

Interviewer: Allison Schaeding

Interviewee: Beth Biester

Date of Interview: March 29, 2021

## **Breeder Interview**

### 1. What was your first rabbit breed?

I don't remember how or why it happened, but when I was 6, I plagued my mom incessantly for a rabbit. My first two rabbits were mixed breeds named Butch and Linda (they came with the names). I told my mom that I wanted to be in 4-H, but after a little asking around, we discovered that I wasn't actually old enough for 4-H, but we found the Springfield Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Association and joined. I needed rabbits I could actually show, so we got a couple of Mini Lops. That year at the fair, the Springfield club hosted a "bunny scramble" for kids, and I entered. I caught a steel junior buck who had been donated to the scramble by Don and Gloria Schroeder. He was my first Dutch. I named him Bo. That was in 1982, and Bo lived until 1994 when I was in college! I even had some of my senior pictures taken with him!

### 2. What has kept you dedicated to the dutch breed?

I got out of rabbits when I started high school, but a couple of years after I finished college, I felt the pull back to rabbits, and more specifically, Dutch. I got a trio from Shelly Thompson in 1999, and have had Dutch since. I have raised some other breeds, but none of them have come close to Dutch for me. I never get tired of looking at them, and with markings, type, fur, and color, there's just so much to think about, which I enjoy. I

have also met some wonderful people raising Dutch, and enjoying the hobby with my Dutch family year after year has made my life richer.

3. What are some of your challenges raising dutch?

Because of space, time, and circumstances, I nearly had to sell my entire herd about 13 years ago, and for quite a few years after that, I only had 20 holes to work with. I was able to expand that to 58 holes about 6 years ago, and that has allowed me a lot more leeway in what I could keep to show and breed. As for more specific challenges, with my grays, I have been making \*some\* progress on improving stop length and buck heads and ear substance, and I'm currently wrestling with keeping good ring color while also working toward a short, snappy coat. With my chocolates, I've been working on improved color and eye color while still working on more cleanly-marked rabbits.

4. What are some of your favorite rabbit shows?

My favorite shows are Ohio Dutch shows and NDS.

5. What do you most enjoy about being a member of the ADRC?

I've gained a wealth of knowledge from interacting with my fellow ADRC members and from reading articles in the DR and Guidebook.

6. Youth deal with condition trouble, how do you keep good coats on your rabbits?

I really think the most important ways to keep good coats are: good quality feed, plentiful fresh water, good year-round ventilation, and clean cages. Beyond that, pay

attention to which rabbits always seem to be in some stage of molt, and cull those.

Those that seem to keep condition all the time are worth their weight in gold.

7. What do you wish you could've known when you first started showing rabbits?

Oh, good grief, so many things! I think if I were to think of it as giving advice to a newbie, there are certainly some things I would suggest. There's no substitute for good feed. You need to pay attention to which breeders have rabbits with good condition and ask what they feed. Then, when you get that feed, you really do need to measure out what you feed carefully. As for purchasing stock, don't shop for rabbits, shop for breeders. What I mean by this is that rather than walking around at shows and looking for "for sale," signs, find a breeder whose rabbits look good to you, and ask what they have available. You may find that they are willing to sell you something that doesn't yet have that "for sale" sign. As for culling, I think a lot of new breeders take the "cull hard, cull often" mantra a bit too seriously with young rabbits, and not nearly seriously enough with older brood stock. It's important to let a good number of your young stock grow out and show as juniors so that you get a good sense of how your particular rabbits grow and fill out. Sometimes a beautiful junior doesn't turn into much as a senior, and sometimes an ugly duckling grows into a beautiful swan. You'll never know if all the ducklings are on the meat truck, you know? Likewise, you must constantly monitor the yield of your older stock. Sure, that doe is a good mother, but when was the last time she produced a keeper? It's really hard to move your breeding program forward if you're using the same old rabbits time after time.

8. Has there been one rabbit that has had a huge influence on your herd?

I can't really pinpoint a single rabbit, but if there are two gray does that show up again and again in the background of all my pedigrees: a doe named Tuppence and a doe named Netflix. Both does had great ring color and were good mothers who produced nice babies.

9. What are some of your long and short-term goals as a breeder?

I have a lot of goals both big and small, but ultimately, I want to be pleased with my own progress and performance, and I want to earn the respect of other breeders by producing quality animals and by being a fair and gracious competitor. I think if I work on those things, all the other goals will come along. One fun goal is that when I retire, I plan to FINALLY get to go to ARBA Convention and to attend some shows around the country.

10. What is something most breeders don't know about you?

Wow-- not sure. Anybody who's my friend on Facebook knows I'm a high school English teacher and AP/IB Coordinator, and that I love rescue dogs, music, and books. I guess one thing that some people might not know is that I have been a huge figure skating fan my whole life, and I've attended Skate America and the U.S. Championships a couple of times. Another retirement goal is to go to U.S. Championships every year, and maybe to Worlds a few times!

**Thank You for Participating in the MDRC Breeder Interviews!**