

Interviewer: Allison Schaeding

Interviewee: Lonnie & Michelle Harper

Date of Interview: April 5, 2021

## **Breeder Interview**

1. Where do you see the dutch breed in 10 years?

In 10 years it's hard to tell where the Dutch breed will be or even the rabbit hobby itself. You have the RVHD and States buckling down on bringing rabbits from other states to show. If it's ever made where rabbits all have to be vaccinated. It will kill the hobby as a whole.

2. You've brought 4Hers to your specialty shows, why do you believe bringing in 4Hers is important for the dutch breed?

Our heart goes out to 4-H kids. So when we can combine the breed we love and help young 4-H kids interested in the breed. To us it's a win win. A lot people try to stir rabbit 4-H kids away from Dutch. To us youth Dutch is the future of the hobby.

3. What all goes into putting together a specialty show?

One the biggest thing with putting on the big specialty shows in Ohio is make it a family atmosphere. We try to hire some the best Dutch judges. We try to have good food. Then we offer things like the Dutch rabbit auction and the AOV class.

4. What do you look for when buying new rabbits?

Very Seldom do we really purchase rabbits anymore. With having Kevin & Al around if we are looking for something we usually contact them on maybe using a buck or even trading rabbits. Our lines originated from their lines. It seems when we bring other's lines outside of their lines we usually have little success.

5. If you could change anything about your journey in rabbit breeding what would you change?

Only thing different we would change would be wish we would never got into Mini Rex when we started in rabbits. If it wasn't for Michelle we would never had Dutch. She had a Dutch as a kid. She purchased our 1st Dutch when we was at breeders looking to buy breedings rabbits for market project.

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

There has been 2 bucks that had a huge influence on our herd. One was a tort buck Jerry. He really was the one to get our Tort lines going. His lines are in many torts across the country. Then you got Jayden blue buck. This buck we must say change the game with our blues. He produced very good rabbits. Didn't matter what doe you put him with you was getting something. Last year we had to put him down. Was probably the biggest hurt we had ever had letting go a rabbit.

7. Do you use DQ rabbits in your breeding program?

Yes, we do use DQ rabbits in my breeding. We are about body's as breeders. I feel markings can be fixed long term.

8. What are some of your challenges raising dutch?

The biggest challenge we have as breeders is probably balance overall on all 6 varieties. When you raise 6 varieties like we do. It takes a lot work to try to get good in all 6.

9. What has kept you dedicated to the dutch breed?

The reason we have stayed dedicated to the Dutch is probably the friendships we have made over the years and we love the breed.

10. Everyone knows you tattoo your rabbits with their names. Is there a story behind why?

So years ago we use to have a system that we used when we tattooed. It be like BK with a number behind it. Well we started tattooing rabbits we showed names. Over time people would only want to purchase rabbits that was named from us knowing it was one of our show animals. So we decided to name everything. It wasn't that the rabbits we selling was bad rabbits. It's was just everyone wanted the ones we showed.

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