

Wool clipping for the beginner
by

JOE HOLMES

We are sometimes asked which of the breeds we consider to be the best commercial rabbit. What can I say-what can anyone say who has had any lengthy connection, through years of experience, with what may be considered the various classes of commercial rabbit?

Purely there can only be one answer, the Angora. Here is a beautiful animal in itself that can go on for years providing that beautiful "something" at much profit, that forms a unique commodity much sought after.

Its wool has a prominent place in the world of fancy and fashion-acknowledged by those holding authority in the commercial side of the woollen industry, as the finest wool in the world. A great advantage to the producer is that the poor animal has not to be slaughtered in order to gain its product.

It is especially for beginners that this article is written, in the hope it will give a little guidance on the subject, which becomes a much enjoyed and profitable pursuit, after the first effort is overcome.

6. without more ado, here is the locus operandi: First place the rabbit to be clipped on a box approximately 9" by 12" (on your table) say, about 9" high. The rabbit will sit much quieter during the operation on this, in preference to being free to roam on the table itself.

Now groom the rabbit well, so that the wool staples are all quite straight. Have a couple of containers standing by to receive the wool as it is clipped off, one for the longest staples and one for the shorter lengths. An ordinary pair of household scissors (the barber's type is to be recommended because of their narrow blades) are used for the job.

Take a parting in the wool, straight down the spine from neck to tail, and from this brush the wool outwards and downwards on each side of the rabbit.

Now the scissors, simply lay them on the skin, flatways for the first clip, with the points under a small portion of the wool on one side of the parting, then clip.

Before proceeding, remove this portion of wool already clipped. As this will be the first time you have attempted to clip a rabbit, do not be tempted to cut off large portions of wool at a time. Take at first the few staples mentioned above with the points of the scissors, remove that wool and then proceed likewise all along the line of the parting. After a few clips you will find it is really quite easy to take a little larger clip. You will find it is easier to start at the neck, travelling straight along the body down to the tail root, and at first, about half inch clips with the points of the scissors, no more.

Go ahead for the first clips. To proceed, make the following short clips straight along the spine, and when you have done this it should leave you with a clipped margin not more than 1" wide (running the full length of the spine), with the long unclipped wool now laying evenly and outwards on either side from the newly clipped strip.

Now to take the wool from the sides of the body. Some people prefer to finish one side at a time before commencing with the other. This is really immaterial so long as you brush the wool straight at the edge of the strip before continuing.

The idea is to take the wool by strips along the whole length of the body, working from the spine downwards, on each side.

Try as you go to keep the line straight in each strip of clipping, that is, do not vary the clips here and there. This makes the job so much easier to get the even lengths, and by keeping straight you will find it easier to take the follow-on strips. You will not be likely to pick up small portions of wool perhaps left on from the last strip, and it will also help to avoid what is termed "double-clip" (see later for meaning of this term).

Having completed the two sides, the chest wool should be taken by holding the rabbit's head back (as in grooming) and clipping round the chest (from shoulder to shoulder) in strips as before, working downward from under the chin to the forelegs (start at the right shoulder unless you are left handed).

Now here are a few extra reminders or "don'ts". Always try to take the full length of staple at each clip by cutting near to the skin. Some producers spoil their consignments by including too much "double clip." This means making two clips to the one given wool length. This happens perhaps more by accident than intent. Sometimes when one has clipped a lock of wool, it is found the full length has not been taken, that it is from close down to the skin and a very short length is still left on. Producers are apt to clip this off and drop it in with the rest of the consignment--quite a mistake, it is better left out altogether.

If there are many of these small portions in a consignment they become a nuisance. Extracting them takes time and this lowers the price for the whole consignment.

There is nothing materially gained however in taking big clips with the scissors, for once you get used to using the blades to, say, up to about one inch from the points, you will clip much quicker and move more proficiently than you could by taking longer clips. It is by trying to take too long a clip that the "double-clipping" mentioned above takes place.

Even a rabbit that carries an exceptionally dense coat is almost impossible, especially with a beginner, to avoid the "double-clip" too much wool is taken at a time. With thinner coated animals it is easier at first, but these of course are not the type of rabbit we recommend for profit.