

BLANC DE HOTOT 101

by Matthew Hinderman

I've heard a lot of speculation and rumor about our wonderful breed the Blanc de Hotot not being a purebred rabbit. Many have commented that the Blanc de Hotots are not "purebreds," so I wanted to take this opportunity to educate the fellow rabbit breeders on a conundrum facing the Blanc de Hotot breeders in the United States. For those of us who breed and promote Blanc de Hotots, we are working with a very concerning problem. Mainly, we see the side effects of years of heavy inbreeding. Historically looking at the Blanc de Hotot, the entire Blanc de Hotot breed originated from seven Blanc de Hotots which were imported into the United States in 1978. You can only breed seven rabbits together in different combinations so many ways before the offspring are heavily inbred. What is a breeder to do when they begin to see the side effects of too much inbreeding? This answer may seem quite simple; you need to bring in new blood. The real question is where do we go to obtain the new bloodlines?

You can bring in new bloodlines by either importing more rabbits or out-crossing to other breeds. Each of these methods will still be a lot of work and will not solve all the problems of the breed. If you choose to import new bloodlines from Europe, you will have to keep in mind that the European form of Blanc de Hotot is also hard to find. The few that have this breed generally are not willing to export because it is extremely difficult to do. If one really wishes to import rabbits, they are best to find a shipping coordinator that is familiar with both languages and the exporting and importing business. A second important factor is that you will have to look

at the breed standard of the country where you plan to import your rabbits from. Comparing the Blanc de Hotot of the United States and the Blanc de Hotot of Switzerland will be like comparing apples to oranges. In the United States our SOP is written as a six class

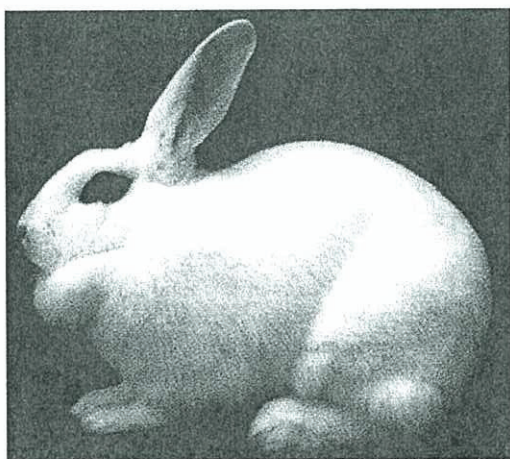
commercial breed. In many European countries, their standard calls for their Blanc de Hotots to have a semi arch body much like the Belgian hare does here in the United States. (See Appendix A)

Both the rabbits above were out-crossed to a Californian yet one has reverted back to the semi arched body. You will see litters with offspring that shift toward the semi arched body even after many generations of breeding. Imported rabbits offspring will have to be culled heavily for producing babies that do not meet our SOP. Their fur is going to be their biggest contribution since the out-crossing decreases fur quality of the breed. A huge Hotot in Europe will be a smaller Blanc de Hotot in the United States.

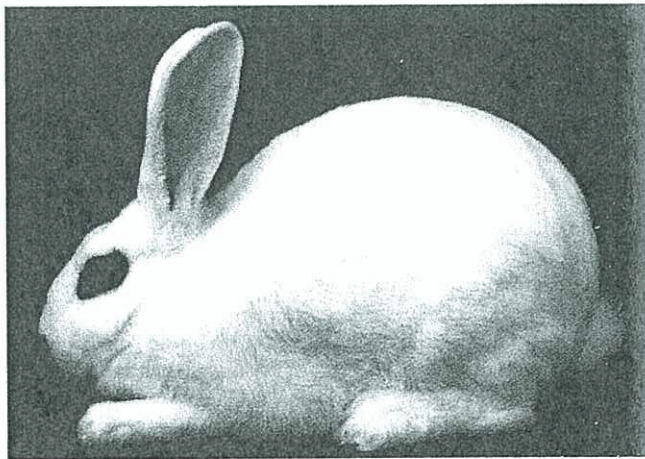
Out-crossing is less expensive, less head ache, and it can be done relatively quickly if you have limited resources; however, this

can be a lot of work also. It is done to preserve our breed and to help it achieve a rabbit that more closely emulates the SOP. Some breeders are not comfortable with out-crossing and may not have the extra cage space to try out-crossing. Out-crossing requires strict culling so only the best rabbits are allowed to influence the breed. The original imports were from Europe and had arched bodies, yet the standard in the United States calls for commercial bodies. For those who want only purebred Blanc de Hotots, I would urge them to read the standard of perfection and only buy those animals that emulate the Standard of Perfection and focus less on the ideology of having a purebred Blanc de Hotot. It is very important that breeders who do outcross disclose this when selling breeding stock as well. Our breed is still a work in progress, so as breeders we are working hard to see Blanc de Hotots with commercial bodies and frosty rollback coats.

When out-crossing one must also remember the original genetic code is: aa B_ C_ D_ E_ EnEn Dudu. The EnEn represents the English Spot/ Checkered Giant genes and the Dudu represents the Dutch genes. Looking at the genetic code of the Blanc de Hotot, we have a broken rabbit bred to have no color. This is why breeders see a stray black spot from time to time. Following in Eugenie Bernhardt's foot steps will be a difficult path to follow since the original rabbits used to create the Blanc de Hotot are vastly different or not available in the United States. We also have breeds available today that Eugenie Bernhardt did not have available to her in the early 1900s. I feel we should follow the creator's intentions for the breed but we have a unique opportunity to create our own path. One day, I would like to see a Blanc de Hotot that can compete with a New Zealand or a Californian! When I first



Picture A- Blanc de Hotot with Semi Arch



Picture B- Blanc de Hotot with a commercial body

began raising Blanc de Hotots, I thought it was a neat breed that I would raise much like a New Zealand or Californian. When I researched the breed, I discovered they were a rare breed and hard to find. After getting my first pair, they proved to be much more work that I intended, but I think that gave me the passion to work with them even more! Now that I have been raising them, it is truly satisfying to see that all the painstaking work is worth while. I see progress and I have heard a lot of encouraging words from those who want to see the breed continue. I am excited about the potential the new import bloodlines will have with our breed. I do what I do to improve the breed and encourage others to raise them, not to win rabbit shows.