

The Dwarf Lop

by Geoff Russell



History

It would be easy to say that the Dwarf Lop is just a scaled down version of the French Lop. However, it is how this scaling down was achieved that not only differentiates the two breeds but also accounts for another major difference, colour and coat.

Much more emphasis is put on coat and condition in the Dwarf Lop breed standard than in the French Lop breed standard and there are many more colours in the Dwarf Lop than there are in the French Lop.

The French Lop was indeed the basis for the Dwarf Lop but it was crossed with the Chinchilla and the Netherland Dwarf to reduce the size rather than just selectively breeding small French Lops for numerous generations.

It was the use of the Netherland Dwarf that accounts for the great variety of colours in the Dwarf Lops today.

Known as the Klein (Little) Widder (Hanging Ear), the Dwarf Lop that had been developed in Holland during the 1950's was first seen by British fanciers at the Utrecht Show in 1968. In 1970 the late George Scott was the first to import them into Britain.

Many of the early specimens grew too large and had poor ear carriage and as their arrival in Britain was only just before the Ministry ban on the importation of rabbits much credit is due to the few British fanciers who worked on the breed.

At the formation of the National French and Dwarf Lop Club in 1977 the problems with weight were so acute that the members of the Club asked the B.R.C. for a larger ring. The request was refused and the breeders just had to work on bringing the size and weight down.

Meanwhile the Dutch fanciers had continued to work on size and type and it was Anglo Chisea who imported eight of these much improved small lops in 1978, even though he lost some of them while they were in quarantine.

The Chisea lops were not to everyone's liking. Some were so low as to be below the three and a half pounds required by the standard; however, Chisea exhibited some of his lops at the Club's Adult Stock Show at Coventry in 1979 and was awarded Best in Show with one of them.

This was to prove the turning point for the breed as in 1980 a Dwarf Lop did well in the Fancy Challenge at the Bradford Championship Show and by 1981 Dwarf Lops were winning Best in Show at open shows and in fact were exceeding French Lops in some areas.

Although the numbers of Dwarf Lops have declined in recent years, perhaps in response to the rise in popularity of the Miniature Lop, they were for many years the most popular lop exhibited.

They reached their highest number at the Bradford Championship Show in 1996 when 152 were shown, making it the second highest number in any breed shown that year.

Special Care

If the Dwarf Lop is kept for exhibition then it must be within the weight limit of 5lb 4ozs. The keeper of Dwarf Lops must be a careful observer of stock and through observation learn each individual lop's food requirements.

A lop should be kept lean and fit and should be firm and well muscled to the touch with no bagginess in the coat around the rear end; this can only be achieved through correct feeding.

Most adult lops are fed once a day and usually at night on either pellets or a dry mix; this should be supplemented with plenty of sweet smelling hay and fresh water.

This strict attention to feeding is as equally important for the breeding doe as it is for exhibition lops; overweight does will be reluctant to mate and are more likely to have birthing problems or give birth to dead kits.

Dwarf Lops should not be housed in wire cages as any system of bedding other than a deep layer of wood shavings will almost certainly result in sore or bald hocks. Once the hocks are bald it is notoriously difficult to restore hair growth.

The hocks can become calloused; bald or calloused hocks will almost certainly result in the lop being disqualified by a judge on the grounds that it is a marked rabbit.

The Dwarf Lop Breed Standard awards 20 points for 'coat'; if these 20 points are added to the percentage of the 30 points allocated for 'type and condition'; and the 10 points for guard hairs then it will be seen that the coat and condition of the Dwarf Lop is a major factor on the show table.

All rabbits must moult and because of the high ratio of points allocated for coat and condition Dwarf Lops showing any signs of moult should not be exhibited.

Presuming the lop is not in moult then it is only good stockmanship and attention to detail that will get the coat into exhibition condition.

The old saying 'what you see on the outside is reflection of what you put inside' is very true. A shiny, healthy coat can only be achieved through a good feeding regime using quality food.

January 2008:
Neil Jefferis with
his Red Eyed
White, the first
Dwarf Lop to win
best in show at
Bradford Excel



Showing

Like all lops the Dwarf Lop readily adapts to the rigours of show life if it is trained to accept human handling when young and introduced to a life of travelling and strange pens gradually and sympathetically.

Training a Dwarf Lop for showing is relatively simple if done slowly and with patience. When the lop is younger and still with its mother it should be gently stroked along the back and on the head between the eyes every feeding time.

This is done so that it becomes accustomed to the smell and feel of the human hand; there is nothing to be gained from trying to get the young kit to sit still in the posed position, this will come later.

Once the kits are separated from their mother then more serious training can commence.

Kits should be placed individually on a bench with a non-slip surface, then with a lot of gentle stroking the lop will learn to sit still.

Once the lop is happy to sit still then it will grow in confidence and will sit up; it is only the lop that is sitting still with its head up and can show itself off that gets the judges attention.

Once the lop is happy and confident when being handled the owner should turn it on its back and check the teeth.

Of course you will have checked them when it was young and know that they are perfectly alright, but by going through the motions regularly the lop will be accustomed to having its teeth checked and will not become distressed the first time a judge checks them.

Similarly the owner should handle the young lop's feet and gently pull each front leg out in turn and blow into the fur across the chest and in the armpits as this is exactly what a judge will do.

In order to introduce the young Dwarf Lop to show life it should first become accustomed to short periods of time in a travelling box and then to short car journeys in the travelling box.

Hopefully the exhibitor can find a small show near to home to introduce the young lop to show life; this will acclimatise the youngster gently and not put it off showing.

It is worth remembering that there are an awful lot of points within the breed standard of the Dwarf Lop that are allocated for coat and condition and that no rabbit can show off its coat and condition if it is so stressed or nervous on the table that the Judge cannot assess it properly.

Fawn



The Dwarf Lop Breed Standard

Ring size C

	Points
1. General type and condition	30
2. Head, Ears, Crown and Eyes	25
3. Coat	20
4. Guard Hairs	10
5. Colour	15
Total	100

1. Type – Body short with well-rounded loins. Deep chest and wide shoulders, giving a cobby well-muscled appearance. Short strong legs.

2. Head, Crown, Ears and Eyes

Head – Well developed particularly in bucks. Good width between eyes. Full cheeks and broad muzzle are desirable.

Crown – The basal ridge of the ears should appear prominent across the top of the skull.

Ears – Should be broad, thick well furred and rounded at the ends. They should be carried close to the cheeks giving a horseshoe like outline when viewed from the front. The inside of the ears should not be visible from any angle when carried correctly. The ears are not measured.

Eyes – Round and bright.

3. Coat – Coat to be dense and of good length, rollback with an abundance of guard hairs.

4. Guard Hairs – An abundance of guard hairs.

5. Colour – Any colour or pattern that conforms to the colour or pattern of recognised breeds.

Weight – Maximum – 5lb 4oz

Minimum – 4lb 4oz

Faults – Narrow shoulders, long in body, narrow head. Ears carried back or not fully lopped. Coat too short or fly-back. Excessive white hairs in coloured exhibits, light tails in sooties. White tails in sooties a serious fault.

Disqualifications – Weight over maximum. Poor condition. Malocclusion. Runny eyes, odd coloured or walleyes. Putty nose. Bunches of white hairs or white toenails in coloured exhibits.

Interpretation of the Standard

With one exception little has changed in the Dwarf Lop Breed Standard since it was first accepted by the B.R.C. in 1977. There was some consolidation of the wording but following a vote by the members of the National French and Dwarf Lop Club in 2000 a minimum weight of 4 pounds 4 ounces was introduced.

This is actually quite a major change when one looks back at the original Breeds Standard and sees that the minimum weight laid down then was 3 pounds and 8 ounces.

A change of over 20% in the minimum weight has meant that the members are demanding that the Dwarf Lop must now be well muscled, strong, sturdy animals but of course must not exceed the same maximum weight that was laid down all those years ago.

Within the weight limits (4lb 4oz – 5lb 4oz) the breeder of the Dwarf Lop must present a cobby rabbit that has a short body, is well muscled with broad shoulders and has short legs.

In other words, a power pack of a rabbit. The quality Dwarf Lop that has these attributes is indeed an imposing sight.

Having produced the Dwarf Lop with the required body type and within the imposed weight limits the breeder must then consider the attributes required of the head, for surely it is the magnificent full cheeks and broad muzzle required of the adult buck that make the Dwarf Lop a show winner.

The broad, flat-faced head must be surmounted by a prominent 'crown' this ridge stands out across the top of the head between the base of the ears and frames the front view of the head.

To complete the view of the head the ears should hang close to the sides of the head forming a horse-shoe shape so that no part of the inside of the ears can be seen from any direction.

Whilst the ears of the Dwarf Lop are not measured when it is being judged they must be sufficiently long to hang correctly.

In the original Breed Standard of 1977 a total of 40 points was allocated to the combination of coat, guard hairs and colour; the present standard allows 45 points for these elements.

This change further emphasises the importance put on the coat. It is the balance of guard hairs that makes the subtle difference between a good coat and the exceptional one required of a winning Dwarf Lop.

If you watch a Judge when he is assessing a Dwarf Lop you will see that he takes some of the fur on the lop's back between his thumb and forefinger and then gets his eyes down level with the lop's back so that he can see the guard hairs that are protruding above the undercoat.

Unlike the other Lops, the Dwarf Lops have the advantage that they were bred down in size using the Netherland Dwarf and the Chinchilla which accounts for the great variety of colours in the breed. With 15 points for colour it can be seen that any Dwarf Lop that does not display true colour will not win at the top level.

Although the Dwarf Lop has declined in popularity in recent years there are still many dedicated breeders. Last year the icing on their cake was the day a white Dwarf Lop went best in show at the UK's premier show, Bradford Excel.



Butterfly



Chinchilla



Sable



Sooty Fawn

These extracts were adapted from Geoff Russell's book *A Fancier's Guide to the Lop Rabbit*. The highly recommended complete guide to the Lop rabbit, with chapters covering buying, housing, breeding, showing, etc. Includes many colour and mono photos. £16.50 by post from the *Fur & Feather Bookshop*.

