

preparing for his arrival, I culled many of my rabbits. But not my Orange Netherland Dwarfs. They are a lifetime investment for me that gives me immense satisfaction and pleasure. I hope some of the readers out there will be able to find the same in this minor variety.

Finally, as a registrar and perhaps future judge, a request to judges: Though Oranges may not (yet) be the most exciting variety of Netherland Dwarf to judge, please judge them with as much dedication as the other varieties. Far too many times I have seen animals with blue undercolor being overlooked when they should have been disqualified. A surefire hint is the smut on the outside of the hind legs. Nine times out of ten, those showing this will have a blue undercolor.



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I have raised both Oranges and Fawns exclusively for seven years. It has been a very challenging yet rewarding experience. My beginning stock came out of Michigan from Jill MacNaughton in 1997. Jill had been doing well with the Oranges but decided to show horses instead. I drove all the way from New York to pick up a trio, which was the last of her stock.

I left the empty barn feeling very appreciative of the opportunity to work with some fine animals. My herd sire buck (Hares 2U Eric), was out of California from Ralph & Jacqueline Johnston. Eric had taken BOV in 1995 at ANDRC Nationals in Tulsa Oklahoma.

From the beginning I bred only Orange to Orange or Orange to Fawn. I have limited space and decided to work solely with these varieties. This has worked well for two reasons. It forced me to be very selective in what I kept and also to work within the bounds of the animals I started with. I purchased almost no outside stock for several years. I extensively line bred and selected for type. It is important to line breed in order to develop consistency from within a confined gene pool. Type is first and foremost, but much time is wasted if animals are produced that are constantly non-showable. A common variable within the genetic make-up of the Orange is the Black gene. Genetically Orange is A_ B_ C_ D_ ee.



Barbra Downing's OJ, Photo courtesy Barbara Downing

However many years ago breeders found that if the Chocolate gene is substituted for the Black gene, the result is better surface color that blends more readily with the orange band. All of my rabbits were chocolate based from the beginning, however looking over the pedigrees there is no chocolate for as far back as I can trace -- over 12 years ago. The chocolate gene was introduced a long time ago and breeders have come to expect it in their Oranges.



Ueno's Tsukimi - Tuscon ANDRC
National BOV
Photo courtesy Julie Ueno

Some claim that Chocolate Oranges are not as bright and clear as Black Oranges. However the brilliant orange color can be found with both genotypes. The intensity of color is tied to rufous modifiers and not to the chocolate or black gene itself. I avoid animals with too much red-orange color. These have more rufous modifiers, which are strong and tend to intensify in subsequent breedings. The color can get too dark and there is less shading on these animals. With Chocolate Oranges the color is more even and shades better along the sides. The color photo of my jr. buck OJ shows the shading nicely.

For a long time my Oranges did well both locally and nationally, however I decided it was time for some outside blood to help with type. In 2002 my Orange Sr. Doe took 2nd at ANDRC Nationals in Merrimac, Wisconsin. It was at this show that I teamed up with Ted McBride to purchase a superb buck by the name of Smith's GO. Looking over the pedigree of GO, I have to admit I was a bit hesitant. GO had a double dose of Black Silver Marten on one side of the pedigree. However, Ted pointed out that the Silver Marten had been combined with Chocolate and bred to Orange and that this would work well with our lines. We were very happy when GO took BOV that day. He has since accumulated 17 legs including BOV again at the 2003 ARBA Convention. His offspring took BOSV and Best Jr. at 2003 ARBA Convention also. At the ANDRC Nationals in Plymouth, California, my Oranges took BOV and BOSV again with Julie Ueno showing them. GO has been the icing on the cake so to speak. Thank you again Garry and Susan!

I wish the best of luck to anyone willing to work with the Orange variety. The Oranges have come a long way in recent years due to the dedication of many breeders I am proud to have known. I would particularly like to thank Ted McBride who has helped me improve my lines by sharing his own stock with me and lending his genetic expertise. Ted has bred Oranges and Fawns for years and without his knowledge of their historic background, genetic make-up, and unique characteristics, I could not have come as far as I have.