

How to breed a winning Blue Rex

This article was written by the late Mr Reg Haynes who exhibited and won with his Blue Rex during the 1950's to 1970's.

'My late wife and I bred quite a lot of winners over the years. When we were running shows in Birmingham, it was nothing to have up to 30/35 blues in a class. I don't think they were of better quality than some of our winners today but it was rare to see the dark faces that are often apparent on the judging tables now.

Unfortunately Blue Rex of sorts can be produced by crossing other colours and it is then necessary to spend years trying to get rid of the dark faces and white toe nails which almost always occur when outcrossing with another colour. The best of the stock that we have today still needs years of work to reach perfection and years of dedication by breeders to achieve this. I say to anyone who wants to start and breed Blues, get the best doe you can from someone who has been doing some winning and start from there.

In Bluerexology the members are willing more than in any breed to help and give advice. Be patient and join the National Blue Rex Club for starters. The secretary is worth knowing and will give you every help and all possible contacts if requested.

The newcomer to Blue Rex should first obtain stock from an experienced breeder and should start with a modest number of rabbits. A mated doe would be ideal. A buck in the early stages is something of a luxury. But take advice of the breeder from who you obtain your stock. Do not overstretch your limits however. Think carefully about how many rabbits you can look after, house and feed with the funds and time you have available. Blues are most easy to accommodate and the main thing is to make your hutches to suit yourself, that is, handy to clean out. So far as bedding is concerned, I have access to a good supply of hay, so use sawdust and hay on hutch floors. Blues are simple to feed and will readily devour all the usual foods, pellets, crushed oats, flaked maize etc.

This is a breed which is full of character and each rabbit has a personality of its own. The does are good tempered, placid and make excellent mothers. Their only failing is that they tend to overeat and put on weight if given a chance so this must be watched. Go easy on the feeding during rest periods. The type of doe I like should have good solid big bones with not too big a dewlap. She must have good pads, a dense soft, short coat and good colour. Geneticists say I'm wrong but experience says that from the doe comes the coat and colour and from the buck, the type. Do not use a bad coloured buck but here the coat may be harsher with a few guard hairs which I think are helpful. I like vigour in a buck - one who knows what is wanted from him. And if his type is good and he was bred from quality stock, then you are more than halfway towards your goal.

I always check the youngsters soon after they are born, then I leave the doe and litter alone so that she can get into the feeding routine. When they come out of the nest it is almost certain that there will be some very light ones (snowballs). These I think will make the best coloured rabbits for showing. At 12 weeks old give them their first proper check over. Colour first then coat. Check for thinness, curl and size of nape of the neck. Don't expect to have a nest of winners every time. But whether you breed a winner sooner or later, the thrill of showing it makes everything worthwhile. The people you will meet when showing are mostly the salt of the earth. Here's hoping that you thoroughly enjoy this breed and have every success. After all the blue rex is the colour for the connoisseur.