

Interviewer: Allison Schaeding

Interviewee: Al Gerhart

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Interview

1. How long have you been raising Dutch?

(21 years) My Daughter Adrienne, got her 1st Dutch in 1999 as a 4-H project, I took over from there about 9 years later.

2. What's one thing in your barn you do to improve your herd overall?

I try to use the best balanced buck I can find, and breed year round!

3. How do you keep your rabbits in condition?

Well that's a good question, first of all good quality feed and fresh water is a must. Also the right amount of feed is important, you want your rabbits to maintain the proper weight & not too much feed that they become overweight. (the best thing to do for an overweight doe is to breed her, when they are nursing a litter they tend to lose weight than after weaning it's easier to bring them back in condition). I always time my breeding for National shows, & Fairs. Rabbits will usually be in their best condition around 5 to 7 month old, timing is everything. Lastly genetics is often overlooked when talking about Condition but it plays a very important part as well as a good breeding program and culling.

4. What is Line breeding?

You see a lot of variations of line breeding, simply put it's matching up rabbits that have some of the same lines or similar rabbits in both pedigrees. I will breed Sire to daughter, and Dam to son occasionally, but I never breed littermates to each other.

5. How would you breed to clean up markings? Which marking would you start with?

I really don't believe in the puzzle theory when it comes to marking (meaning I don't breed for one marking at a time), I believe it takes way too long to achieve your goal by breeding for one marking at a time. I think you are better off breeding for a balance of markings by using the best marked buck you can find and line-breeding. You will still get miss marks no matter what you do, but I think you get better consistency of markings by breeding for balance. As far as importance of Markings: Cheeks, Saddle, and Stops, in that order make up the majority of the marking points, and more importantly judges opinion.

6. What do you know now that you wish you knew when you started breeding?

Genetics, and how to evaluate Type and Color, to me it's hard for anyone to understand Type and Color until they actually see it and feel it for themselves! Yes there is a certain feel to good type.

7. What Dutch variety did you start with?

A Trio (2 Blue does and a Black Buck) shortly after we brought in a (Hooper) steel buck, I should mention both does had DQ's but the bucks were very well marked and good type.

8. What do you most enjoy about being an ADRC member?

The People! I also enjoy the competition.

9. What are some of your goals for the future of the Dutch breed?

Promote the Dutch Breed, to increase the numbers shown on a local and national level. To increase membership and participation of youth Breeders.

10. Is there a memorable moment at a rabbit show that you will never forget?

Winning the National Dutch show, and sharing it with my family & friends.

My kids won the National Dutch show in Youth, 3 times (Adrienne & Mac Gerhart) in 2002, 2004, & 2006.

My Son and I won NDS in Open in 2010, and I won it again in 2017.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to answer your questions, I hope to see you this fall. I will be judging in Michigan this September if all goes well.

Take Care and be Safe

Al Gerhart