

The Making of a Stud

By Janice Calvert

Having bred and shown stock under the name of Parvenu Stud, originally with my father and now with my partner Peter, for the past thirty years I suppose I am in a reasonable position to put pen to paper to answer this question.

I am often asked what constitutes a good stud and I suppose the answer to this must be consistency on the breeding pen and on the show table. How is that achieved I hear you ask. The starting point has to be good foundation stock. Look at the members list and see who has been around for some time and who is doing the winning on a consistent basis. Obviously there will be peaks and troughs but it should point in the right direction. You made need to pay a little over the odds for best quality stock but don't forget the litter sister to the winner will probably be as good and just because their winners doesn't make them good breeding stock.

Having chosen the breeders from whom you want to obtain stock you need to consider what you require to get started. I would recommend two does and a buck for stud. One of the does could be a youngster for you to show while the other an older rabbit for you to mate and have your first litter. Alternatively you may consider a mated doe. If you can, go and visit the breeder, handle and feel their stock and discuss what to expect of them as youngsters and adults. Some strains show better as adults while others show better as youngsters. Don't be in a rush to sell rabbits from your first litter you need to see how they come on and develop. If possible take the youngsters back to the breeder to help you decide which to keep and which to sell.

Developing the stud and maintaining consistency of quality is in my mind best achieved with line breeding. What is line breeding, well it is breeding the son back to the mother or daughter back to the father over generations. Do not mate brother to sister as this can create inbreeding problems and would only be considered if brother and sister were outstanding rabbits.

What else is there to say? Well a lot of hard work and dedication, a willingness to listen to experienced breeders and a good specialist club all go towards the stud development. Do go to the stock shows, introduce yourself to the secretary and asked to be introduced to other members. Ask for opinions on your rabbit after judging, even the best of us still do this! Once you know like minded people the shows will become even more enjoyable.

Janice