

MEET THE FANCY'S PIONEERS

5: RENE BAREHAM



Irene Bareham became a rabbit fancier in 1940 and within two years her "famous Woodhurst Stud of Silver Foxes - Bucks at Stud, fee 10/6d" was being advertised in the BRC's yearbook. Winning championship awards under top judges F G Woodgate, Thomas Leaver, Frank Maynard and A J Power it wasn't long before Rene joined them behind the judging table. Noted for her expertise as a fur and rex judge, our photo was taken at Bradford Ch Show where Rene judged on many occasions.

In 1944 Rene was elected to the BRC's National Council and this is where her extraordinary talents as an organiser shone through. The following year she and husband Tommy staged the successful National Victory Show in London (to celebrate the end of World War II). This success was followed by London's National Championship Show, which attracted over 14,000 entries and 8,000 visitors.

Then Rene was asked to help the BRC to stage a new London rabbit event, the Dairy Show at Earls Court. It was the southern equivalent to the Bradford Ch Show and ran for many years until 1969 when the BRC was informed that the rabbit section would close. As its newly elected BRC President, Rene was determined to stage an annual show in the city; writing in a March issue of *Fur & Feather* she appealed to readers to "Rally round for a big London Ch Show" inviting readers to attend a meeting at the Great Northern Hotel, Kings Cross. Fanciers travelled from all corners to support, and the London Ch Show was born.

Rene was elected President, a position she held until her death in July 2001. But it is for her talents as a breeder and exhibitor that she is remembered in this series – this article on her favourite fur breed the Silver Fox was written in 1943.

THE SILVER FOX

The Silver Fox is one of the most beautiful of the normal furred varieties. Its black and white make-up, plus its strong but not big boned body, give it a majestic appearance which never fails to please. Full of life and vivacity it never tires of running to the hutch door, inquisitive of the slightest sound.

Let us peep into its life history. The Fox is one of the newest of our fur breeds, for it was not until the late nineteen twenties that it was recognised. The does are exceptionally good mothers, and I have yet to have one to the contrary. Given a respectable hutch and a dark corner, with a plentiful supply of soft hay, you can be sure, a day or two after kindling time, of finding a nice, warm, cosy nest, and on parting the fur there you will find the litter of youngsters, generally about six or eight.

Very often, due to the introduction of the blue in years gone past, some litters carry a percentage of this colour, and these, unfortunately, at this age show very little white in the form of chinchillation; for that matter their ticking is not easily discernible even when they become adults.

The blacks, however, are just the reverse, for the white shows up very distinctly against the black background, making them

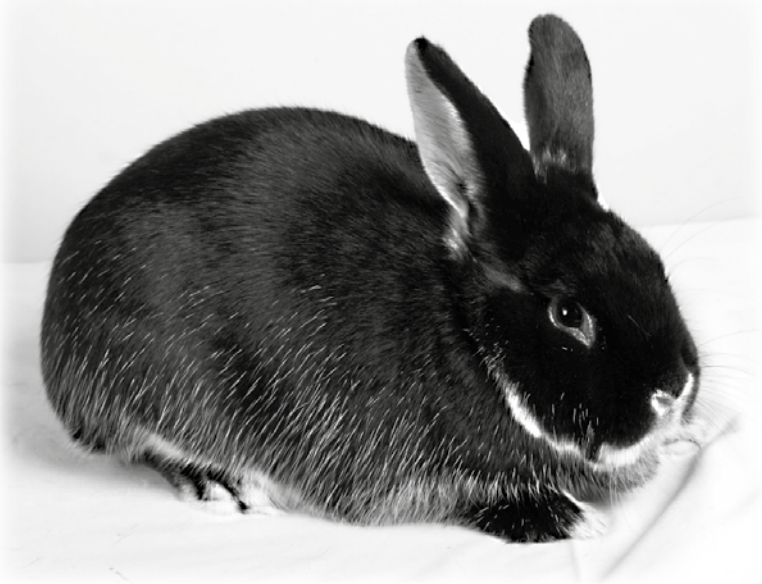
resemble small hedgehogs. This peculiarity never fails to please any novice who may see the nest.

The general appearance of the youngsters should be jet black with white belly and white ticking evenly interspersed all over chest and flanks, leaving a small portion of black in the middle of the back. Further white will be seen inside the ears on the nape of the neck and along the jaw line. The eyes should also have white circles, but at this age this can not always be seen. If there are any blues the markings will be similar, but with blue instead of black.

It does not take these youngsters long to get about, as both mother and babies do well even on a very "rough" diet.

After a few weeks you can easily begin to see your potential winners and breeders. If the blues have altered to almost white, and, when the fur is blown back, are white right down to the skin, these are the ones which will moult into the real Dutch blue which is the correct colour desired by the standard. Those blues which remain dark invariably are not much use as adults.

The blacks do not alter a lot from birth, but by now the eye circles should start to show clearly, and the markings generally become more defined. I like the black unticked patch on the back to be



as small as possible, because it is a very good sign that in the adult the ticking will be well up over the hindquarters.

A Fox can be disqualified from the show awards for having a "putty" nose, so at this age I look very carefully for this failing. This, incidentally, is one of the Fox's faults and one that should be eliminated from the breeding programme. It is not a wise procedure to breed from them.

In the adult coat the back should be free from white hairs (i.e. hairs which are white right down to the skin – not to be confused with ticking, which is a black hair with a long white tip.) It is at this stage that white hairs begin to appear. If there are only a few and the rabbit

excels in the other points required it does not matter over much, but should there be an abundance of them the animal should receive the same treatment as that of the one with the "putty or frosty" nose.

Fox youngsters are well boned and have keen appetites, with an especial liking for long drinks of clean water. It does not take them long to reach their adult size, and by this time they should bear some resemblance, or, better still, be identical with the Silver Fox Rabbit Club's standard.

Foxes sometimes have a tendency to be rather too long in the body, thus losing their cobby appearance, and this is another fault to which strict attention should be given. The fur should be jet black, with



the undercolour as dark blue as possible, dense and silky to the touch, and, although density is of more importance than length, it should be at least an inch long; also it should have enough resistance to fall gently back into its normal position, after being brushed from the tail to the head. Definitely, it must NOT fly back.

It is not uncommon to find a perfectly marked Fox marred by a rusty tinge, which, to say the least, is extremely disappointing; sometimes Foxes develop this just before a moult, in which case, after the rabbit successfully passes this stage, its new coat appears, jet black and shining like an onyx.

Often when this rustiness is apparent in the Blacks it is then that the Blue Fox comes to the fore on the show bench, as it is not so prone to show the brown.

The Blues do not seem as popular as the Blacks, although for what reason I cannot say, as coat for coat the Blue has the advantage in density and is altogether a very attractive animal.

All Foxes must have chest, flanks and feet well and evenly marked, with long white guard hairs, any extension of this ticking up the sides or over the back to be considered a beauty, and not a fault, though a rabbit with this extra asset should not, for this alone, be considered preferable to the one in which the sides alone are ticked. In any case, the ticking or chinchillation should be evenly balanced and clearly defined.

The eye-circles, inside of ears, line of jaws, tail and belly should be white. The ears should be

broad and of medium length and carried erect; also, they should be completely free from white hairs on the outsides. The eyes should be blue or brown, it does not matter which.

In addition to the Black and Blue, Foxes are also bred in Chocolate and Lilac, the standard being exactly the same for each, except that the black is replaced in either case by chocolate or lilac.

A really healthy Fox needs very little grooming for show and exhibition, just a daily rub down with the palms of the hands, and a final polish with a silk handkerchief is all that is necessary to keep the coat in that polished condition so much admired in this variety of rabbit. It has not been until recent times that Fox breeders have come into their own at the shows, which can be well understood, for as compared with some breeds Foxes are as yet in their infancy.

Whether the intention is to show or not, it is essential to handle the stock daily, as by so doing any illnesses or rabbit troubles will soon be noticed and dealt with, and at the same time the animals become tame and easily managed, which is distinctly an advantage if shows are to be visited. No judge likes an animal which careers up and down the table.

Some breeders maintain that Foxes breed 100 per cent true. I would not like to go as far as this yet, for there is always the odd "woolly" which turns up occasionally, and now and then a self will appear in the best of regulated litters. I can say, though, that Foxes do breed at least 95 per cent true. The "woollies" are not much

use, except that they may denote that the doe or buck throw good, dense-coated youngsters, as will usually be seen by the remainder of the litter.

Foxes should not be bred from until they are past the seven months, as only by waiting until the animals reach maturity can good, strong litters be obtained. Three litters a year are sufficient for any doe to rear, and working on these lines the Fox will more than satisfy the most demanding owner.

As can be expected, the better the Fox is housed the better rabbit he becomes and will thrive exceedingly well on a good diet given with liberal clean drinking water. Speaking from experience, the Fox is not easily scoured. Much pleasure can be derived from watching the Fox after his evening meal. He delights in capering around, and seems to put on an especial act for anyone who is present.

The breed is very fortunate in having a live club to represent it, and throughout the year there are many advantages to be gained by belonging to it. Besides the many trophies to be competed for, advice will always be forthcoming from any member of the club should any problems arise.

In conclusion the Fox can be fully recommended for any novice to take up, being a hardy animal and easily bred from.

Using sound common sense and judgment, coupled with a love of animals, success is within the reach of anyone.

