

THE ARGENTE FAMILY

4: The Argente de Creme by Peter Smith

Argente Creme

History The Creme is yet another variation of the Argente colours and differs in type and size to the Champagne, Bleu, Brun, St Huberts and Noirs.

Of all the Argentes, I would say that this is the most appealing colour wise as the orange undercolour and cream top provide a sparkling contrast.

The breed became very popular very quickly in the 1940s and 50s and I am reliably informed that classes in excess of 100 were achieved regularly at the large Championship shows. What a contrast to today's classes, for any breed out there, never mind Cremes

The main stalwart of the Creme for many years was Roger Brooks. He exhibited Cremes since the late 1950's and won all the major club and big Championship show honours with them. The other main breeders in recent years have been Laurel Thompson and Michael Guy, who again have won a number of stock shows over this time. Others seem to have dabbled and one or two have them as second string, but this delightful breed, like many other Cinderella Fur breeds, needs more dedicated breeders.

Type The Creme is the smallest member of the Argente family and should tip the scales at around the five-pound mark. One of the main characteristics of the Creme is its sprightliness and they are usually extremely fit. Finer in bone than its other Argente counterparts, a good comparison of the Creme would be a five pound Tan.

Whilst the Creme is fine in bone, it should avoid the extremes of snaky type, which would include a snipey head, poor shoulders and narrow hindquarters and at the other extreme, excessive cobbiness, which tends to lead to a heavy bone structure and overweight exhibits. Condition is also very important in showing off the type to its best potential. Any unfit, poor conditioned rabbit is unattractive to a judge and the Creme is no different.



Condition is achieved by good feeding, the Creme is particularly fickle in the diet stakes and as a result seem to come in to condition quite easily.

Colour As I said earlier, it is the colour of the Creme that makes it such an eye-catching rabbit. Born a

self coloured orange, the same silvering process occurs in line with the other members of the Argente family. Again, the silvering process is unique to each rabbit, although there do seem to be two distinct processes, as described under the Argente Bleu. The Creme seems to favour the process whereby the adult coat comes through straight away, as opposed to the so-called 'double moulters' whereby an intermediate silvered coat appears followed shortly by the adult coat.

The self-orange gradually changes to a creamy orange top colour interspersed evenly and moderately with longer orange guard hairs (ticking).

It is the extent of these guard hairs that determines the top colour of the Creme. The heavier ticked rabbits will look too dark and these dilute the bright creamy sparkle of the rabbit. Coupled with darker topped exhibits, you usually find duller undercolour, which again detracts from the sparkle.

The other problem that can occur with darker exhibits are black hairs in the colouring pattern. These often occur in the ears and are a fault.

Rabbits with little or no guard hairs in the top colour will again not have the desired sparkle, as the whiteness of the top colour will detract from this. So the ideal, is somewhere in between.

Again, the only way to establish what is about the right top colour is to handle exhibits, but in this day and age, with them being in so few hands, many will not have seen a top class Crème.

Three outstanding ones stand out in my mind. The first, Roger Brooks' Gold Star Champion in the late 1970's. It excelled colour and had a wonderful coat. The second, belonged to Bernard Liles and was runner up BIS in the Northern Argente's Silver Jubilee Show in 1980. I had the pleasure of stewarding it that day and it ran the BIS Champagne very close. Again superb colour. Finally, Don Helsdown's Crème buck which was BIS under me at the National Argente ASS at Corby in the mid 1980s. It excelled type, coat and colour and was best Fur under Mick Ward in the Open Show out of well over 100 Normal Fur rabbits as there were lots of stock shows that day.

I touched on undercolour earlier; this should be bright orange and extend as deep as possible down to the skin. Another good benchmark for what colour this should be is that of a good Orange Rex's top colour, which has an orange sparkle about it. Poor undercolour is usually that which is drab in colour, almost yellowy or has more of a fawn tinge to it. The other unique feature of the Creme compared with the other

Halloween Stud's Creme,
best Argente at 2014
Bradford Ch Show



Argentes is that it is permitted to have a white belly, whereas with the other colours the undercolour must extend all round.

The fully coloured Creme should have an evenness about its colour from nose to tail when in its full adult coat. As with all young Argentes, the self colouring remains on the head, nape, ears, etc should not be penalised as moult in the under five month classes.

Coat The Creme's coat is slightly different to that of the other colours, and nothing like the open flowing coat of the Champagne. Cremes tend to have a slightly shorter coat and it is not required to be as dense. Nevertheless, it should still retain a silky texture and avoid, in particular, being too harsh.

The future The Creme is at present in too few hands and like the many other colours suffered from inbreeding problems. There are some Cremes over in Europe, but from what I've seen they are much larger than our standard in the UK and also very heavy in top colour. However, some Cremes are coming out of St Hubert litters and hopefully mixing these with what remains from past generations may just provide some hybrid vigour and get the Crème up and running again. They are such a strikingly coloured rabbit and deserve to be in more hands than they are at present.

I'm sure our National secretary Laurel Thompson would point anybody interested in the right direction. You will find her address is in the British Rabbit Council's yearbook.

Roger Brook's
gold star
champion

