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AMERICAN BELGIAN HARE CULTURE.

BY
EPH. RUTH,
PONETO, - INDIANA.

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Being a full and concise treatise upon
the Breeding and Management
of this popular and val-
uable little animal.

BY
EPH. RUTH, PONETO, IND.

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PREFACE.

The unprecedented sale, with which the little book, entitled "THE BELGIAN HARE," has met with, together with the growing popularity of this valuable little animal, has been the cause of our launching this more complete work upon a generous and deserving public.

We have herein tried to treat this valuable subject more fully, knowing that beginners want something as a complete guide, whereby his labors may be well repaid, and that his time and money may be well spent. With this aim in view we have tried to outline briefly, though quite thoroughly, the principle points in Belgian hare culture.

If we have been the means of helping others to care for the Belgian hare, thereby contributing to their pleasure and profit, we shall feel amply repaid for our trouble.

THE AUTHOR.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

The Belgian hare is rather hard to describe in color, as we have been heretofore governed by the English Standard, which, while the American people have adopted, is not as clear upon several points as we should wish.

“Rufus Red” is a very indefinite term, as viewed by the writer. Dictionaries define “Rufus red” as being a “brownish red.” Thus you see we are out of the “mud into the mire.” As many shades of brown exist, as of red, and consequently we still are at sea.

Our idea of the red, preferred in a good specimen of the Belgian hare, is about that shade found in ground cinnamon. This red color should predominate upon the top of the neck, gradually becoming darker farther

back, which is caused by the "Ticking."

The "Ticking" should be the most prominent upon the rump or hindmost part of the animal.

This "Ticking" is not fully agreed upon, as some claim every hair should be tipped with black, which creates what is termed "Ticking." We consider this idea wrong, because upon the top of the neck, in best specimens no black should appear, but be a rich red, gradually becoming ticked as we go backward upon the animal. This ticking should be broken in appearance, producing a wavy-like appearance.

The front feet and legs must be a good red in color, similar to that described upon the back of the neck, but will be of a rather darker hue than found upon the neck.

The hind feet and legs are preferably red also, but white on the hind feet is not really a disqualification.

The ears should be well laced, and lacing means, the tips of the ears, and down the edges, should be laced with a narrow strip of black. The ears should be about five inches in length, and carried straight. Lopped or broken ear is a disqualification.

The standard weight is eight pounds, but greater weight is easily obtained and advisable, so long as we maintain the correct proportions.

The shape desired is a long, rather slim

body, giving the animal the appearance of speed. This shape is required by the present standard and is all very well for a showy specimen, but as we are nearing a point where we shall look to the butcher's block for our principle market, we think this "gas pipe" idea of shape will gradually become relegated to the past, and the more blocky form take its place, or perhaps we will obtain to more than one class of the Belgians, as in horses, viz.: a "draft" horse and a "race" horse. Each have different shapes, and serve their different purposes.

That we must have a revision of the present standard now in use, seems to the writer inevitable. "That the "Rufus red" strain's standard should be revised and made more explicit seems to be fast approaching and that there must be a standard for the Blacks is also certainly near at hand. Quite a number of breeders are originating strains of Black Belgians, and have them so well perfected at the present time, that they do not hesitate to say, they breed more true to color than those known as standards. Some people will ridicule the idea of Black or a White Belgian, but, reader, do not judge this matter until you have solved this problem. If an imported or thoroughbred buck and doe are mated together, and from that mating we get a litter of, say, ten young, and upon examination

we find in that litter three or four black ones and the balance standard color; which are the Belgian hares? We know of some writers who recently ignored the idea of black or white Belgians, but they have not told why they were not pure blood, or pure bred. They go on, however, selling the nest mates of that same litter as thoroughbreds.

When a friend of mine told me of his misfortune in a doe "throwing a litter of eleven, four of them as black as his hat, and that he forthwith destroyed the black ones," we could not help asking some questions. We first asked: what became of the red ones? He said, "they were fine, and I sold one pair at four months old at \$50.00" That led us to ask him whether they were thoroughbred. His reply was, "Yes, the buck was an imported one and the doe was only removed two generations from imported parents. That she had had five litter before, all red ones, and two litters since which were all red ones." If this proves that the blacks were not as much Belgian as the red ones, then we do not understand the laws governing thoroughbred breeding.

We advise breeders to stick to the blacks. We believe the day is coming when a black's pelt will be worth more than a cull red one will be worth, carcass, pelt and pedigree combined.

TO THE BEGINNER.

Beginners in hare culture should study well all sides of the subject. Many make mistakes in various ways, and while some are careful upon a few particular points they entirely neglect or lose sight of others.

First do not overdo the matter. Better have a few well cared for, than many kept in a haphazard way. "The best is none too good," is applicable to all kinds of live stock, and the Belgian hare is not an exception. Belgian hares are live stock, and deserve just as good care and attention as any other. If you do not think so, you better not engage in the breeding of them, as you will only be a source of discomfort to your animals, and do yourself no good, from a financial standpoint. Belgian hare culture, while it is a light, or easy occupation, it is not "child's play" and you must not so consider it or treat it, if you expect gratifying results.

Get good stock to commence with, and keep trying to improve upon what you already have, at all times. You cannot enter upon any new industry with a full knowledge of its necessities, but you can inform yourself, from time to time, upon any of the great or good issues, by reading up the experiences of others, and connect such informa-

tion, with that of your own observations, and you will have the best "encyclopedia" upon the subject in existence. We therefore say, observe closely your own stock; look well to their wants, by providing suitable quarters for them, which should be kept reasonably clean. We believe cleanliness in a rabbitry is the only road to health.

Feeding should be done upon good sound judgment, so as to not overfeed, or give too much of some one thing at a time when it may do harm. A sudden change of green food in large quantity being very detrimental to rabbits when not accustomed to it. When they are accustomed to it there will be no harm done, but use discretion at all times, if for no other purpose than to save waste.

To start in this industry we would state, get good stock, not too many, provide them suitable quarters, feed regularly and do not overfeed. Water is just as essential as feed, and should be supplied as regularly as feed. Keep the quarters clean as it is very essential to their health, and will make your rabbitry more inviting to yourself and visitors. Avoid wet or damp quarters, as the Belgian hare cannot endure wet quarters. Good dry nesting should also be provided, and soft hay or straw should be provided for such purpose.

ORIGIN.

The origin of the Belgian hare is clouded. The best authority obtainable upon the Belgian hare is very uncertain as to its exact origin. This, however, does not detract from its value or usefulness. While it would be much more satisfactory if we had a positive knowledge of its exact origination, we should not allow the absence thereof to lessen our appreciation of this valuable little animal. The most reasonable conclusion, of the origin of the Belgian hare, is that it is a production, or a result of judicious breeding of different types of the rabbit family. By whom, when, or where this was done cannot be determined positively.

The Belgian hare—so called— is a misnomer, because it is not a hare at all, and is entirely void of all the hare nature. Hares bring forth their young with eyes open, and lively as crickets, while the rabbit is quite different, being born blind and helpless, and remaining so for a period of eight to ten days. Again the hare does not give birth to so many at a time, nor so often. That the so-called Belgian hare is a rabbit, and nothing but a rabbit, its nature surely proves to be the case beyond any doubt. That it differs from the common rabbit, is true in regard to size, shape, color, etc., is all. Its nature is iden-

tical, and consequently in the absence of positive knowledge, we must reason from the most positive stand-points.

That it is a cross-bred animal, produced by crossing the hare with the rabbit, has been exploded, from the fact that all efforts to obtain a cross of that kind has either been fruitless or resulted in producing a sterile being, thus stopping further developments of the experimentations.

The Belgian hare, having been known under different names, such as "Ostend rabbits," "Leporines," etc., we believe has been the cause of losing track of its origin. There are no doubts but that the rabbits imported into England from Ostend, and by which name they became known, enter into what also was known as the "Leporine," and that from this latter name they took on their present name, from the fact of their resemblance in shape, etc., to the English hare. That they have been improved in size, shape, and color, to gratify the fancier, cannot be doubted, but while the fancier can improve by judicious breeding of scientific matings, he cannot change the nature of the animals so bred.

The origin need not hinder any one from engaging in the industry, as it is very evident that the Belgian hare has come among us to

stay, having qualities which we cannot help but appreciate to such an extent that, while we eat meat, and can find the quality so suitable to our requirements, in the Belgian hare, which can be produced at less expense than other meats less desirable, we certainly will give this little animal a large cultivation, even if we do not know all about his ancestry.

Value of the Belgian Hare.

It is remarkable with what force some people will enter into arguments upon topics of which they have not the slightest knowledge. We have never yet found any one who had actual experience with the Belgian hare, but what was favorably inclined toward this little animal. Upon the other hand, however, we find many who denounce them bitterly. Why? The answer is, because they are very ignorant of the true value of this industry. Were they as well learned in the true characteristics of the Belgian hare, as they would have you think them to be, then and in such case their croakings would change. Those who have devoted the most attention to the Belgian hare are the ones who today are most liberal in their praise of this industry.

Being the finest of meat, easy of digestion,

tender and juicy, having a good, rich flavor, places it among what will soon be classed as a necessity, instead of what it now is—a luxury. Being very prolific, cheaply fed, easily cared for, requiring very small quarters, enabling almost everyone to have a few for their own use, certainly are conditions that must meet with favor from every candid thinking person.

We will submit a few figures for the consideration of the reader, and allow you to draw your own conclusions.

A Belgian doe is capable of breeding eight or nine times a year. She will also produce from six to fifteen at each litter. Suppose she breeds six times in a year and has eight at a litter that she raises, this gives us forty-eight young in one year's time from a single doe. The first litter of her young are old enough to have had two litters of young each, and the second litter should have had one litter each. We will suppose that one-half are does and been bred as above indicated, we would have one litter of four does bred twice, or equal to eight does once, to which we add the other litter which is bred once, making four more or twelve does in all, of the young ones being bred. Now to estimate them upon the same basis we have twelve litters of eight each, or ninety-six young from the first two litters of the old

doe, making a grand total of one hundred and forty-four young produced from one single doe in one year's time. It is, however, but just to state that most of these young are not grown, but we can count upon thirty-two being full grown and estimate the balance one hundred and twelve about one-third or one-fourth grown.

The grown ones should weigh about eight pounds each and the others about three pounds each. Now the figures show that we would have nearly six hundred pounds of meat produced from one single Belgian in one year's time. If such does not give a very creditable showing we do not know what would, and as to the consistency of the above figures, we believe any one who has had one year's experience as a breeder will verify them as correct, and not overdrawn.

THE RABBITRY.

A rabbitry may be constructed upon a very inexpensive plan, or it may be made as fine and expensive as the proprietor wishes.

In regard to what it shall cost, must be determined by the party who is engaging in it, and while we shall try to outline a rabbitry, showing what amount of space is necessary, and our manner of constructing the interior portion, we will allow the reader to determine how expensive he may wish this structure to be, all of which can be regulated in price, as to material used, and fineness of finishing touches.

We will outline a house for rabbits upon a small and cheap scale, but one which will accommodate quite a number. The building to be, say, ten feet wide and twenty feet long, can be made to contain five hutches in a row on each side of the building. These hutches being made three feet wide and four feet long, will allow an isle or walk through the middle four feet wide. This building can contain two or three rows of such hutches up and down. If the first row of hutches is commenced up from the ground or floor, say, two feet, the whole space 10 by 20 feet could be used as an apartment for the young rabbits after weaning. The hutches should be

about two feet high each, and if intended to have three tiers high the building would have to be eight feet high at eaves. If you should wish to store some feed in same building, it could be made some higher and the upper part used to contain some hay and other food stuff such as grain, etc. You see such a building would contain thirty hutches, each hutch being three by four feet, which is ample room for one doe and her young, until the young are old enough to wean.

These hutches should be made with doors in the front. The doors could be made of frames from 1 by 3 inch stuff, and these frames covered with one inch wire netting. This arrangement allows of a good view of the inside of the hutches and also allows you to provide the rabbits with food and water readily. We also like a small door at back of each hutch to admit of cleaning out the hutches from the outside of building.

The hutches which are used for breeding does require a nest box in each hutch. This box should be about sixteen inches wide, twenty inches long, and fifteen inches high. The hutches used for bucks do not need any nest boxes. If you have the ground to use, you can make runs for your rabbits by fencing off little lots any desired size. Putting your fencing down in the ground about twelve to fifteen inches to keep the rabbits

from burrowing out, and making outside fences sufficiently high to keep out dogs, cats, and other vermin. Partition fences three feet high will hold the rabbits, and will do quite well for all the partition fences.

Thus you see a small space will contain a large number of rabbits. To enlarge your rabbitry, you can continue the length of the above described building, and each four feet in length of the house, will contain six hutches, if made three high.

If you construct the building out of ordinary lumber, the expense will be very light, while upon the other hand if you so desire you can use more expensive material, have it elaborately finished off, both inside and outside, and invest much money in the building. You must decide as to the expense.

FENCING.

In fencing ground for rabbits, two points must not be overlooked. It does not require a very high fence to keep the rabbit inclosed, but we must protect them from dogs, cats, etc., therefore we must fence to keep such out. We must also fence to keep the rabbits

in, by sinking the fence below the surface of the ground, sufficiently to keep them from burrowing out. This may be done by sinking boards to a depth of about sixteen inches below the top of ground. Wire netting is also very good and in some localities is cheaper than to use lumber. Where the wire netting is used, and it is intended for all except very small ones, we consider the six feet wide netting a good article to use. By putting it fifteen to eighteen inches into the ground, we have a fence four and one-half feet high which ought to keep out dogs, etc. Instead of using a scantling to tack the netting to at top we suggest the use of a heavy wire just above the netting, to which you can connect the netting by wiring the netting to this heavy wire, at intervals of about a foot. We think posts ought not to be over twelve feet apart, as it makes a better fence than if the distance is more.

The above is for outside fence, inside or partition fences need not be so high, as a three feet fence will be sufficient to keep the rabbits in. We advise the keeping of boxes or some kind of shelter for the rabbits to run into, in all inclosures, and if given some old logs, brush, or something to hide under or about they will not be so liable to try to burrow out, but will burrow about such places instead of at the fences. They also

require shade in summer time, and some kind of protection in bad weather.

FEEDING.

Feeding rabbits, while very simple, needs attention, and is more a matter of necessity than an art in knowing how.

Rabbits eat nearly all kinds of vegetables, and are quite fond of many kinds of fruit. Among the more common of their feed we will mention, Clover Hay, Corn Blades, Cane, etc. In grains: Oats, Corn, Wheat, Rye, etc. Vegetables: Cabbage, Carrots, Parsnips, Turnips, Potatoes, etc. They also eat many kinds of weeds and worthless stuff which make their keeping very inexpensive, such as Plantain, Milkweed, Lambsquarter and in fact nearly all succulent herbs are relished by them, and if used, lightens the expense of their keeping, and also gives them a greater variety, all of which we think is beneficial to them. They also will eat much of the scraps from the table, such as bread crusts, etc.

In regard to young ones, we advise milk if you have it. They will devour a great deal of milk, and if accustomed to it, will do much better at weaning time, than if they do not get it. Some say "they will not drink milk," but we have failed to ever

have that kind, and we believe those who write such stuff, either know better or they do not raise rabbits.

According to our experience, it is not so much a question of what to feed, as how to feed.

Feed regularly twice a day, and you will not miss it. Feed just what they will eat up nicely, so there will not be a loss by wasting of feed.

Provide small troughs, boxes, or dishes for grain, ground feeds, etc., and small racks for hay. Hay that is given to them on the ground or floor is very apt to get damaged by being trampled upon, and soon becomes unfit for food, and well-fed rabbits will not eat it. Therefore you want to guard against loss by providing suitable racks.

To feed enough and not to waste is economy. To feed good health-giving food, and at the proper time, is not only economy, but will be a great factor towards making a success of the business from a financial standpoint.

To conclude this chapter we will say: feed enough, but not to waste. Feed regularly and consistently. If not accustomed to green stuff, give it sparingly at first, and you can gradually increase the green feed until all danger will be over.

We believe a little dry feed is beneficial at all times, summer and winter, hot or cold, it won't hurt them.

DISEASES.

Diseases are not as common in this country as in Europe. The rabbit family in this country, we are glad to state, is a very healthy animal. The English breeders have much more to contend with, in the way of diseases, than the American breeders.

Snuffles, Slobbers, and Dysentary, are the principle diseases that breeders have to contend with in this country, and we firmly believe, that with good judicious management these can almost, if not entirely, be avoided. Our experience is that prevention is of greater importance than doctoring.

We shall herein give the reader a list of a few of the more common diseases, with remedies that have been either used by us or highly recommended by those whom we believe are perfectly reliable.

SNUFFLES.

Snuffles is the most prevalent disease known to the rabbit, or we might say, to the Belgian hare, as our experience has been almost entirely with the Belgian.

With good, healthy stock, properly housed, in roomy quarters that are well ventilated, and kept clean, together with good, suitable food, and we believe that snuffles would not be known, or not to any extent. The symptoms at first are sneezing, which at first may be very slight, caused by a slight cold. This sneezing grows worse as the disease progresses, and in aggravated cases results in apparent hard breathing, showing a rapid and excessive heaving of the sides, similar to "Thumps" in other live stock.

TREATMENT.

Remove the affected animal to an isolated hutch, where it will be free from draughts, and feed stimulating foods. Wash the nose and legs with carbolized soap. The carbolized soap used on the feet and legs is conveyed to the nose by the rabbits habit of washing itself with its feet, and keeps the nose supplied with the carbolization.

Disinfect the hutch with any good disinfectant. "Sanitas" oil is very highly recommended as a disinfectant, and is very good to use as a preventative. We have found tar-water a very good article to use. Take about a half pint of pure pine tar to a gallon of water, in which also put about two ounces of common salt. This mixture

in severe cases may be sprayed up the nostrils once or twice a day by using it in the proportions of one or two drops in as much warm water, which will cause the animal to sneeze violently, discharging the mucous from the nostrils. It can be sprayed up the nostril with a common small syringe. After sneezing quite freely, apply the mixture to the nose and front feet, and it will have a very healing effect. Boracic acid dissolved in water is also very good, used in like manner.

SLOBBERS.

Slobbers is most common to young rabbits, and is rarely found among the fully matured ones. It is a disease that we believe can be avoided by the free use of common salt. The cause seems to be from a compactness of the food in the stomach. The saliva which should go into the stomach, thereby helping to digest the food, is wasted out at the mouth, and the animal in washing itself, smears its front feet with the matter, and soon becomes a smeary mast about the head and front feet and legs. There is no doubt but indigestion is the cause.

TREATMENT.

Oil of Juniper has proved very good in cases of indigestion, and can be adminis-

tered two or three times a day, by putting about five drops of Oil of Juniper into a little sweet milk. Sweet Spirits of Nitre is also good, given in the same proportion and in the same manner. It is also well to wash the mouth with Borax water frequently. We also advise washing the feet with Borax water, Carbolized soap, or "Sanitas" oil.

DYSENTERY.

Dysentery is also more prevalent in young than old stock, but is common to both. It is generally traced to changing of food, from dry to green, which is often done too suddenly. In changing from dry to green food, do so gradually and you will avert much of this trouble.

The symptoms are: loss of appetite, the excrement soft and watery, and may sometimes come away in apparent chains, entirely unnatural.

TREATMENT.

Keep the rabbit warm and dry, and give about one teaspoonful warm water to which has been added one drop of ether and three or four drops of peppermint oil. Feed dry feed such as oats, dry bread, clover hay, etc., for a few days. Feed and nursing will do more than medicine in nearly all cases.

Carbolated Vaseline is a very good article to have at hand at all times and use same as has been suggested for the Carbolized soap. It is also excellent to use upon the ears of your rabbits at any time you may discover any sore spots upon them. In fact we think it is very good to use occasionally, even if the ears are not sore.

Before we drop the matter of diseases, we want to advise prevention again, as being much better than doctoring.

We therefore state that what doctoring is done, better be done before the disease has developed itself. Keep yourself supplied with some Oil cake, Fennigruuk, Carbolized soap, Vaseline, Oil of "Sanitas" and Naphtholeum. Use these articles from time to time as your good judgment will suggest, each in its proper time, and fed intelligently, and we think you will have but little need for doctoring, if you look well to cleanliness of the quarters, keeping hutches well disinfected at all times. The "Sanitas" preparations being of much value in the rabbitries at times.

It is an established fact, that good sanitation, judicious feeding, and close attention to the little details about the rabbitry will do more toward the successful operating of same, than doctoring your stock after disease have become deep-seated.

MATING.

In mating, we must consider well the object in view. If we are only mating or breeding for market purposes, where our aims are to produce pounds for meat, we have not so much to contend with as when breeding for fancy points.

In breeding for market, the principle things to be considered are, health and size, together with prolificness of the parent stock.

We consider health of first importance, as without good, healthy stock, our labors

will be in vain. Size is next to be considered, for pounds are what we are striving for, and is the factor wherein the dollars come from. Lastly we must consider the prolific quality of our breeding stock, for there are some stock more prolific than others, while some again may be sterile, and disappoint us altogether.

Consider well the above qualities, and breeding for market must be successful.

In breeding for fancy points we encounter greater difficulties, as we have so much more to contend with. We require all of the qualities necessary to breeding for market, together with the many fancy points which we wish to obtain in color, shape, etc. Therefore when we are mating stock for fancy points, we must study well what points are lacking in the female, and see that where she fails, or is deficient, that those points are well developed in the male that we mate to her. Thus if we have a doe lacking in ticking, we want to breed her to a buck that is well ticked. If the doe is deficient in lacing, select a buck that is well laced, and so in every particular, wherever the doe is not up to the very best, try and provide for the deficiency in the buck. Our experience has been that the male influences color and size, more than the female, and we can de-

pend upon a buck producing color points, more certainly than the doe.

It is a very erroneous idea, we think, to destroy quite young hares, on suspicion that they will be culls, because we cannot determine what quite young hares will develop into, especially is this the case in regard to color. We have had hares at two, and even three months of age, that we custrated, considering that they would be culls, but to our astonishment, when six months old they were quite fine animals.

In mating stock, always select the best specimens, both male and female, and observe closely all the points, such as size, color, shape, length of ears, ear lacing, ticking, etc., and never mate those which are both lacking in the same particular point or points.

MARKING RABBITS.

That some means should be resorted to, to mark rabbits, whereby we may know of their parentage or ancestry is very important to all who are breeding for particular points. We therefore will give a very simple mode, and one which we think as good as any, although there are several ways.

A great variety of marks may be made

by the use of notches, used upon both ears. To illustrate this mode of marking, we will mark one litter with, say one notch in left ear, another with two notches in left ear, another with three notches in left ear. Then we can use a notch in the right ear, and after using two and three, we can use one in each ear, one and two in each ear, and by reversing the order and using the three notches and both ears enables us to obtain a great variety of marks. To obtain more marks we only have to add another notch which will provide several more distinct markings. These marks will have to be registered, to refer to, as otherwise we would be liable to forget, but if registered we could at any time refer to same and know to a certainty just where certain rabbits belong. Notches in the ear does not do the rabbit harm to any extent, but holes in the ears are not advisable, as the rabbit cleans its ears with its paws, and if holes are in the ears they are liable to tear their ears and keep them sore, or what may be worse, cease to clean them, thereby causing disease. Notches will not have this effect, and is therefore a preferable method to use. We confess that seemingly this is a very trifling matter, but experience teaches the best breeders that such trifling things

are of much importance, and if we desire success, we must attend to the small things, when the larger will not be present to occupy our attention. It's an old proverb of "an ounce of prevention being worth pounds of cure."

Preparing For Exhibition.

Those who wish to place their Belgians in competition with others in the show room must consider well the facts which lead to success.

The best specimens are made to show to much better advantage, by grooming, etc. It is well and almost absolutely a necessity to look well after this matter if you wish your animals to carry off the prizes, because all breeders who are experienced along the line of exhibition, are doing exactly this kind of preparing. A Belgian hare can be improved in its appearance very much by being carefully and properly groomed for some time before exhibited. To do this you can use your hands only, or you can use a brush. The coat of the animal can be sleeked up to a wonderful extent by persistent grooming. Every stockman sees to it that his horse is groomed and cared for, and especially is such the case if he is intended to be exhibited. Is

there any reason why your Belgian should not have the same attention? By careful grooming, the coat or fur is kept clean, smooth and glossy, giving the hare a much better appearance than otherwise, and as we believe also tends to do the rabbit good in other ways. Condition is one of the points considered by the judge, and much can be added to the appearance by grooming, besides this course of working with your rabbits, has a tendency to tame or quiet them, causing them to appear, and really are, very much quieter, lessening their fear when visitors or the judge is around. You can add a great deal to the appearance of your Belgian by grooming, as well as to your horse. Try it for ten days and you will be convinced that such is the case. The fur becomes more sleek, loose hairs are removed, and any dirt that may have collected is also gone, giving a sleek, glossy appearance.

NOTES ON THE HARE.

The Belgian hare's period of gestation is thirty days, and seldom varies but a few days from that time. They will breed any time in the year.

They have been known to have as many as nine litters in one year.

They have been known to have as many as sixteen at a litter. They usually have from five to twelve at a litter.

They average, according to our observation, about eight or nine to the litter.

They do quite well in close confinement, or small quarters.

They are sometimes cannibalistically inclined.

They are sympathetic mothers, but will not fight to protect their young, but seem to grieve when their young is disturbed.

They seem to need more water at kindling time than usual.

They ought not to be bred more than six times in a year.

They will burrow in the ground, and fencing must be such as will prevent burrowing out. A three feet high fence will control them, but you must fence against dogs, cats, etc.

One buck will be sufficient for fifteen or twenty does.

Do not crowd too many into small space.

Water twice daily, or keep good water by them all the time.

Don't allow sick animals to remain with healthy ones.

Keeping the hutches clean, and well disinfected, will insure success in a rabbitry.

Mate the best of stock for breeders, and

let the others grace the table.

Do not doctor unless you understand fully what you are doctoring for. Prevention, we consider of much more importance than drugging the animals after becoming sick.

Sickness can usually be traced to some neglect upon the part of the keeper.

In mating take the doe to the buck's hutch.

Always handle them carefully. Handle them by taking a good handful of the pelt, just over the shoulders, like handling a puppy.

Do not handle by the ears, as there is danger of breaking. A lopped or fallen ear is a disqualification.

White on front of fore feet and legs is a disqualification.

A wry tail, foot or feet is also a disqualification.

A dew-lap does not disqualify, but is objectionable.

Great care should be used in judging Belgians.

Consult all the best literature upon your favorite subject.

Show your animals in competition with others.

If you do not secure the prize you will learn why.

Try to correct the errors of the past, for therein lies success.

Weigh the advice of others with your own good sense and past experience.

Do not fear an over production of hare meat. It will take hundreds of tons to supply our markets.

It only needs to be tried to be appreciated, and when fully introduced, the demand will be enormous.

Better only a few well cared for, than many neglected.

The pelts are also valuable, and markets are being established for this particular kind of fur.

The Belgian hare industry is one in which almost any one can engage in to provide recreation, and at the same time provide meat for the table, second to none.

The labor is not hard, and a child can take care of a few.

They are more docile than smaller breeds of the rabbit family, and are much more profitable, as they are very prolific, and fast growers.

When fully matured, Belgians weigh from eight to fifteen pounds. The standard weight is eight pounds, but larger size, if in proportion, is advisable, and not a defect.

The young should be separated when

about three months old, putting the sexes by themselves.

Surplus bucks should be castrated, it will lessen their fighting qualities, and they will do better.

You can cook the hare in any manner you would a chicken. Roast, fry, broil or stew them.

JUDGING.

Judging the Belgian hares, under the present or English standard, is a very difficult task, as the standard is very indefinite upon several points, and consequently admits of varying opinions.

Judging is done in two manners, the one being by comparison, the other by what is termed the score-card system, both having enthusiastic advocates.

Comparison judging we do not find as accurate as the score-card system, and affords the possessor of the animal nothing to go by for his own information, whereas the score-card points out or locates the defective points, thus giving us a record which can be preserved and consulted at any time, and affords a very good means of affecting sale of the animal, as well as being a very satisfactory evidence to the purchaser that he is getting his money's worth.

Comparison judging simply says you have

either lost or won, and leaves you there.

That either system can be done honestly and conscientiously, there is not a doubt; but that both ways have been, and will be used with some partiality is too true.

We are in hopes, and firmly believe that the time is not far distant when we will have a new standard, and we also hope to see it much more explicit, and that upon its adoption a score-card will also be adopted, whereby this valuable little animal will get his just deserts, and at the same time, sustain every good and honest judge, without him having to assert so much argument to sustain certain opinions.

That it can be done is very evident, but both systems will certainly have supporters, because in one we have that which we all covet, viz: the card which is positive evidence of a disinterested parties' judgments of that particular animal, and deserves consideration.

Upon the other hand, comparison admits of much more rapid work, and in great shows where many animals are to be judged, affords a very much quicker means of turning off the job.

That there will be differences of opinions cannot be helped, from the fact that men are prone to believe what *they* have is a little better than others, being blind to little de-

fects that the honest disinterested judge plainly sees, and being just, cuts the section possessing the defect.

PEDIGREES.

Experience teaches us that pedigrees are both beneficial and detrimental. If we could have a true, honest pedigree, from known ancestors, which were right beyond doubt, then we would want a pedigree.

But a pedigree,(?) giving a long recital of ancestry, bearing names of "Kings and Queens," "Lords and Ladies" of high degree, peddled out by unscrupulous persons for the sake of gain, are to be condemned by all who are honest at heart. That such pedigrees are too common, are fully realized by many confiding purchasers, who have invested handsome sums of money, to find that the price paid got them a pedigree, and the animal was a very poor specimen. Without the pedigree, the animal would scarcely be noticed by any one, much less by a true fancier.

It is to be deplored that such conditions exist, but that it is a fact is too evident.

We have no doubt but the above will bring forth criticism, but "truth is mighty," and we only wish to benefit our readers, when we state,—better buy an animal that is good

without a pedigree, than to buy a pedigree, without a good animal.

So far as a pedigree is concerned, it simply relates the genealogy of the animal, and it may be a good one, and it may be a very bad one, but who ever heard of a pedigreed animal, which was offered for sale, that the pedigree was not more forcibly dwelled upon than the real merits of the specimen itself?

When we produce an animal that has the requisite number of points, show that animal to a true fancier, stating the fact that you know nothing about his ancestry, but he is for sale, and you can be assured that he will not remain long upon your hand.

Then again produce an animal of which you can furnish a true record of its breeding back for many generations, but the specimen has many faults, although he comes from some "Lord and Lady" of high fame, show him to a true fancier, and place the same price upon him as upon the other specimen, and see which one will command the price.

We are not condemning the idea of a pedigree. Upon the other hand we are heartily in favor of a pedigree, but we do not want the reader to dote upon a pedigree to such an extent that he loses sight of points of perfection in the animal thus pedigreed. To illustrate our meaning, or rather demon-

strate the worthlessness of a pedigree, we will state that a pedigree of a Belgian hare is the same of all animals of the same litter. This being the fact, we wish to also state that we have never seen a litter of young, where all were alike good. Such being the case, consider a litter of half a dozen youngsters, half of which are males and half females, we have these animals, all varying in points of perfection, but bearing the same pedigree. Which, allow us to ask you, is the one to buy, judging from the pedigree? The type fail to tell us this important part, though the ink used be of glowing colors, and the high-sounding names of Lord, or Queen, loses much bearing under such reasoning.

COOKING THE BELGIAN.

We do not intend to go into detail as regards cooking the Belgian hare, as we do not consider it necessary.

The Belgian hare can be cooked in any way in which a chicken can, and when that is said we believe it is made so plain that all will be able to cook them, if they only have them to cook.

You can roast them, fry them, boil or broil them, and lastly but not leastly, Pot Pie them. In the latter case stew until the

meat is tender, removing the bones. Make a nice crust with which line a deep pan, then place your hare meat in this pan in which it is to be baked. Add salt and pepper to taste, and if desired any other seasoning. Cover the top with a crust same as you lined the pan with, and bake quickly.

Dressing for roast hares may be the same as for chicken. A very good dressing being made as follows: one pint of bread or crackers crumbed fine, one teaspoonful of pepper, one of thyme, and a tablespoonful of salt, if in season and desired a little parsely chopped fine. Melt a piece of butter the size of an egg, and add one cup of boiling water, also a couple of well beaten eggs. Mix the above thoroughly and you will have a very simple inexpensive dressing. You can use other articles if desired, or make any kind of dressing suitable to your taste.

Young hares three to five months old are the most suitable for frying. For roasters select those from four to six months old, and if older ones are used for roasting it is best to parboil them first, making them more tender. Older ones should be boiled or stewed until quite tender when they can be roasted also.

THE HIDE.

That the hide of the Belgian hare has a value not to be overlooked, is evidenced by the fact that hatters use large amounts of such fur in the manufacture of their goods.

That this fur will grow in demand, is certain to be the case. The demand we believe will grow, as the production is increased.

The hide is also valuable in the manufacture of robes and garments of various kinds, and as we produce more and more from year to year, so also will the consumption grow.

To skin the hare is quite simple and needs no explanation further than to state that if the hide is intended for use in the manufacture of robes, or garments, when the hide with the fur on is wanted, then skin the animal as you would skin a coon, or an ox. If for hatters use, where the fur alone, without the hide is used, skin the animal as you would skin a mink or muskrat, by ripping the hide from one hind foot across to the other, and strip down over the body, without ripping along the belly. To stretch the hide taken off in this latter manner, shape a board properly and insert into the hide with the fur side next to the board. Stretch tightly, and tack with a few small nails and leave to dry.

To tan the hide can be done by any pro-

cess known to tan any of our fur bearing pelts. A very simple process, and one that has been in use for a great many years, is salt and alum. Remove all fat from the hide, and apply salt and alum of equal parts which has been powdered quite fine. After two days remove same, moisten the hide again and apply another coat of the above salt and alum, letting it remain on about three days, when it can be treated again with half as much salt as alum, completing the process entirely, and leaving the pelt soft and in a nice condition.

There are many more processes for tanning, but we have been informed that this one is as good, if not the best, for its simple process, ease of application, and the cheapness of the composition, being easy to obtain the salt and alum in any locality.

Possibilities of Hare Culture.

It is very difficult to comprehend what the industry will develop into. That it is, and will continue growing to wonderful proportions seems quite certain. The prolificness of the rabbit seems to indicate that in a short time the country would be overflowed with them, and this very thought seems uppermost in the minds of many, which will have a tendency to delay the progress of the

industry. That we are in any immediate danger of an overproduction, is not consistent with the best judgment. When we consider the immense number of people of this country alone, who must be fed, incomprehensible figures confront us, and the thought of an overproduction vanishes like dewdrops beneath the morning sun.

With upwards of seventy-five million people of our country to be fed, to say nothing about the balance of the world, we can scarcely comprehend the consumption of any of our food products.

That the Belgian hare will fill a want in this country is very probable. The pasture lands of the middle west are becoming short, resulting in a less production of beef cattle, while the consumption is steadily increasing. With the above fact fully established, we cannot foresee the possibilities of an animal which affords as fine a quality of meat as does the Belgian hare, which can be produced at as low a price, as we can produce any kind of meat. Reasoning upon such thoughts, we cannot help but anticipate a market for many hundreds of tons of Belgian hare meat annually. We cannot comprehend the amount of the poultry products in this country. We look upon statistical reports, reading the figures without any definite ideas of their gigantic meaning.

That the Belgian hare will develop into an industry of similar proportions seems to be very evident. Easily raised, requiring very small space, affording as fine a meat for consumption as any we have, surely indicate a future for this animal that cannot be foretold. That some will become over-enthusiastic is probable. That many will doubt its utility is certain, but having the usefulness it has, combined with its economic culture, certainly will provide for the Belgian hare a prominent place in the homes of the American people. Our hunger must be abated, our appetites be satisfied, and as long as we live, move, and have our being, we must supply necessary food for this purpose. That the Belgian hare is destined to supply this want in a great measure is reasonable to conjecture.

BLACK BELGIANS.

There is no longer any doubt but that the Black Belgian, must have its place among the list of valuable animals, and not, as many have been inclined to think, "only a cull." Those who are so inclined will find that they have been losing time, and that the black Belgian is not only a fixed fact, but that in points of value, is in advance of his red-necked brother. None will question

the quality of the meat, and when we take into consideration the pelt, the black certainly will have first place among furriers.

We know no reason why the blacks will not be as hardy, as prolific, affording just as fine a "roast or fry" as the red ones, and such being true, there can be no doubt but the blacks will out-value the standard ones in the pelt.

We know that black pelts, among the furriers command the best prices and it must necessarily follow that the black Belgians pelt will command the better price also. As we increase the production, we will also increase the demand for this kind of fur, and it is not unreasonable to believe that the day is coming when we can produce Belgians for a sum equal to that of the value of the pelt.

Skunk farms and mink farms are springing up all around us, and we are informed that they are very remunerative. Such farms are conducted expressly for the fur production, having but little value aside from that of the pelts, and we believe Belgians can be raised with much less expense than either skunks or mink.

Belgian hares have the additional value, aside from their fur, of that of the whole carcass being the finest of meat, and being in demand for food. We cannot approximate the value of this coming little animal.

LEPORINES.

According to the best information we can obtain, the so-called Belgian hare of today, was originally called "Leporine." Some-time early in the nineteenth century, some wild animals found in Belgium, were secured and bred together, with a view of rearing an animal, conforming in shape to the English hare.

These wild animals were rabbits, and the product of their mating were called "Leporines."

About the middle of the century these animals found their way to England, when they became known as Belgian hares, from their resemblance to the English hare. However this may be, the name is a "misnomer" for the fact that this animal is not a hare at all, but an improved strain of the rabbit family. The very natures of the hare and rabbits are quite different, and all efforts to cross the hare and rabbit have been futile.

There is no doubt but what it was the English fanciers, who succeeded in producing this valuable little animal in its present size, shape and color, originating it from a much smaller, and a very different shaped animal. The present production of this labor is a very beautiful and practical animal,

standing confinement quite well and very hardy.

There seems to have been two distinct types, developing from this series of breeding. The one was bred for its wonderful size, and was known as the Flemish Giant, while the others, conforming more to the style and shape of the English hare, were bred for their beauty, and were known as the Belgian hare.

The first standard was adopted in England in the year of 1878. That standard did not require a long racy appearance, and the ticking extended all over the animal. In 1882 the standard was revised, and that revision resulted in the form which we now have. While the present standard is very indefinite upon several points, it has been a great benefit to fanciers who have been guided by its outlines and much improvement has been derived from its guidance. No standard was adopted for the Flemish Giant until 1897 which was done in England also. The latter requiring even ticking all over, with very large size.

It was in 1897 that the National Belgian Hare Club of America was organized, and they adopted the English standard for the Belgian hare. The standard for the Flemish Giant has not been adopted in this country as yet, but there is every reason to be-

lieve that it will be in the near future. That both the Belgian hare and the Flemish Giant, originated as above stated there is not a doubt, but to whom is due the first credit, or at just what data is not positively known.

Will The Business Be Overdone.

A great many persons, are always in fear of some calamity overcoming every new adventure. This is all very well, and to consider the possibilites of success or failure that may attend any business, is wisdom. So many have asked us if we did not think this business would be soon overdone, that we deem it useful to herein state our views upon the matter.

Our opinion is that it will not soon be over-done although we firmly believe the industry is only now in its infancy, and within a few years will the production increase a hundred-fold. However this wonderful increase has no reason to alarm any one, or cause them to fear an overproduction yet.

We believe the census of 1900 will show that we have seventy-five millions of people, to say nothing about the balance of the world.

When we produce hare meat, and place it upon the market at a price the same as other meats can be bought for, there will

be no doubt but that hundreds of tons of this meat will be in demand. Compare it with that of poultry, and we cannot comprehend the amount that will be required to fill the wants of this great nation alone.

It is fair to count upon the above figures, and allow each person to consume, say, ten hares in a year, or one in five weeks, we will have the stupendous number of three quarters of one billion hares, to produce in the year. Such being the case, it would require 50,000 men to kill and dress 50 hares each per day, 300 days in the year to make them ready for this market.

We admit the above figures are somewhat startling, but figure it correctly for yourself, and see if we are not right. If we are right, we certainly think that fears of over production are without foundation, although the Belgian hare is a wonderfully prolific animal.

They can be produced at a less expense per pound than any other meat we know of, and the quality being second to none, and superior to most other meats, we certainly are borrowing trouble, when we are considering a glut in the market at this early day. There is room for, and will be a demand for many millions of Belgians each year, so long as the people eat, and when we quit eating will be time enough to consider over production of this best of meats.

THE BENEFITS OF CLUBS.

That the organization of clubs are a great benefit to the Belgian hare industry, or to any other industry, is beyond all doubt. The only question of their usefulness lies in the management of same.

Clubs organized and operated upon unbiased principles are of untold importance to all concerned. They are simply schools of information, in which members participate in exchanging ideas and experiences, which ideas find their way to the press, thereby giving to the world at large much information which otherwise would lie dormant in the minds of but a few. They are also the incentives of our shows, which arouse our enthusiasm, spur us on to greater and more persistent efforts, trying from time to time to produce the very ideal animal that is required by the standard. It is through the efforts of these organizers that we engage in building up certain branches or annexes to the industry which later on bear fruit of importance to all concerned.

Any well regulated show, where all can compete in friendly contest for honors, visited by thousands of persons, both interested, and those not directly interested, cannot help but be of much importance.

It is the incentive to greater efforts upon the part of those already engaged in the pursuit, and also the creation of many new converts to the industry.

That organizations should recieve the support of all true fanciers, there cannot be any reasonable doubt.

Such organizations have done, and are doing very much toward the advancement of the interest of all kinds of live stock, and the Belgian hare industry can be benefited in a similar manner, if the fanciers will organize and work together, each and every one lending his brother fancier the encouragement he can.

Club organizations can do much in subduing dishonest transactions of unprincipled persons who are ever ready to prey upon a generous public. They can and will do it. Organize for protection. It is all right.

GENERAL REMARKS.

That Belgian hare culture is a pleasant and profitable occupation, those who have experience in the branches do not hesitate to proclaim. That those who know nothing about this growing industry, should be very loud in their cries of "Fad," does not signify anything. It is this very class of

people, who, when they do discover their mistake, and finding that they have only been losing time from their own ignorance of the true facts, become the most enthusiastic upon the other side. We do not approve of either being over-enthusiastic upon either side of the question, but rather incline to the idea that cool common sense be applied to both sides of the question. It is not all "sunshine" in any avocation, and we must not expect that Belgian hare culture is attended with no drawbacks. All live stock is subject to more or less disease, must be properly provided for, and given such attentions as their natures and the surrounding circumstances require, if we hope to be at all successful.

That many will engage in this industry, who will fail entirely, while others will engage in it and seemingly under no better circumstances, they will succeed from the very start, must be expected. It has been the case in all things, and we need not expect it to be otherwise in this occupation.

To the experienced breeder, there is little can be said to encourage or discourage him, so far as he has had experience, because experience has always been a grand teacher, though oftentimes a very expensive one. It is for this reason that we aim to obtain the experience of others, connecting the same

with our own (if we have any) or utilize it to our advantage, thus gaining knowledge which perhaps it would take us years to obtain, and at an expense much greater, to say nothing about the loss of time.

Such being the case, it certainly is advisable then, especially to the beginner, to observe closely the actions of others engaged in their chosen occupation, who are successfully conducting the business, and to reach out much farther in our efforts of observation we have only to read the literature being published upon the subject, obtaining therefrom the experience of those with whom we cannot come in contact personally. The press is mighty, and he who expects to get along without reading all the literature he possibly can, will find himself behind, if not a failure in his chosen occupation. Read, think, act, and application will bring success.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion allow us to state that we have herein tried to give such facts, as have been our own guidance, in conducting a rabbitry upon a small scale, and upon very limited means, together with such other datas as were given to us, by personal friends, in whom we have every reasonable confidence of the truthfulness of same.

It has been our aim to convey to the readers, plainly, though very briefly, such information as seems to us the most necessary to the successful operation of a rabbitry, and while we were inclined to believe that we could do the most good by producing a work at a nominal price, that would fill the wants of more persons entering upon a new adventure, by confining our work to short chapters, touching upon more points to be considered by the beginner, thus covering a much larger range of the real fundamental requirements of this industry, than to spin out a long essay consisting of well worded flowery language, intended more to please the mind, than to enhance the pleasures and value of the occupation.

We believe that Belgian hare culture is the coming industry of this country, and to those who are engaged in this valuable occupation, and to those contemplating engaging in it, either for the pleasure they may derive from it, or for the profit they may realize from this popular and growing industry, we submit this little work, hoping that the hints herein contained may be the means of helping you to success, and that you will be guided by its teachings to such an extent that your pets, which the writer holds in such high esteem, will be cared for in such a manner, that they will fare no

worse, than his teachings herein laid down would suggest. With this end achieved, the writer will consider his work well done, and that his labors have been fully rewarded.

STANDARD.

We herein reproduce the only guide we have at present, in regards to points. That the present standard will be revised, or a new one adopted soon, we believe will be the case.

DISQUALIFICATIONS.

A lopped or fallen ear or ears, wry tail, or crooked foot or feet, solid white on front of forefeet or legs.

THE ENGLISH STANDARD.

1. **Color**—Rich rufus red (not dark, smudgy color) carried well down sides and hind-quarters, and as little white under the jaws as possible..... 20
2. **Ticking**—Rather wavy appearance and plentiful..... 15
3. **Shape**—Body long, thin, well tucked-up flank and well ribbed up; back, slightly arched; loins, well rounded, not choppy; head rather lengthy; muscular chest; tail straight,

	not wry; and altogether of a racy appearance.....	20
4.	Ears —About five inches long, thin, well laced on tips and far down outside edges as possible; good color inside and outside, and well set on.....	10
5.	Eyes —Hazel color, large, round, bright, and bold.....	10
6.	Legs and Feet —Forefeet and legs, long, straight, slender, well col- ored and free from white bars; hindfeet as well colored as possible... ..	10
7.	Size —About eight pounds.....	5
8.	Condition —Not fat, but flesh firm like a race horse, and good quality of fur.....	5
9.	Without Dewlap	5
Total		100

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