

The German Lop

by Geoff Russell

Orange German Lop



Photograph: Neil Robertson

History

In an attempt to develop a medium size lop, breeders in Germany worked throughout the 1960's to create the German Lop. At this time the French Lop at a weight in excess of 10lb and the Holland Lop (to become known in Britain as the Dwarf Lop) weighing between 4 – 5¼lb were the only two flat faced lops.

It is known that the German breeders certainly used the French and the Holland Lop to develop the German Lop but there was also at least one other ingredient in the mix that was to give the German Lop its distinctive Roman nose, so it would be incorrect to say that like the Dwarf Lop it is just another scaled down French Lop in a different weight band.

In Germany the German Lop was officially recognised in 1970 where it was given the name Deutsche Klein Widder. It was imported into Holland in 1972 and gained recognition there in 1976.

Although popular in those two countries the breed has not spread widely and may well not have reached Britain if a Dutch breeder, Ms E van Vliet had not imported them here when she moved to Britain in the early 1980's. Dave Cannon took on some of the van Vliet stock and worked with her to produce a British breed standard and gain B.R.C. recognition in 1990.

The early stock in Britain was mainly agouti in colour but it was not long before other breeders in Britain became interested in the breed and imported other colours from Holland so that now all colours recognised by the B.R.C. are accepted.

There can be little doubt though that the agouti coloured German Lops have the best agouti undercolour of any agouti coloured rabbit.

Considering the breed was only recognised in Britain in 1990 and the German Lop Club was not formed until the 90's it is quite remarkable that Mr and Mrs Powell were best in show at the London Championship Show with a red eyed white German Lop in 1998 and that since then the breed's popularity has increased to the point where they are the third most popular lop (behind the Miniature and the Dwarf Lop) to be exhibited at the Bradford Excel Championship Show and are consistent winners at Open Shows throughout the country.

Special Care

It would be very easy to say that no special care is required to keep German Lops for the breed are renowned for their calm, good nature; they are not unduly large or heavy, are excellent mothers raising large litters of healthy babies and make equally excellent exhibition or pet rabbits.

However, like the French Lop they do have a very ample undercoat with a dense coat that is slightly longer than the coat of the other lops. This can certainly create problems at moult time.

Many German Lop breeders either keep their stock in outdoor hutches or in a semi-outdoor situation that provides cover for the breeder attending his stock yet allows the lops to be exposed to the elements.

Because of the logistics of caring for a large number of rabbits most breeders keep their stock in some form of 'shed' but the enclosed environment that the shed creates is not conducive to dense, longish coated lops and therefore they are better to be housed outside, even if it is only during the moult season, to aid the rapid clearing of the coat.

Perhaps because the German Lop has such a pleasant nature they can very easily be overfed. Whilst this could create obvious problems for the exhibition German Lop keeper to keep their lops within the disqualification weight of 8½lb it can also be the cause of a variety of problems for the pet German Lop owner.

Overweight lops have difficulty grooming and cleaning themselves and are therefore susceptible to fly strike; overweight does are much less likely to carry live babies and are generally more likely to fall prey to all manner of diseases.

It must therefore be a priority of German Lop breeders to keep their lops lean and fit and not to fall for their wonderful disposition and overfeed them.

As the German Lops are such good breeders and raise large healthy litters, anyone breeding them should make sure that they have a suitable outlet for their surplus stock.

Showing

The German Lop has risen in popularity on the show bench in recent years and this really is no surprise as quality lops have spread from the hands of a few dedicated breeder across the country. There are now many studs breeding superb type into their German Lops and when this type is combined with the very good colour that many German Lops carry then it is little wonder that they are winning at Open Shows across the country almost every week of the year.

German Lops rarely suffer from poor ear carriage; because of the weight of their broad and comparatively short ears (11-12 inches from tip to tip, including the skull) and the highly developed crown the German Lop's ears rarely remain erect.

With ear carriage problem rarely seen breeders can concentrate on type and colour. This general high standard means that anyone coming new to the breed will have to attain a very high standard if they are to compete with the established breeders.

Whilst there are a few coloured exhibits with dark feet i.e. the blacks, blues and sooty fawns the majority of the popular colours of German Lops being exhibited have white or light feet.

This means that the German Lop exhibitor must perfect the art of keeping their show lops clean so that they can be presented to the judge in immaculate condition.

Whilst there are numerous ways of cleaning white or light coloured feet, and every exhibitor has their own secret method, there can be no doubt that the easiest way is to prevent them getting dirty in the first place. This can be easier said than done, but the novice exhibitor must adapt their maintenance regime to achieve this standard of cleanliness in their exhibition stock.

Because it is generally only bucks that are shown as adults – bucks are generally cleaner than does – with a little ingenuity and some extra work the show buck can be kept clean.

Show bucks should be kept on wood shavings to prevent them getting sore hocks, therefore it is imperative that a regular supply of 'white' shavings that do not contain colourings or dyes is found.

If the hutch is thoroughly cleaned out on a regular basis, say once a week, then all that is required to prevent those white feet getting stained is to add a thin layer of fresh shavings each day and to remove the toilet corner every two or three days.

The keeper of exhibition lops with white or light coloured feet will have a far easier and more rewarding life if the lop's feet are not allowed to get stained in the first place.

German Lop Breed Standard

Ring Size L	Points
1. Overall Type and Shape	30
2. Head and Crown	20
3. Ears	20
4. Coat	15
5. Colour and Pattern	10
6. Condition	5
Total	100

- Type – Very cobby, massive and muscular. The neck on a good German Lop should not be visible. Ideally it should be equally as broad in the shoulder as in the hind quarters. From the short nape the line of the back should rise in a slight curve to a well-muscled rump which should be short and well rounded. The front legs are short, straight and thick. The hind legs should lie parallel to the rump and not jutting out when resting. A dewlap in does is permissible.
- Head – The head should be strongly developed with a distinct width between the eyes. The German Lop should have a Roman nose appearance with well-developed cheeks.
- Ears – The ears should be broad, thick and of good substance, they rise from a strong ridge called a crown on top of the head, carried closely to the cheeks, with openings turned inwards. The ears should hang down straight just behind the eyes without either being carried forwards or backwards. Ear length, measured across the skull minimum 27.96cms – maximum 35.5cms (11-14ins. maximum).
- Coat – The fur is of normal length, very dense with strong guard hairs.
- Colour or Pattern – All recognised colours are accepted as well as the butterfly pattern.
- Condition.

Desired Weight – Adult, minimum 2.948kgs – maximum 3,855kgs (6½ – max 8½lbs).

Disqualifications – Weight over 3.855kgs (8½lbs). Putty nose on Butterfly pattern. White patches on coloured rabbits.

White German Lop



Interpretation of the Standard

With 30 points for overall type and shape added to 20 for head and crown and another 20 on ears it can readily be seen that a great deal of emphasis is placed on the shape of the German Lop.

The cobby, massive, muscular type packed into a short powerful body is an absolute must for the exhibition German Lop and any German Lop that does not display these qualities should not even be considered as a show rabbit.

When judging a German Lop for its suitability for exhibition the lop should be placed on a low table facing you so that you are looking down on it. From this angle you will be able to see its body shape which should be as broad in the shoulder as it is in the hindquarters; it is these massive shoulders that not only give the German Lop its characteristic shape but also make the difference between exhibition and pet German Lops, for it is only these specimens that have the massive shoulders that will also have no visible neck.

Having observed the lop from above it should then be viewed from the side where the line of the back should rise in a slight curve to the short, well rounded, well muscled rump.

If the German Lop displays these characteristics then you should stand in front of it then place one hand on the rump applying only slight pressure to keep it down, and with your other hand grasping the base of the ears slightly raise the lop's head so that you can observe the front legs.

The feet should remain just touching the table, but with the weight taken off the head and shoulders and the backend held down you will get the ideal view of the front legs that should be short, straight and strong.

Although not shown in the breed standard as a fault many Judges will penalise an agouti coloured lop that has 'barred' i.e. stripes of a different colour on the front legs. This may seem slightly unfair but the agouti German Lop that is going to win the highest level will not have barred front feet.

Many fanciers, and indeed many books, state that the German Lop is the same as a French Lop but just a bit smaller. It is the shape of the head of the German Lop that tells the real truth – that the German Lop is not just a small French Lop.

The German Lop should have a Roman nose and as it should also have a distinct width between the eyes and well-developed cheeks the Roman nose can only be seen when the lop is viewed in side profile.

There are German Lops around that have been crossed with French Lops to improve the massiveness of the body and shoulders and it is in these crossed rabbits that the flat face of

the French Lop is often seen rather than the distinct Roman 'bent' nose that the German Lop requires. The breeder that tries to gain the extra edge by breeding a French Lop into a line of German Lops will be caught out on this feature that really separates the breeds.

The ears are well described in the Breed Standard and so long as the standard is interpreted fully then there can be little ambiguity. With only 15 points for coat and guard hairs one may, wrongly, assume that little importance is attached to the coat.

When it comes to winning in the Challenges no rabbit, no matter how good its type, will succeed if it does not have a good coat. So whilst the Breed Standard may put little emphasis on coat, if a German Lop excels type then it must be presented with an excellent coat if it is to do itself justice.

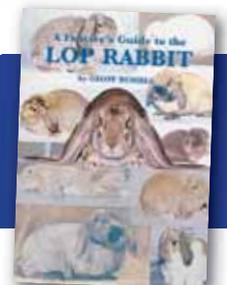
If we add the 15 for coat to the 10 points for colour and 5 points for condition then we can see in fact there are a total of 30 points for coat, colour and condition. So quite rightly it is the complete package that is required if a German Lop is to win. However, if it does not have that all important body and type then it will never win, no matter how good its coat, colour and condition.

Because of its size it is unlikely that the German Lop will ever be as popular as its little cousin, the Miniature Lop. But it has gained in popularity in recent years and it is not unimaginable that it may overtake the Dwarf Lop in popularity.

A few dedicated breeders have ensured that the standard of the best German Lops is indeed very high and these breeders consistently take the top honours in Open Shows throughout the country.

If this trend continues then there can be little doubt that this powerhouse of a lop will attract even more followers. Although the German Lop has not spread widely across the globe it would appear that its future is certainly safe in Britain.

Extracts from The Fancier's Guide to the Lop Rabbit (Geoff Russell) available from the Fur & Feather Bookshop, £16.50.



Further Information

National German Lop Rabbit Club.
www.nationalgermanlopclub.co.uk

Agouti German Lop

