

CHARACTERIZATION OF A PET RABBIT'S HERD IN MEXICO CITY

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ABSTRACT

Two main characteristics were analyzed on a rabbit herd: weight and ear length. The pet rabbit herd measured consisted of 150 adult rabbits of a selection Rabbitry, including the following 10 breeds in proportion: Netherland Dwarf (34), Dwarf Hotot (5), Dutch (12), Jersey Wooly (12), Mini-Rex (17), Holland-lop (10), Mini-lop (29), Rex (17), Satin (10) and Creoles (4). The main results conclude that there were no significant statistic differences between the weight and ear length of bucks and does of the 10 breeds, with the following averages and standard deviation for each breed; weight (kg): ND 1.50 ± 0.35 , DH 1.62 ± 0.54 , D 1.84 ± 0.16 , JW 1.71 ± 0.42 , MR 1.89 ± 0.21 , HL 1.92 ± 0.32 , ML 2.62 ± 0.35 , R 2.98 ± 0.70 , S 3.89 ± 0.40 and C 2.82 ± 0.61 ; ear length (cm): ND 6.46 ± 1.0 , DH 6.50 ± 1.32 , D 7.69 ± 0.35 , JW 7.6 ± 0.63 , MR 7.62 ± 0.58 , HL 10.61 ± 0.69 , ML 11.28 ± 0.58 , R 10.52 ± 0.92 , S 11.33 ± 0.65 and C 9.73 ± 1.60 , respectively. All the does were not pregnant and at least 6 months old by the time of measure.

Key words: pet rabbit, selection, weight, breeds, dwarf.

INTRODUCTION

This study draws on the need to know more about these type of breeds that are not as common as those for meat production world-wide. The market for pet rabbits is growing nation-wide, and the people are starting to know a little bit more about the great variety of breeds that exist because of specialized pet rabbit's books. However in Mexico only 16 breeds from about 60 breeds in the whole world (SANDOVAL *et al*, 2000) are raised. From those 16, 6 are used for meat production and the rest for fancy, pet and fur (COLIN, LEBAS, 1995). Any rabbit can be a good pet, but the dwarf breeds and some other rare breeds are the most wanted (SANDOVAL *et al*, 1998). The differences between each breed are quite clear, not only in shape but in behavior. The descriptions on this paper, are not biological or morphological, but try to be a good guide for any other farmers who are interested in breeding these rabbits. Many books give ranges about weight for several breeds, but not a specific measurement of all breeds, and only some of them tell you an approximate size of the length of ear. The most specific information about breeds is kept in the standards of some associations, like the American Rabbit Breeders

Association (ARBA)¹. In this urban selection Rabbitry, more than 100 varieties are obtained in a year of production with these 10 breeds (Figure 1).



Netherland Dwarf



Mini-lop



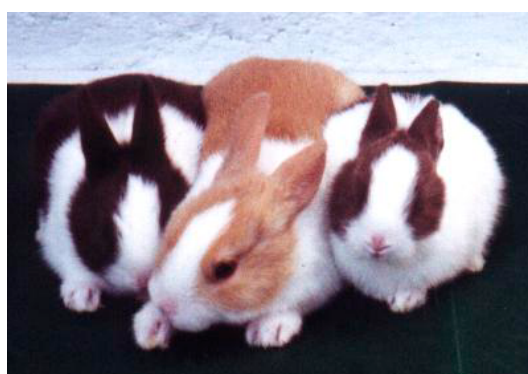
Satin



Jersey Wooly



Rex



Dutch

Figure 1. Some breeds of pet rabbits

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Animals

150 adult rabbits of 10 different breeds on an urban selection pet rabbit farm were analyzed. The distribution per breed and sex is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of bucks and does analyzed per breed.

Sex	Netherland Dwarf	Dwarf Hotot	Dutch	Mini Rex	Jersey wooly	Holland lop	Mini lop	Rex	Satin	Creoles
Does	30	3	10	14	9	8	25	12	8	3
Bucks	4	2	2	3	3	2	4	5	2	1
Total	34	5	12	17	12	10	29	17	10	4

All the does were not pregnant when measured.

Methods

The weight was measured with a mechanic scale and the ears were measured with a ruler.

The statistic analysis of the measurements obtained was processed with the NCSS statistic program.

With the experience of almost 10 years of breeding, the breeder gave some adjectives as a description for the 10 breeds.

Location

The rabbitry is located in Xochimilco, south of Mexico City.

Weather

This *delegación* is characterized as temperate sub-humid with rains in the summer (June until September), with an average annual temperature of 15°C, an average annual precipitation of 680 mm and it is situated at 2,230 meters above sea level, and on the next geographic coordinates: north 19° 19'; south 19° 09' for north latitude, to the west 98° 57' and to the east 99° 10' for west longitude (INEGI, 1993).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An ANOVA was made, and there were no significant statistic differences between the weight and ear length of bucks and does for each breed. In the case of the weight, it is a characteristic not common for other domestic species (cow, sheep, pig, etc.), where the males are normally bigger than the females. In this case some does were slightly heavier than the males. These results are presented on Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the pet rabbit breeds: weight and ear length (average and standard deviation).

Quantitative characteristics	Breeds									
	Netherland Dwarf	Dwarf Hotot	Dutch	Mini Rex	Jersey wooly	Holland lop	Mini lop	Rex	Satin	Creoles
Av. Weight (kg)	1.50 ± 0.35	1.62 ± 0.54	1.84 ± 0.16	1.89 ± 0.21	1.71 ± 0.42	1.92 ± 0.32	2.62 ± 0.35	2.98 ± 0.70	3.89 ± 0.40	2.82 ± 0.61
Min. weight (kg)	1.03	1.13	1.63	1.52	0.76	1.52	2.07	1.72	2.76	2.44
Max. weight (kg)	2.3	2.2	2.11	2.25	2.01	2.64	3.28	3.94	3.89	3.52
Ear length (cm)	6.46 ± 1.0	6.50 ± 1.32	7.69 ± 0.35	7.62 ± 0.58	7.6 ± 0.63	10.61 ± 0.69	11.28 ± .58	10.52 ± .92	11.33 ± 0.65	9.73 ± 1.60

On Table 3, these breeds are described qualitatively, by giving them several adjectives, selected from our own criteria and based on our experience of 10 years of breeding.

Table 3.- Five qualifying adjectives per breed.

	Breeds									
	Netherland Dwarf	Dwarf Hotot	Dutch	Mini Rex	Jersey wooly	Holland lop	Mini lop	Rex	Satin	Creoles
Qualifying characteristics	sweet	shy	sturdy	pretty	shy	shy	Pretty	shy	shy	sturdy
	sturdy	peaceful	shy	sweet	sturdy	peaceful	sweet	peaceful	peaceful	nervous
	curious	curious	curious	curious	stubborn	pretty	tender	delicated	sturdy	curious
	stubborn	nervous	nervous	peaceful	curious	intelligent	curious	curious	curious	pretty
	nervous	unfriendly	unfriendly	intelligent	peaceful	stubborn	sturdy	tender	nervous	shy

CONCLUSIONS

This study about some of the main characteristics of pet rabbit's breeds is only preliminary and tries to support a wider knowledge about pet rabbits. The weight and ear length are interesting characteristics on these type of breeds, not only for the breeders but the rest of the people. The qualifying characteristics are indicators of the nature of these fancy breeds. Well established parameters on the daily work of a selection Rabbitry, gives the basis of experience and exit on breeding these rabbit breeds.

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