



Judging Rabbit Pelts

4-H LEADER GUIDE • EM4353E

Information on the detailed and systematic judging of rabbit skins is based on the same characteristics as those found in the live rabbit. The following information is from the American Rabbit Breeders Association's *Standard of Perfection* and through correspondence with its members.

COMMERCIAL FUR CLASSES

Designed to meet the requirements of fur normally used in the manufacture of fur garments or trim, the two fur classes of commercial, normal fur are Colored (all colors except white) and White (usable portions of pelt only). There are also classes for Satin and Rex fur.

Texture

20 points. Definition: the characteristic disposition or connection of threads, filaments, or other slender bodies interwoven as a fabric of close texture.

The coat should have "body." It should not be harsh or like wire, nor too fine, silky, or woolly. It should have enough coarse guards to offer resistance when stroked towards the head. This stroking action produces a reaction in the fur called "flyback." That is the return, evenly and quickly, of the fur to its natural position over the entire body. The best furs stand straight up

during and after flyback, and do not assume a prone or flattened position. The undercoat should be soft and fine, interspersed thickly with heavier, longer guard hairs. These guard hairs serve to protect the soft undercoat.

Density

15 to 20 points (dense or thick). A good thick coat of fur all over the back, sides, chest, and flanks. Rabbits scoring high in density have a larger, more usable pelt. The underfur shall be soft and dense; thick, with heavy, protruding guard hairs. These guard hairs should be visible down to the skin, and extend above the underfur; the stomach fur will be shorter. Avoid soft, woolly fur on the stomach and crotch.

Balance and Condition

20 to 30 points (balanced even and smooth). Fur length should be normal for the animal, with a differential between the tip of the guard hair and the underfur not to exceed $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. A dense coat is preferable to a thin coat. Condition means a state of being thick and alive. To be in proper condition, the fur must be set tight in the skin, without evidence of molt, broken spots, mats of fur, or stain. The guard hairs should be live and not brittle or dry. The coat should be clean, bright, and clear of stain.

Color

15 to 25 points. Nature's natural color enhances the coat to a degree that cannot be duplicated by commercial dyeing; it is reality-oriented.

Coat colors are classified as selfs, shaded, agouti, and marking patterns. Any color may be expressed in terms of three factors: hue, chroma (purity or saturation), and brightness (or value). Generally, the most obvious or striking feature of a color is its hue. The color is qualified as pale, dark, dull, light, deep, clean, smutty, brindled, etc.

Matching colored pelts goes beyond selecting the ideal breed standard's surface color. Depth of surface color is important. It must be carried well down the hair shaft in the self and shaded classes. In the agouti classes, proper intermediate color is important. To match correctly, the undercolor must also be considered. (Note color on hair shaft next to skin).

Leather and Size

20 points. The leather side of the pelt should be smooth, lightweight, and supple. Cut pelt value if the tanned leather is heavy, beardy, torn, cut or extremely ragged on the edges, or wrinkled. The dorsal fur is the usable portion. This portion covers the area from the neck to the rump at the tail junction, and down the sides to the lower flanks. The ventral (belly) area has a shorter, softer fur. Size is important. The usable portion must be as large as possible.

DESIRED QUALITIES FOR TANNED PELTS

When judging pelts, we are guided by the commercial live animal fur standards. The best quality rabbit skins would be those taken from older animals during cold weather. Primeness of the pelt may be determined by blowing into the coat. A prime skin is in the best condition

possible. Unprimed areas can be identified by the short fibers of the new ingrowing fur. Evidence of shedding and the difference in rate of growth of the new hair are clearly evident on the flesh side of the colored skins by the extant and intensity of the pigment. White skins show only a faint amount of this discoloration. Again, the poorest quality skins do not have flyback; they feel soft and the fur mats easily.

SATIN FUR STANDARD

The ideal Satin fur should be fine, very dense, and thick. The soft, dense undercoat should be interspersed thickly with luminous slightly coarser guard hairs, visible to the skin and extending above the underfur evenly $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. The coat should be well balanced, of uniform length, about 1 inch to $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches long; allowable lengths include plus or minus $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. It must have a distinct glossy, lustrous sheen.

REX FUR STANDARD

The Rex fur is short and plush-like. It stands straight upright and has guard hairs of almost identical length with those of the undercoat. Rex fur must be extremely dense, $\frac{5}{8}$ inch long, straight, upright with identical length and texture throughout the entire body. The fur has a lustrous sheen with an incredible supply of guard hairs, evenly distributed over the body without protruding noticeably. The fur is to be of good body with a plush-like effect and distinct, springy resistance to the touch. It should feel smooth to the touch without being soft or silky.

For the complete guide for grading and matching pelts, it is best to use a special card, tailored for each fur type, with delineation and point values for each factor.

Summary Score Card for Commercial Normal Fur Pelts

<i>Character</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Judge or Select for:</i>
Texture	20	Flyback qualities necessary for durability
Density	15	Lush, thick-set coat, cushiony feel
Balance	15	Evenness of texture, density, and length
Condition	15	Prime, finished, free from stain and dirt
Total	<u>65 Points</u>	

Summary Score Card Commercial Satin Fur Pelts

<i>Character</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Judge or Select for:</i>
Texture	20	Roll-back qualities necessary for durability
Density	15	Lush, thick-set coat, cushiony feel
Balance	10	Evenness of texture, density, and length
Condition	10	Prime, finished, free from stain and dirt
Sheen	10	High degree of luster, bright
Total	<u>65 Points</u>	

Summary Score Card Commercial Rex Fur Pelts

<i>Character</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Judge or Select for:</i>
Density	20	Extremely thickset, plush-like guard hairs plentiful
Texture	15	Upright, springy, smooth to the touch
Balance	15	Same length, density, texture over entire pelt
Condition	15	Prime, lustrous, free from breaks, bare spots
Total	<u>65 Points</u>	

To each of the fur pelt classes, add the following characters in order that the total scores may equal 100 points.

	<i>Points:</i>	
Color	20	Proper surface, intermediate, undercolor
Leather	10	Lightweight, soft, pliable
Size	10	Largest usable portion of pelt
Total	<u>35 Points</u>	



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EM4353E