

Proper Posing of Rabbits

By Carl W. Filliater #463 (Retired)

Exhibitors seem to complain more about posing than about anything else. A lot say “I would not care how the Judge posed the rabbits as long as they posed them all the same”. What they should say is “I don’t care how the rabbits are posed as long as they are posed according to the Standard”, and judged according to the Standard.

Probably the best typed and properly posed rabbit I have seen was the BEST IN SHOW at the Louisville Convention in 1999. It was an all around very well balanced rabbit. It did not have more depth than width, they were balanced. A Florida White, and guess who owned it. Look it up.

In Webster’s New World Thesaurus, Pose is listed as a noun-artificial position. As a verb-2 (to assume a pose for a picture) model, adopt a position, adopt a stance: For our purpose I believe artificial position fits the bill to a T. After all how often does a rabbit actually sit in the position as describe in each breed standard. But this pose, head down-but not to be touching the table, end of front toes straight below the center of eyes, toes of hind feet straight below the front of the stifle joint, was decided on many long years ago and still remains the same. The rest of the pose is according to breed description.

Compact-1-closely and firmly packed, 2- taking little space etc;

Medium-an intermediate thing or state

Moderate-avoiding excesses and extremes;

Long- of greater than usual length etc;

The above four words are used in the description of the type of body that rabbits are to have. No where in the book of Standards does it state how long each rabbit is to be. And it can not. In the Compact length, there is the Netherland Dwarf at a maximum of 2 ½ lbs. to the Lilac at a maximum of 8 lbs.. In the Medium length, is the Silver at a minimum of 4 lbs. to the four heavy breeds at a maximum of 12 lbs.. In the Moderately long length is the Giant Chinchilla. In the Long length is the Flemish and Himalayan. The American and English Lop does not state a length. And there are various lengths in the Full Arched breeds, which in most cases are either not posed or have a special pose, which I will not cover in this article.

In not one Standard does it say to push the rabbit together to make it shorter, or more compact, or deeper than what it is. Nor are we to stretch it out to make it longer. We are to pose it, so it shows us what genetics has done for it, Good or Bad. We as Judges are not to try and improve on, or make worse, than what genetics has done. We can not make the shoulders any deeper than what genetics has done, so why should we try to make the hindquarters any deeper than what genetics already has.

When I was working for my Judges License a couple of Judges advised me the length of a Compact rabbit should be just a little less than twice its width. A Medium length should be twice its width or just a trifle more. A Moderately Long rabbit should be 2 ¼ times its width. And the Long rabbits go by the type description, which explains what they want very well. I have found, not only in my own stock, but also while judging this will hold true throughout the weight ranges.

There are twenty (20) breeds, eight (8) Compact and Twelve (12) Medium length, that describe the body type basically the same way, but not necessarily in the same order. The top body line is to rise in a gradual curve from the base of the ears (or the nape of the neck) to the center of the hips, or the high point over the center of the hips, and curve down to the base of the hindquarters. With shoulders, mid-section, and hips that balance. Depth and width throughout should balance. Some breeds use equal or approximately.

There are eight (8) breeds, two (2) Compact and six(6) Medium length, that state for the high point to be over the hips. Most also state the hindquarters to be well rounded. If you analyze this description it comes out that the high point has to be over the center of the hips.

There are two (2) Medium length breeds that state the arch to start at the back of the shoulder and rise to the high point over the center of the hips.

The American states the arch to start at the back of the shoulder, rising to a high point slightly forward of the hip joint. If you look at the rabbit you see where that point is at the center of the hip.

The Flemish Giant states the body should gracefully arch from immediately behind the shoulder blades, reaching its highest point directly above the haunches (hips) and gracefully sweep, rounded and full, to the base of the tail. In order to get this description, the high point has to be almost over the center of the hips.

The Himalayan wants a long narrow body, to show the unique cylindrical shape. It is the only breed to be stretched out. I put the Himi in just for its uniqueness of type.

The Giant Chinchilla ask for the arch to start at the CENTER of the shoulder and then rise to the high point at the center of the hips and then round down to the base of the hips. I capitalized center of the shoulders, do to so many Judges wanting the arch to start at the back of the shoulder only because they are listed with the Semi Arched group. A good way to judge the center is; it should not be more than the width of three fingers. I know some people have smaller or larger fingers, but that leaves you with a good idea of where the arch should start.

A couple of other words from the dictionary; Balance-I am only going to list the one that fits in with type description-harmonious proportion of elements in a design.

Equal-1-of the same quantity, size, value, etc., 2- having the same rights, ability, rank, etc., 3- evenly proportioned.

Gradual-taking place by degrees; developing little by little.

Center- the approximate middle point or part of anything.

Also everyone should read; "To Strike a Pose" starting on page 37 of the Official Guide Book "Raising Better Rabbits & Cavies". This book is put out by the ARBA and every member gets a copy of it. The article is written by Eric Stewart and Randy Shumaker. It is a very informative article. It should be required reading for everyone working for their Judges Lic.. And maybe some questions ask on the article.