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# RABBIT TRACKS: *Choosing a Breed*

## Introduction

Choosing a breed of rabbit to raise is one of the most important decisions you'll make for your 4-H rabbit project. There are 42 recognized rabbit breeds and more than 100 kinds of domestic rabbits. These breeds and varieties range in size from 2.25 to more than 15 pounds when mature. Breeds are set apart by body type, while varieties are distinguished by coat color. There are vast differences in body shape, size, fur, coat and eye color, markings, and temperament among the breeds and varieties. Therefore, before you choose a breed, learn as much as possible about the breeds that appeal to you.

## Learn About the Breeds

To learn about various breeds of rabbits, get to know local rabbit breeders. Also, join a rabbit club, attend rabbit shows and 4-H rabbit programs, and read pamphlets, trade magazines and books about rabbits. The **Standard of Perfection**, which is published by the American Rabbit Breeders Association, is recommended. Your local 4-H rabbit leader, state 4-H rabbit specialist, rabbit associations and specialty clubs can also help you find information about the rabbit breeds that interest you.




## Selecting the Right Breed

Your final decision on which breed to raise should be based largely on your purpose for raising rabbits. Coat color and breed traits should be considered, but it's not practical to select a breed for looks alone. Certain breeds of rabbits are better suited for meat production, fur production, exhibition or laboratory use. There is no single breed that is best for all purposes, although some breeds have multiple uses.

If you are interested in fur, four types of hair structure (normal, Angora, rex and satin) are recognized in rabbits. In certain fancy breeds bred mainly for show (such as Dutch, English spot and checkered giant), coat markings are very important. Raising these fancy breeds may be too challenging for beginners. This is because a large number of offspring is usually required to obtain animals with suitable markings for showing.

The standard breeds and varieties of rabbits recognized by the American Rabbit Breeders Association, their ideal body weights and uses are shown in the following table.

## Suggested Reading

**Standard of Perfection**, American Rabbit Breeders Association, P.O. Box 426, Bloomington, IL 61702. 



## Rabbit Breeds

Breed	Varieties	Ideal Body weight (in pounds)		Primary Uses
		Bucks	Does	
American	Blue, white	10	11	Meat, fur, show
Angora (English)	White, colored	5.5	6.5	Wool, show
Angora (French)	White, colored	8	8	Wool, show
Belgian hare		8	8	Show
Beveren	White, blue, black	9	10	Show
Britannia petite		2.25	2.25	Show
Californian		9	9.5	Meat, show, fur
Champagne d'Argent		10	10.5	Fur, show
Checkered giant (American)*	Blue, black	11 or over	12 or over	Meat, show
Chinchilla (American)		10	11	Fur, meat, show
Chinchilla (Giant)		13-14	14-15	Fur, meat, show
Chinchilla (Standard)		6.5	7	Fur, meat, show
Cinnamon		9.5	10	Meat, fur, show
Crème d'Argent		9	10	Fur, show
Dutch*	Black, blue, chocolate, gray, steel, tortoise	4.5	4.5	Show, lab
Dwarf hotot*		2.25	2.25	Show
English spot*	Black, blue, chocolate, gold, gray, lilac, tortoise	6	7	Show
Flemish giant	Black, blue, fawn, light gray, sandy steel gray, white	12 & up	13 & up	Meat, show, fur
Florida white		5	5	Lab, show, fur
Harlequin*	Japanese, magpie	7.5	8	Show, fur
Havana	Black, blue, chocolate	5.25-5.5	5.25-5.5	Show, fur

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## Rabbit Breeds (Continued)

Breed	Varieties	Ideal Body weight (in pounds)		Primary Uses
		Bucks	Does	
Hotot*		9	10	Meat, show, fur
Jersey wooly	White, colored	3	3	Show
Lilac		6-7	6.5-7.5	Fur, show
Lop (English)	Solid, broken	10	11	Show
Lop (French)	Solid, broken	11	12	Show
Lop (Holland)	Solid, broken	3	3	Show
Lop (Mini)	Solid, broken	5.5	6	Show
Netherland dwarf*	Self, shaded, agouti, tan pattern, any other variety			
New Zealand	Black, red, white	10	11	Meat, lab, show, fur
Palomino	Golden, lynx	9	10	Meat, show, fur
Polish	Black, blue, chocolate, Blue-eyed white, Ruby-eyed white,	2.25	2.25	Show
Rex*	Black, blue, broken, California, castor, Chinchilla, chocolate, lilac, lynx, opal, otter, red, sable, seal, white	8	9	Fur, show
Rhinelanders*		8	8.5	Show, fur
Sable		8	9	Fur, show
Satin*	Black, blue, Californian, Chinchilla, chocolate, copper, red, siamese, white	9.5	10	Fur, show
Satin Angora	White, colored	8.5	8.5	Wool, show
Silver	Brown, fawn, gray	6	6	Show, fur
Silver Fox	Black, blue	9.5	10.5	Show, fur, meat
Silver marten*	Black, blue chocolate, sable	7.5	8.5	Show, fur
Tan*	Black, blue, chocolate, lilac	4-5	4.5-5.5	Show

\*Breed may have coat color markings.



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