

Origin of the Holland Lop
By Phil Batey
Ruskin Miniature Lops

Note: in the UK the Holland Lop is a Miniature Lop

Adrian was a very unassuming man and very few photographs were ever taken of him. Below is a very rare glimpse at the Man & Legend who is Adrain de Cock with one of his 'Madagascar Bucks'



The Miniature Lop was the brain child of Adrain de Cock of Tilburg, Holland in the late 1940's. His vision was to produce a small, miniaturized version of the French Lop. This Giant of breeds was very popular all over Northern Europe with both exhibition keepers and meat producers alike.

The Nederlandse Hangoor Dwerg as it is known in Holland - which translated means - Dutch Little Hanging Ear - was a work in progress for Adrian over many years. His first attempt to breed this 'new lop' was in 1949 when he took a French Lop buck and mated it to a Netherland Dwarf doe. The Netherland had been a very successful and popular 'miniaturization' for the Dutch some years earlier and was in some way the inspiration that Adrian took for his new, small lop breed.

The mating between the French Lop buck and Netherland doe was not as successful as Adrian had hoped. The babies were born abnormally large and died from being crushed at the time of birth. The doe later suffered fatality also. Disheartened with his new project, Adrian decided not to progress this any further. However, in 1951 Adrian was talking to another fancier about his vision for a Smaller Lop breed and was persuaded to try again, this time taking the other option of using a French Lop doe and a Netherland Dwarf buck. Adrian had thought of this option back in 1949 but had not imagined that the small Netherland male would be able to mate with such a large framed lady.

There are no records that show how this mating was carried out. Imagination can only be used as to how a little buck managed to mate such a big female. I think we must also at this time remember the old saying 'where there's a will there's a way'. The mating was a success and the resulting litter was born in July 1951. There were six babies in total, all agouti and all survived. Adrian had his first generation Hangoor Dwerg's. All the babies were retained and when the time came to start the next generation a Sooty Fawn English Lop was introduced.

The ear carriage on the F1's were all erect (contrary to Adrian's belief that they would be lopped) and another direction had to be set. As the French Lop was a step backwards, being of much larger size to the youngsters, the English Lop was the next option. Slightly smaller than the French but with much bigger ears - and never a problem with lopping - Adrian decided to mate one of the young does to a Sooty Fawn buck owned by a friend. The mating took place in February of 1952 and the resulting litter of F2's was born in the March.

The litter was not large, with only three youngsters born, but the visual change from the F1's was evident. As the litter got older, the ears started to fall and when the litter was 5 months old the ears were all lopped. Measurements of the ears were taken at this stage and measured 12cm from tip to tip. They were weighed at this time as well and the smallest youngster in the litter weighed 3.5kg (7lb 7oz) Adrian was exceptionally pleased with this litter as they were far better than he had hoped for at such an early stage in the development of his 'brain child'.

From this litter of F2's does were mated back to F1 bucks and F1 does to the F2 buck with resulting litters in all matings. His third generation (F3) were coming on well, and the ear carriage was improving - the ears now hanging closer to the head - and resembling more that of the French Lop used in the initial mating.

From the years 1953 to 1955, Adrian developed these lines further and produced generation after generation - getting smaller with each litter. By the end of 1955 Adrian had a variety of colors on the go (mainly Sooty Fawn) and the weight of these animals had reduced to under 3kgs, His job now was to get the Dutch Rabbit Club to acknowledge their existence by accepting them as a recognized breed. This was to prove more difficult than he had first imagined. It took a further 8 YEARS of breeding, distributing stock to other interested breeders and promotion of this breed until finally in 1964 they were accepted for standardization by the Dutch authorities.

The breeds popularity throughout Holland prospered and soon became a common sight on the show benches of other countries across Europe. In 1970 an application was made by the parent club in Holland to reduce the weight once again, this time to 1.5kg. This was duly accepted and is the maximum weight that breeders still work with today. This speaks volumes for the grit and determination of the Dutch Fanciers. For 33 years their standard maximum weight has remained the same and they have continued to produce the best specimens seen any where in the world. The breed may have traveled far and wide over the globe and so has the outline of the standard, but from country to country this has been changed slightly. Here in the UK the rabbits originally imported in 1970 were of the 1.5kg standard but as the rabbits got bigger, the type got better and we changed our standards to fit the rabbits, NOT breeding the rabbits to fit the standard.