

BEHOLD THE BEVEREN

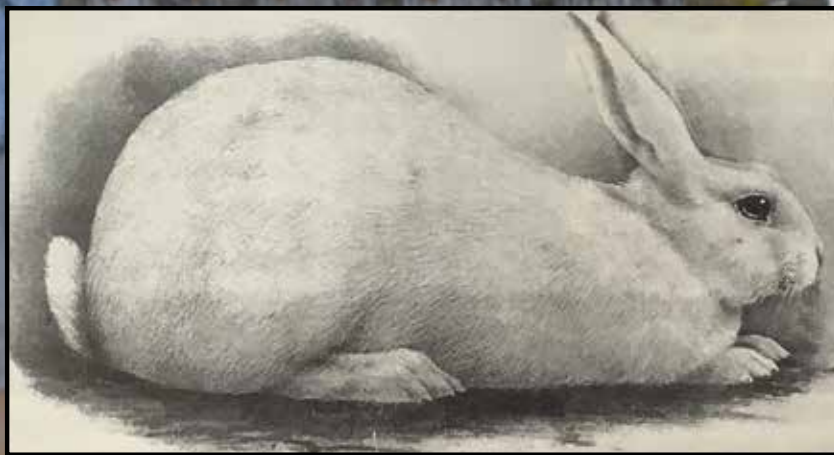
Thomas Tafoya

The Breed of Distinction

Beautiful, majestic, and undeniably striking, the Beveren is a breed of true distinction.

From its graceful body type to its flowing fur, every detail speaks to its elegance. Sweet and gentle by nature, Beveren have found a special place in my heart, and I hope they find one in yours as well.

*Beveren from the Wippell Collection,
Reproduction from a Fur & Feather color plate issued 26 April,
1929. Courtesy of the Bob Whitman Collection.*





The History of the Breathtaking Beveren:

The Beveren is an ancient breed originating in North-Central Europe. They were created in the town of Beveren in the Waas region of Belgium around 1898. The breed was derived from the crosses of the Brabanconne Blue, St. Nicolas (St. Niklass) Blue, and the Blue Vienna. In 1902, the first standard was instituted for the “Blue Rabbit of Beveren” in Beveren, Belgium. Three years later, in 1905 the first exhibition of the Beveren Blue presented by Mrs. A.M. Martin, in Norwich, Great Britain pioneered the rabbit show hobby in Europe. On May 29, 1918 in Birmingham, 17 people met and founded the Beveren Club. This founding Beveren Club began to recognize other breeds of fur rabbits and in 1925, changed its name to the British Fur Rabbit Society, later becoming the British Rabbit Council. In the early 1900s Beveren were imported to the United States under the name “Beverin” later changed to “Beveren” as we know today.

The Beveren rabbit breed was officially recognized by the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) on December 3, 1925. At the time of recognition the Sitka, a Black rabbit breed in America, soon became what we know today as the Black Beveren. Ed Stahl of Missouri imported the White Beveren in 1933 from England noting that this white rabbit was “distinct” due to its blue eyes.



American Sitka, circa 1924, Courtesy of the Bob Whitman Collection

V FOR VICTORY

During the First World War, the “V” for victory helped rally troops, and support amongst the people. Some breeders that are rich in history claim that in WWII Winston Churchill’s iconic “V” or “Peace” sign was influenced by the Beveren rabbit due to the distinct V-shaped ear carriage of the Beveren.

Throughout this era, the Beveren acquired a great amount of popularity with the British. Later, in the early 1920s, the breed was raised for rabbit pelts in addition to meat. During this period, the White variety quickly became the most popular variety because it was the easiest to dye by furriers. The Blue variety of Beveren were raised in Buckingham Palace in London before World War II. This is where the history buff Beveren breeders believe Winston Churchill got the inspiration for the “V” or “peace” sign.

Through the lengthy development in the 20th century, British fanciers developed the Blue, Black, White, Lilac, Brown and Pointed varieties.



BEHOLD THE BEVEREN

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The topline, bone, meat structure and balance need to be the absolute most important reasons to keep or cull your animals”. This is why processing them for meat can be very important; you can see what springy ribs look like from the inside, as well as pinched hindquarters limiting how the muscles develop. While the breakdown of points is important, think about balance- strong shoulder muscles are needed to support the softball-like head, ears and hindquarters needs to be just as ‘thick’ and ‘strong’ to offset their mugs.

“

Beveren breeder, Jamie Lucca, of JCL Rabbitry.

Comparatively speaking, the Beveren standard as printed in the ARBA “Standard of Perfection” (SOP) remains traditionally the same in type and structure as that originally developed in Britain. One major difference is that the ARBA only recognizes Black, Blue, and White varieties in the American Beveren. Like many American breeds that have a rich history from Europe, the ARBA Standard for Beveren puts an emphasis on general type over the color and coat quality.

Over the last several decades due to the limited gene pool of Beveren in the United States, a few American fanciers have begun importing stock from Britain to increase genetic diversity. Breeders are hopeful that the Beveren will continue to gain popularity in the United States and continue its development for centuries to come.

An Overview of the Beveren Breed

Kim Calloway, president of the American Beveren Rabbit Club, says

*“Breeders should always breed for the top three:
“TYPE • TYPE • AND TYPE”*

The general type is extremely important on a Beveren, as it has the most allotted points in the ARBA Standard of Perfection. Color, Fur, Head, and Ears are important, but one should base cull decisions on body type evaluations.

Just like any rabbit, proportion is extremely important, whether it is the whole rabbit, the body and head, or the head and ears- overall balance is something to aim for when it comes to the Beveren.



DID YOU KNOW?

While the ARBA recognizes three varieties of Beveren, England at one time recognized the Blue, BEW, REW, Opal-Eyed White, Black-Eyed White and Black.

Today England recognizes the Brown and Lilac along with the Black, White and Blue Beveren.

Posing Your Beveren

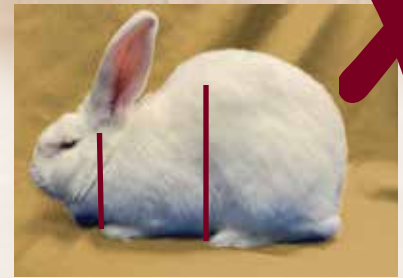
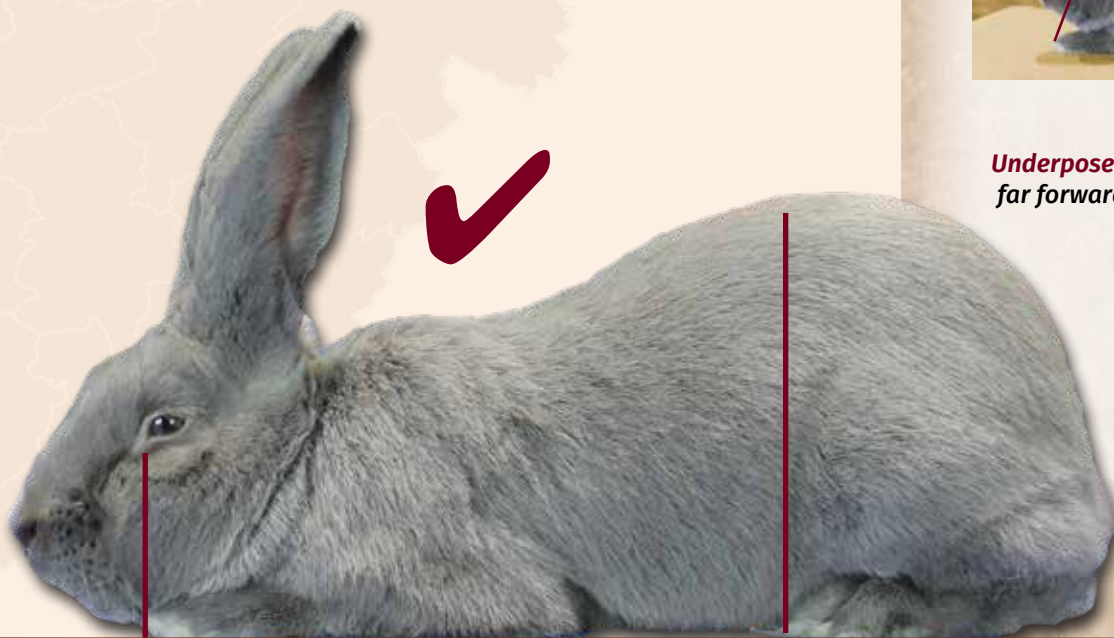
The Beveren is a medium length, semi-arch breed with the topline starting at the back of the shoulder. The back toes should align under the knee, and the front toes align under the eye. The topline should be a smooth curve from the back of the shoulder to a high point over the middle of the back, displaying a beautiful mandolin shape we have all come to know and love.

It is extremely easy to overpose these majestic animals, which is a major struggle breeders face when exhibiting across the United States. Many breeders comment and raise concern as they predominantly see judges try to compress, and over-pose the Beveren to make them appear like a commercial breed with less shoulder.

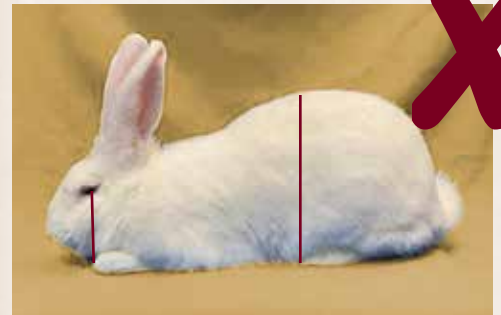
When Beveren are over-posed the back toes are often pushed forward to touch the elbows and sometimes they are even pushed past the elbows. Tails on these over-posed positions are usually pushed under the tailbone giving the Beveren an overall unnatural appearance.

When a Beveren is under-posed, or stretched out the results are a long, flat, sloped animal that does not resemble the ideal profile described in the SOP.

Correct posing is critical to appreciate the mandolin body profile and correctly accentuate the strong shoulder, smooth curve of the topline with a deep loin, and full rounded hindquarter.



Overposed: The front feet are too far back and the back feet are too far forward. Overposing causes this animal to resemble a poorly typed New Zealand with extremely low shoulders.



Slightly Overposed: Not as extreme of an overpose but the back feet are slightly far forward of the front of the hip which gives the appearance of an undercut hindquarter.



Underposed: The front feet are placed too far forward and the back feet are behind the front of the hip.

Correctly Posed: The front feet are placed directly under the eyes and the toes of the rear feet are aligned with the front of the hips.

BEHOLD THE BEVEREN



Although dark in color, this Beveren rounds very nicely around the hindquarter and is very full to the table. He has exceptional shoulders as well."



This animal is posed correctly and shows a good topline from the proper start in the shoulders, a nice rise that rounds nicely into a full-to-the-table hindquarter. He is lacking some width over the hip-loin junction. He also shows ideal color for a Blue Beveren.



This animal could use more depth over the loin. She is a bit longer in the midsection, causing her to flatten out and not round as well over the back. She has good shoulders.



This animal has a beautiful head but is flat over the hindquarter and doesn't show a very good rise



This animal shows proper feet placement for posing. As an intermediate animal she hasn't matured or balanced out. When Beveren are intermediates, they tend to grow longer and then wider with age. She is too long in body and yet hasn't grown the mass or the width to balance.

The Beveren Body-Balance is Key:

The body type of a Beveren is semi-arch or Mandolin meaning that compared to other breeds they are slightly longer in body. They should have a well defined rise starting at the back of the shoulders, (not the base of the ear) and continuing in a smooth and gradual rise to the peak, and then round over the hip to complete the arch. The topline should resemble the mandolin instrument laying on its narrow side, with special attention to where the peak hits in order to present a balanced view. A trick that seasoned breeders tell new Beveren breeders is to keep a ruler in the barn. Using a ruler to measure the depth of shoulder and the depth at the peak helps confirm or deny what the eyes see. Most Beveren breeders look for a Beveren to be a minimum of 16+ inches from nose to tail to present a balanced, posed senior Beveren. The ideal Beveren that is balanced should have equal parts length to width respectfully. Some breeders may select narrow animals because they are long and have a sharp topline, without looking over the top of the animal to see if the animal is also broad in hip and deep in loin. The goal is to have shoulders that are strong, firm, broad, and balanced, with enough width through the hips to create a smooth taper. Shoulders lacking depth can give the appearance of depth through the hindquarters, and conversely too much depth of shoulder is usually paired with very little rise to the peak making the Beveren appear flat over the back. Balance is the key. The ideal height difference, most breeders who use the ruler agree on, from the top of the shoulders to the peak is no less than 2 inches on senior rabbits. This allows for the proper mandolin type to be seen on a mature Beveren if the rise from shoulder to peak is also balanced. The hindquarters should be full to the table.



similar to commercial body profile breeds. Ideally, Beveren have a diameter measurement of at least 6 inches in the hindquarter, however breeders are aiming for 9 inches on seniors. *“Extremely long or short body length; flat, lacking arched outline”* are faulted in the SOP.

The Beveren Head-Broad and Bold

The SOP states *“The head is to be full from top to bottom, with a well-filled face and jaws.”* The head should be balanced with the body as you usually see a broader head in bucks than in does. The head should also have a definite curvature between the eyes and nose and have a medium broad muzzle. A medium dewlap is allowed on does only. The faults as listed in the SOP are *“Narrow, pinched head; lack of curvature in profile; excessive dewlap.”*

The Beveren Ear-The Signature V-Shape

The ears should be well-furred and carried in a “V” shape. They should not be too thin, nor too heavy. The base of the ear should be strong so that the ear carriage is erect and carried in that signature “V” Shape. Senior or intermediate animals should have an ear length of 5+ inches. The only breed-specific ear disqualification is length less than 4.75 inches on seniors or intermediates.

The Feet & Legs of the Beveren-Straight, Strong and Powerful

The front feet should be straight and very strong. The hind legs should also be as straight as possible, well furred, and powerful. The feet and legs should have medium bone and should be in proportion to the body.

Many Beveren struggle with being pinched in the hindquarter. As breeders we must strive to breed for back feet that are wide set, parallel, and powerful. The toenails on whites should be flesh-colored or white and the toenail color on blacks and blues should be dark. The SOP disqualifies animals with non-matching toenails on the same foot or corresponding foot.

A full round and well-filled hindquarter is desired on the Beveren. Strive to cull pinched or undercut animals.



*Photo Credits:
Thomas Tafoya, Jen Richardson, Pam Jones and the ARBA
Photography Committee*



This animal shows a well curved head with a broad muzzle and very good “V” shape to the ears



The above photo shows back legs that are wide set, powerful and parallel showing us that he has a very nice hindquarter



This animal's feet are in a “V” shape showing us that the hindquarters are pinched.



This White Beveren portrays a beautiful balanced topline with well-shaped ears, a good shoulder, and smooth rise rounding over the hindquarter.

BEHOLD THE BEVEREN



The surface color of the black is to be deep and rich carried down to an undercolor of dark blue.



The surface color of the blue is to be a pure shade of light lavender carried uniformly down to the skin.



A close up of a White Beveren eye to show the brilliance and beauty of the eyes.



The Fur of the Beveren-Rich, Glossy, Dense:

Beveren have a rollback fur that is very dense and glossy. The guard hairs should be abundant and have a fine width, but that should be strong enough to fall gently back into position when stroked from tail to head. Density and texture are equally important, with the ideal fur length being between 1.25 and 1.50 inches. Beveren fur is faulted for being soft, wooly; harsh, or heavy. Fur under 1 inch in length, or fur over 2 inches in length is a disqualification.

The Complex Color of the Beveren

The Black color should be a deep, gleaming, jet black color carried down into a dark blue undercolor with the eyes being dark brown. The SOP faults on “Stray white hairs; rust; hutch stains; lack of even color.” It disqualifies for “Any other color eyes; white spot(s).”

The Blue color should be a pure shade of light “lavender” blue carried down into the undercolor, free from silvering with the eyes being Blue-gray, with allowance of a ruby glow to the pupil. Across the Beveren Breed there is a lot of discussion about the Blue Color. Some judges choose darker colored animals because it is an appropriate blue color for other breeds, but they don’t realize that the Beveren breed calls for a very light blue color.

The British Rabbit Council describes the blue Beveren Color as “Clear shade of light lavender blue, extending to the skin, free from silvering” which is how our standard puts it as well, however, within the BRC a lot of blue colored animals are lighter than in the United States. There is also discussion and clarifications being made about the word “lavender” in the Standard, which also confuses judges and people with the Lilac variety. Further clarification will be made in the future. The SOP faults on “Stray white hairs; rust; hutch stains; lack of even color; any shade of blue other than described.” It disqualifies “Any other color eyes; white spot(s).”

The White color should be, just that, as pure white as possible, with zero ivory cast, with the eyes being a brilliant blue. The SOP faults for "hutch stains." It disqualifies for "Any other color eyes."

An Everlasting Journey:

Beveren are beautiful, majestic, and wonderous. They are a challenging and complex breed to raise their beauty is second to none. I hope you will agree that they are a breed of distinction.

Join the Fun:

The Beveren Club is not just a club, we're a family. You'll be welcomed with open arms when you join the wonderful world of Beveren!

Beveren are suitable for many different purposes, including meat, show, pelts, etc. If you are interested in this breed or if you have questions and want to learn more, the Beveren Club website is <https://beverens.webs.com>. Our 2022 National Show will be held on April 9th at the Canton Ohio Hall Of Fame Show, so come and join us!



The proper color of a Blue Beveren next to a proper Blue Netherland Dwarf. The Blue color of the Netherland Dwarf is what most other ARBA Blue colors are similar to. Thank you, Pam Jones, for the use of the Netherland Dwarf.

Meet the Author:

Thomas Tafoya is a 16 year old from the little town of Cheboygan Michigan. At 6 years old he started raising rabbits and later fell in love with the rare breeds; particularly the Beveren. Thomas has earned Best In Shows, Reserve In Shows and Honorable Mentions with his Checkered Giants, Lionheads, Palominos, Cinnamons, Tans, Beveren, Standard Chinchillas and Silver Martens. At the 2021 ARBA Convention in Louisville Kentucky, he received Best Of Breed for both Beveren and Cinnamon, as well as many Best of Varieties.

Thomas has served the hobby by creating and running 'Virtual Rabbit and Cavy Shows!', the largest virtual show group during the Covid-19 pandemic and RHDV2; a task he still enjoys.

Thomas has taken steps to start a club in Northern Michigan and is working towards his ARBA registrars license in 2022.

Thomas would like to thank his mentors Nina Menard, Jamie Lucca, Kim Calloway, Pam Jones, Jen Richardson, Neill and Hannah Dunlap and Meg Whitehouse for the support throughout the creation of the article, and his parents for always supporting him.



To gaze into the Beveren is to catch a glimpse of true beauty