think" look out. Just judge my animals to the standard and compare to the other animals on the table at that time. That is the opinion I paid my entry fee for not a personal opinion of the judge.

Respectfully submitted, Tom Schubert