

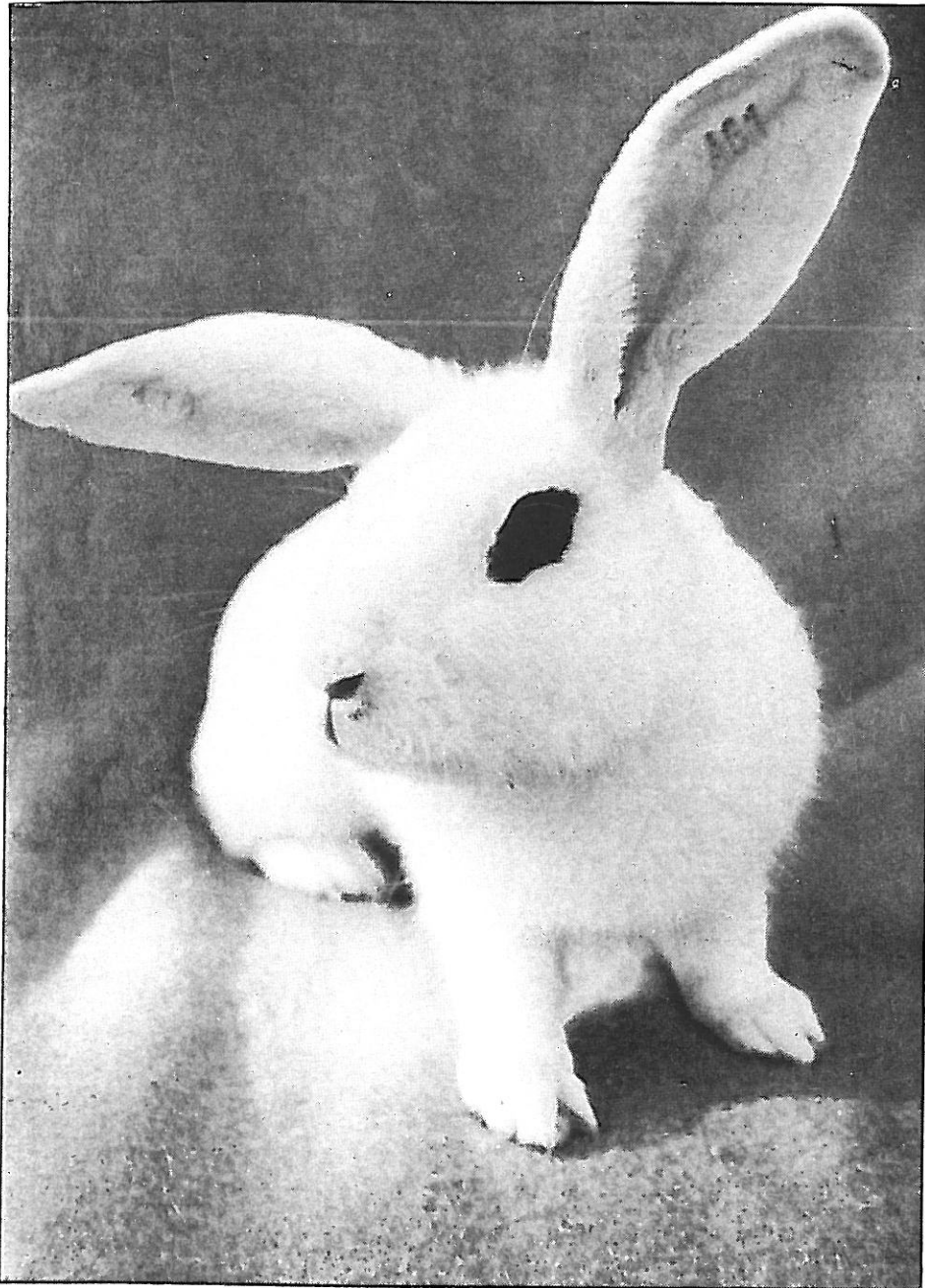


# Rabbits

Volume 5, Number 10

October 1982

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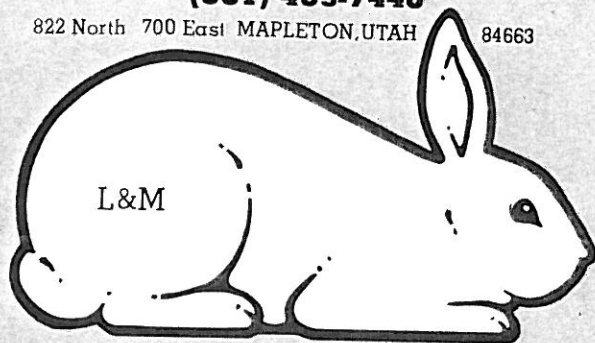
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## The Hotot Rabbit

The Hotot Rabbit Breeders International was founded in 1979 to promote and encourage the breeding and improvement of the Hotot.

Members aggressively promote the Hotot through active club membership and are quick to point out the Hotot's advantages for food, fur, fancy and experimental purposes. It's elegant and graceful appearance arouses attention at the show table. The frosty white sheen of its pelt and abundance of guard hairs, adding long-wearing durability, make the Hotot outstanding to the fur trade. The food source industry takes note of the Hotot's production ability and it's capacity for reaching marketable weight quickly. Being a white rabbit, but with colored eyes, and having somewhat longer ears with prominent blood vessels allowing easier injections and blood extraction, the Hotot is very desirable in many laboratory experiments. These advantages make it the rabbit to rank along side the New Zealand and Californian in popularity.

Through its quarterly publication, the *Hotot International News*, perspective Hotot breeders and fanciers are educated and encouraged to advance and promote the breed. The HRBI also makes available to its membership; our six-color embroidered arm patch, packets of promotional flyers, stationery and pedigrees.

Show sanctions are made available to both open and youth shows with the HRBI awarding the winners of Best Display, Best of Breed, Best Opposite Sex, Best Pre-Junior and Best Fur. Also awarded are the top five winners of the sweepstakes series, which runs from July 1 through June 30.

HRBI members feel very close to their breed and to their support of the organization. We would like to welcome you to discover the HRBI and to become a part of making the Blanc de Hotot, **Number One**.

## Hotot Rabbit Breeders International

Secretary: Bob D. Whitman,  
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# Roots

## Searching the Blanc de Hotot's Past

by Bob Whitman

For a long time in certain white rabbits, there have been those having the area around the eye more or less colored or having a colored circle around the eye and also having some colored patches on the body. The iris of the eye of these rabbits is entirely colored. All of these rabbits have stripes, streaks or patches on an already white body.

Until World War I, the Hotot was not known under an actual name. In his journal, Eugene Meslay, talked of a Giant White with black eyes of Madame Bernhard. It was not until 1920 that the breed was first shown at the Exposition Internationale d'Aviculture in Paris; under the name, Geant Blanc de Hotot.

In 1921, at the Paris Exposition, Bernhard showed a buck weighing six kilos — about 13½ pounds. This rabbit placed a first and a second in the fur exhibit and became the highlight of the exposition, selling for an all time high amount.

The standard established by Bernhard was officially recognized and accepted by the Commission des Standards de Francaise on October 13, 1922. In the original French text, there was no mention of the black bands around the eyes, but of black eye-lashes and lower eye lids, more or less colored grey.

Belgian author, W. Collier, stated, "We have seen excellent animals, having lids and lashes forming blackish spectacles." It was when this "spectacle eye" appeared frequently that the Swiss quickly included it into their standards. The European Hotot of today is a white rabbit with black eye bands. The Giant Blanc de Hotot with the grayish eye band and black eye lids and lashes took a backseat until it completely vanished from the show rooms throughout the world.



Author Bob Whiteman and Hotot.



The Hotot was imported to Switzerland in 1927 and it was here where the breed found the greatest recognition. Berne, Switzerland and the surrounding area became known as the "Stronghold of the Hotot Rabbit." England imported the breed in 1970 and these rabbits were exhibited at the Bradford Championship in 1972. The breed is now extinct in the United Kingdom.



Derived from Hotot-en-Auge, geographically nestled in a lush green valley of Normandy (near the port of Le-Havre in northern France, an area known for its apple cider and superior dairy products) come the name and the rabbit, Blanc de Hotot — White of Hotot.

Madam E. Bernhard, chatelaine de Calvados, who owned a large rabbitry of Geant de Flanders (Flemish Giants) and Geant Papillon Francais (Checkered Giants), has been given total credit in originating the Blanc de Hotot. Bernhard's goal was to produce a large white rabbit with black eyes of multi-purpose qualities for meat, fur and show. The year in which she began her breeding program to produce the Hotot is clouded, however, published dates lead us to believe it was in 1902. It was resolved by Bernhard to work only with the Geant Papillon Francais. Through the process of elimination, Bernhard saved only animals which were lightly marked. A mental picture can easily be drawn of the goal the Baroness set for herself and the numerous, 500 plus, matings, that would produce the Hotot rabbit we now have today.

The first markings to disappear were the flank spots. The ears and spine markings proved to be extremely difficult, in spite of the various splits in these markings. The last of the markings to fade were the eye circles (bands) being almost impossible to eradicate.

Several years passed with Chatelain (Baroness) of Hotot refusing to sell any of her stock as litters were still throwing marked rabbits. Fredrick Joppich, a great German breeder of the Hotot for over 30 years, confirmed this, stating, "The marked rabbit throw-backs were nearly impossible to eliminate, as the English Spots and Checkered Giants." The Hotot rabbit we now have has had the desired characteristics since 1912.





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the "Stronghold of the Hotot Rabbit." England imported the breed in 1970 and these rabbits were exhibited at the Bradford Championship in 1972. The breed is now extinct in the United Kingdom.

We have just learned that the Hotot was imported from France to America in the mid-1920's by Dr. Wade Wright of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company of New York. Wright in turn gave these animals to Dr. Wade Brown of the Rockefeller Institute. The Geant Blanc de Hotot was listed in the 1928 Standard of Perfection of the American Rabbit Association; describing the breed as an eight to 11 pound animal with black eyes, head large and strong, ears carried in a "V" shape, large and pointed. Fur fine, soft and brilliant. The rabbit is Flemish type, large, long and massive.

In 1930 Dr. William Ernest Castle obtained two Hotots from Dr. Brown. Carrying out extensive genetic experiments with Hotots, he reported his results in "Contributions To The Genetics Of The Domestic Rabbit," Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1932. When the Hotot became extinct in America is not recorded.

I re-introduced the Hotot to America. The first shipment of two pair arrived in Houston,

Texas at 2:45 p.m. June 25, 1978. This shipment came from Fernande Eberli of Saint Louis, France.

Margaret Henderson received a second shipment from Silvea Amen of Castres, France, consisting of three does and one buck. The shipment arrived in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on July 2, 1978.

The first litter of Hotots born in the U.S. came only July 24, 1978. This litter consisted of eight — six Hotots, one Boxer and one Silver Piebald.

America's first public viewing of the Hotot was at the New Mexico State Fair when Henderson and I exhibited two 6-8 does. These rabbits were judged per the translated French standard on September 17, 1978 by Jack Mundhenk.

Eleven Hotots were presented at the 55th ARBA Convention and Show in 1978 at Saginaw, Michigan, where the ARBA Standards Committee recommended the acceptance of the Blanc de Hotot. It was on March 5, 1979 that the American Rabbit Breeders Association approved the Blanc de Hotot as a standard breed. What has been a long sought after dream for many became reality. The Blanc de Hotot was officially recognized in the United States.

The Hotot Rabbit Breeders International was founded, with the ARBA approving and accepting application for charter, on May 21, 1979. Fourteen interested breeders and fanciers of the Hotot became the charter members of this organization. □

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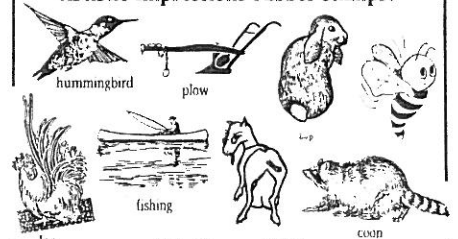
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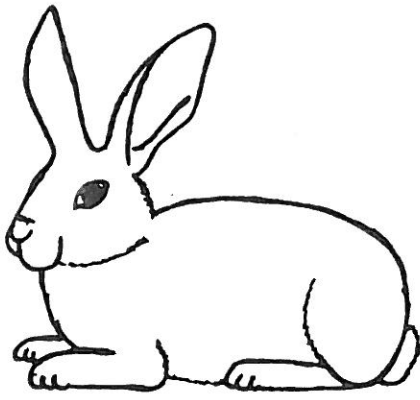
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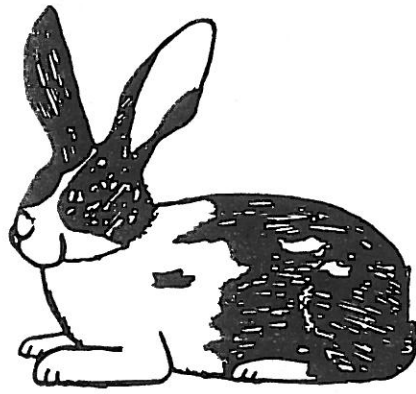
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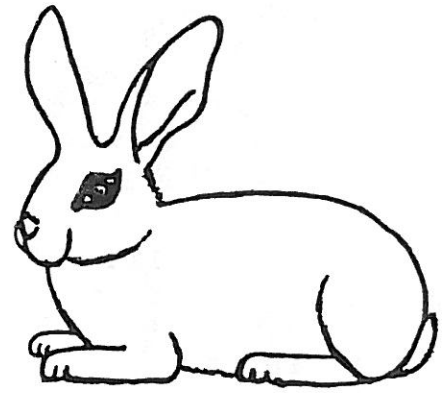
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**Boxer**



**Silver Piebald**



**Hotot**

## At First Look

by Bob Whitman

Look in the nest box and what do you find — one to 10 Hotots. Not always?! Now that I have been breeding Hotots since July 1978, I can look back at those eager moments when I peeked into the Hotots' nest box for the first time only to see that I didn't always have two tiny eye bands on each rabbit. In the first litter of Hotots born in America there were two oddballs. The first mismarked one that stood out like a sore thumb, looked like a badly marked Dutch. As this particular rabbit grew, the black sections began to show more and more white hairs. The marking was dubbed a Silver Piebald. The other rabbit in the litter had only one eye band, therefore it was called a Boxer.

These mismarked rabbits were sometimes raised to fryer size; some even made it to the roaster stage before being destroyed and as they grew certain items were soon noticed. The Boxers were always small rabbits, very refined in their features. Their fur was very silky and fine, lying close to the body. Heads

always appeared to be narrow as the rest of the rabbit and strangely enough, all Boxers were bucks. In the years and months since the first Boxer was born I've raised six animals with this particular type and have yet to see a doe.

The Silver Piebalds almost took an opposite turn in many respects from the Boxers. I've found this marking far more likely in a litter over the Boxer. Most litters will have one, some two. I've had reports of as many as eight in the litter being Piebalds. The Piebalds that I have kept to marketing age have caused me to shake my head in wonderment, because all have been bucks. Body structure has been bold and heavy, longer ears than usual, bull heads, coarse type fur, open and longer than what our standard calls for. The Piebalds have been extremely docile, whereas the Boxers are very active.

I'm one to look deeply into things, however I have never attempted to mate these mismarked animals with the fear that through future generations of breeding the marking might appear more prolific in the litters. Besides, in order to keep my Hotot herd with all registered animals in the breeding program, there is little room for the mismarked

but to try them out on one of the many Lapin Blanc recipes.

One breeder reported getting Hotots with the proper eye band marking. These rabbits grew, however, into fluff balls; namely Angora Hotots. I too had one born, a buck, that appeared to resemble an Angora. The rabbit had no value to me whatsoever in a Hotot breeding program so it was put to the knife. I concluded that no doubt somewhere down the line in France to improve on the breed fur, the Angora was used. This gave the New Zealand breeders years of headaches in the US years ago when they felt they could improve the New Zealand's fur by making a cross using Angora. For years this gene remained in many lines and once in a great while it would crop up in the nest box. Should this ever arise in your Hotots, it is suggested that you test mate the doe again and should the woolier appear, destroy the doe or buck, whichever the case may be.

Summing it all up, we can still be thankful that when we look into the nest box for the first time, little Hotots will be the majority rule. Much success in your breeding program. □

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Continued from page 13.

sulting in what is known as an agouti  
 appearance.

The medulla of the guard fiber, or the  
 fiber's hollow center, is larger than the  
 medulla in the undercoat. More often than  
 not, the medulla of fur fibers are what are  
 called ladder type. A ladder type medulla  
 is formed by hollow air pockets in the center  
 of the fiber alternated with bridge like struc-  
 tures made up of cells of the cortex. The  
 hollow areas serve as added insulation for  
 the animal. The undercoat of rabbits has  
 commonly been referred to as wool or under-  
 wool. This is a misnomer. As mentioned  
 earlier, wool does not contain a medulla.

Guard fur is a slightly different shape than  
 underfibers. The whole tip of the guard  
 hair is formed into a flattened, shield shape  
 that then goes into a pointed tip. Underfur  
 does not flatten out toward the end, but  
 directly forms a pointed tip.

Rabbits do moult. That is, they shed their  
 fur seasonally to grow a new coat. Baby  
 rabbits begin to moult their nest fur at ap-  
 proximately two months of age. Shedding  
 continues to occur every three to four months  
 throughout a healthy rabbit's life. Some rab-  
 bits that are raised specifically for their fiber  
 to be used in fabrics, such as Angora, have  
 their coats plucked every three months. Fur  
 harvested in this manner is at its optimum  
 length. When rabbits are plucked for their  
 fiber, fur lost during moulting is minimal when  
 compared to rabbits that are not plucked.-  
 Plucking encourages a richer, thicker under-  
 coat to grow in. Occasionally, rabbits are  
 sheared rather than plucked to remove fibers.  
 This fur removing technique, however, does  
 not encourage a thicker new growth nor  
 lessen the length of moulting periods. Shear-  
 ing also produces a shorter fiber that is not  
 as desirable to the yarn processors as  
 plucked fur.

I hope your now have a clearer under-  
 standing of fur and its characteristics. These  
 characteristics give rabbit fur the qualities that  
 make it desirable in the marketplace for  
 fashion furs and soft textured fabrics. □

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