

Transylvanian Giant Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*): we don't want another variety of German Giant

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Abstract. The present paper intends to sound an alarm signal regarding the morphological evaluation criteria of the Transylvanian Giant Rabbit (TGR). Although TGR is a breed for exhibitions, it has some features specific to the production lines (ears not that long, limb bones not very long, head and belly not very large, muscles well developed). Rabbit breeders and some judges in different shows and contests have popularized the German Giant body shape as being mandatory for all large breeds of rabbits, which is not exactly accurate. The tendency of breeders and referees to judge the shape of the TGR body according to the criteria valid for the German Giant breed could transform the TGR into a new variety of German Giant.

Key Words: European Standard, hardy, morphology, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, rustic.

How the Breed Was Designed. The Transylvanian Giant Rabbit (TGR) is a newly formed and consolidated breed (Petrescu-Mag et al 2009, 2014). It was created as a compromise solution between some current trends and demands, specific to Romania:

1. There was a need for a Romanian breed, hardy, built on a rustic, local genetic background (Jochová et al 2017; Abdel-Kafy et al 2018).

2. The TGR breed had to present qualities that enable it to be farmed intensively but, first of all, it had to be able to be farmed on a small scale (backyard farming) (Petrescu-Mag et al 2011), because the big companies producing rabbit meat did not face external competition.

3. The TGR breed would not have had the chance to last for decades if it had not been standardized for show/competition (Figure 1). The animals certified as belonging to specialized breeds, and which were exhibited at shows had higher sale prices, being considered livestock. In fact, the only breeds of rabbits that have survived over the centuries in Romania are the show breeds.

For these reasons, although TGR is a breed for show, it also presents some features which are specific to the production lines (shorter ears, limb bones not very long, head and belly not very large, muscles well developed) (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 1. Young Transylvanian Giant Rabbits with good potential for shows (photo credit: Costi Soare).



Figure 2. Black variety of Transylvanian Giant Rabbit (photo credit: Ion Mohora).



Figure 3. Havana variety of Transylvanian Giant Rabbit (photo credit: Vicențiu Vick).

How They Try to Transform It. Rabbit breeders and some judges in shows have popularized the German Giant body shape as being mandatory for all large breeds of rabbits, which is not exactly accurate. If we look at the morphology of the body of the large breeds, as presented in the European Standard for Show Rabbits, we can see that there are at least three large breeds that show significant differences from the German Giant-specific body type: Blue of Mähren (Figure 4), White of Bouscat (Figure 5) and Blue of Saint Nicolas (Figure 6).

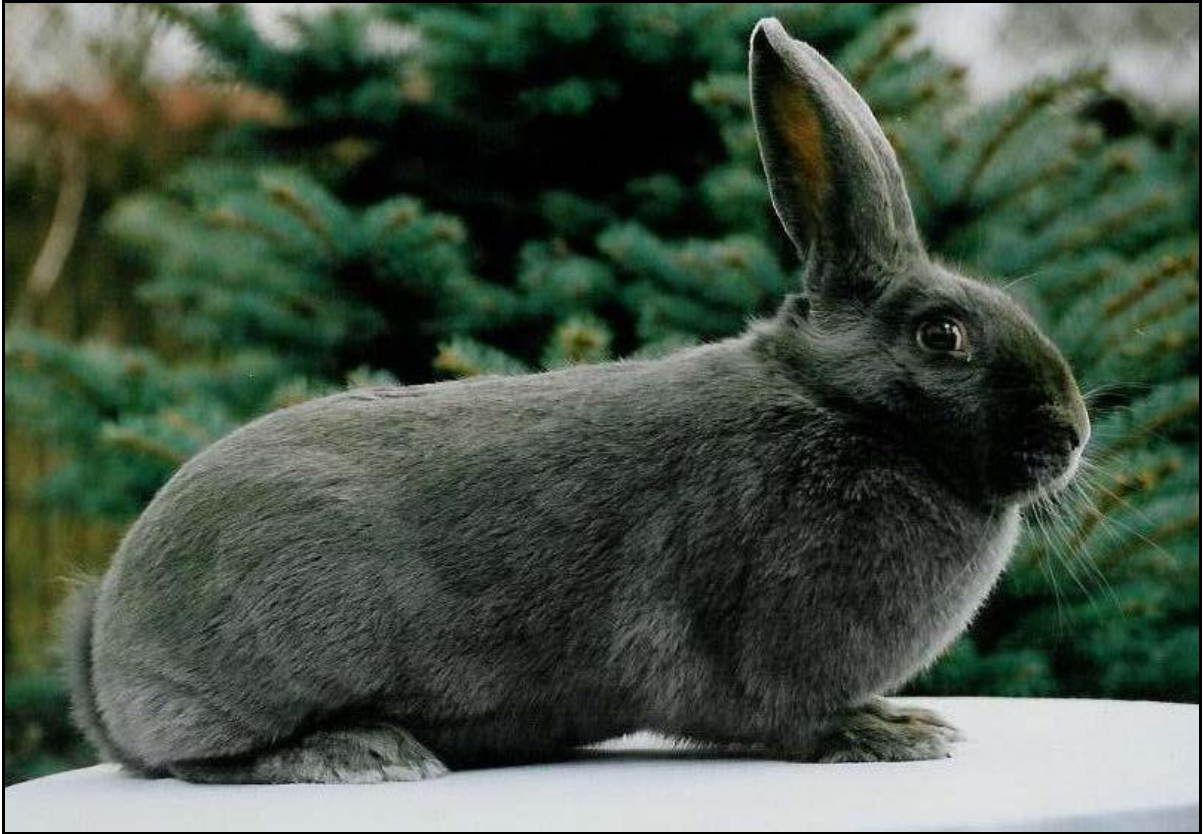


Figure 4. Blue of Mähren (Source: Entente Européenne d'Aviculture et de Cuniculture, 2003).



Figure 5. White of Bouscat (Source: Entente Européenne d'Aviculture et de Cuniculture 2003).



Figure 6. Blue of Saint Nicolas (Source: Entente Européenne d'Aviculture et de Cuniculture 2003).

Please Stay as You Are. Even if the rabbit breeds evolve over time, we consider that the breeds must be maintained on the initial improving trajectory, to prevent the loss of their original morphological, productive or aesthetic qualities, as the case may be.

The fact that there are other large breeds of rabbits that do not look morphologically similar to the German Giant breed, and no only, is an argument that TGR should not be considered unsightly if it does not respect this morphological type.

The tendency of breeders and referees to judge the shape of the TGR body according to the criteria valid for the German Giant breed could transform the TGR into a new variety of German Giant.

Conclusions. Although the TGR is a breed for show, it adds some features specific to the production strains of rabbit. Rabbit breeders and some judges in shows have popularized the German Giant body shape as being mandatory for all large breeds of rabbits, which is not exactly accurate. The tendency of breeders and referees to judge the shape of the TGR body according to the criteria valid for the German Giant breed could transform the TGR into a new variety of German Giant.

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