

Breed judging standard for the Szekler rabbit in purebred rabbit exhibitions

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Abstract. The Szekler rabbit, originally developed and documented by Dr. Zsigmond Rákossy and his team, is now represented by a revised breed standard as of 2024, which supersedes all previous versions and preserves past standards solely for historical reference. This updated standard specifies the breed's ideal characteristics for purebred judging, emphasizing its robust, slightly elongated body type with a broad chest, straight back, and well-rounded rump, along with a compact and harmonious head. The optimal weight, which garners the highest score of 10 points, is between 5.0 and 6.5 kg, with a minimum acceptable weight of 4.5 kg. The fur is dense, of medium length, covering well-defined, medium-sized ears held upright. The Szekler Rabbit displays a distinct marked pattern, featuring a darker facial mask and a graded color contrast along the sides, with four recognized color varieties: black, havana, blue, and lilac, each following the Sallander color pattern. The marked areas show intense pigmentation, with lighter, matte tones on unmarked areas, and a base color leaning towards white. Eye color varies by coat variety, with brown eyes in the black Sallander and light blue-steel gray eyes in other varieties. The standard outlines minor and major defects, including deviations in body structure, coat texture, and pattern definition. These precise criteria aim to ensure consistent evaluation, celebrating the breed's unique traits while supporting its future development.

Key Words: *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, Szekler rabbit, breed standard, body type, weight evaluation, fur texture, marked pattern, Sallander color pattern, purebred rabbit judging.

Introduction. The Szekler Rabbit was created and first described by the team led by Dr. Zsigmond Rákossy (Botha et al 2015, 2016). This breed standard for judging the Szekler Rabbit is the revised version, developed in 2024, and, with its publication, all previous editions become void, retaining significance only for the breed's historical record.

Body Type and Shape. The body is slightly elongated, cylindrical, equally wide in the front and back. The chest is strong and broad, the backline is straight, ending in a well-rounded, muscular rump. The neck is short, and the shoulders are broad with well-developed musculature. The limbs are strong and of medium length, with the ideal position of the trunk being medium to high, elevated from the ground. The overall appearance is of a robust rabbit, well-muscled but elegant (Figure 1). A small, well-formed dewlap is accepted in females.

Weight. Minimum weight is 4.50 kg, with the ideal being at least 5.00 kg, and the maximum 6.50 kg. Weight evaluation: 4.5 kg – 4.75 kg: 8 points, 4.75 kg – 5.0 kg: 9 points, 5.0 kg – 6.50 kg: 10 points.

Fur. The fur is of medium length (approx. 2.5-3 cm), with a dense, even undercoat and not too coarse. The ears are well covered with hair.

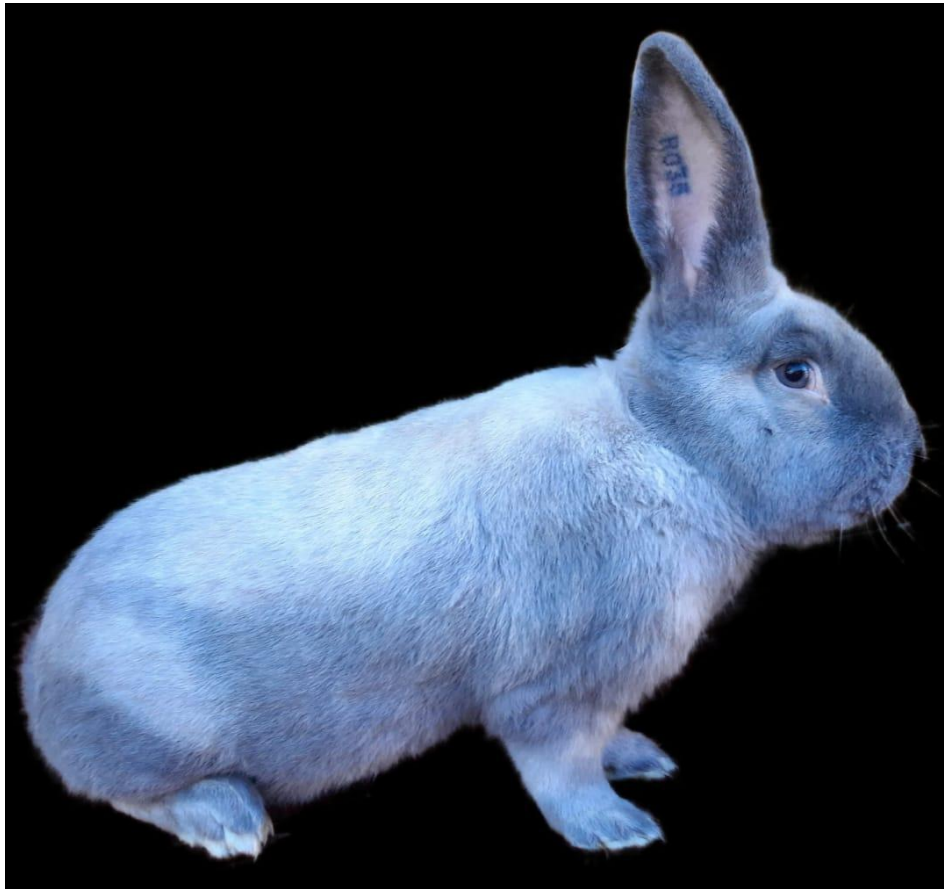


Figure 1. Image of the external body of the Szekler rabbit (photo: Zsigmond Rákossy).

Head and Ears. The head is harmonious with the body, with a broad forehead, developed cheeks, and a slightly arched muzzle. Sexual dimorphism is evident. The ears are fleshy, of medium width, with slightly pointed tips, held almost vertically. The length of the ears is between 12 and 16 cm, with the ideal length being 13-15 cm, proportional to body size.

Marked Pattern. The rabbits present a well-pigmented facial mask, darker in the nose and jaw regions, and the eyebrows are also pigmented. The forehead and subocular area are lighter in color. The ears, limbs, tail, and belly are well pigmented but not monochrome. Starting from the forelimbs, a darker shading extends along the sides, which should be as prominent as possible. However, on the thighs, this shading blends with a lighter area. The nape and back are also lighter in color, creating a contrast with the shading on the sides.

Color. The breed is raised in four color varieties: black, havana, blue, and lilac, with a Sallander color pattern. Thus, the coat color can range from black-gray, brownish-yellow, light blue, or lilac-sepia, extending over the entire body in the marked pattern, with the pigmented areas being more intense in color and the unmarked areas being lighter, matte, and less saturated. The pigmented part of the hair tips is much narrower. The base color is light, leaning towards white. The eye color is brown in the black variety and light blue-steel gray in the other varieties. The claws are pigmented but light in color.

Health and Care. Refer to general characteristics (Vlad et al 2017).

Minor Defects. A thin body, poorly developed musculature, narrow chest, prominent or sagging shoulders, sloped rump, narrow pelvis, arched backline, low trunk position,

sagging belly, hind legs not parallel to the body, slightly flat feet, very thin limbs, playful tail, narrow and pointed muzzle, folded ears not harmonious with the rest of the body, slightly hanging testicles, large dewlap in females. Minor coat defects include coarse or too soft hair, sparse undercoat, overly long guard hairs, hair loss, poorly covered ears. Minor defects in the marked pattern include a faint, interrupted, or poorly defined pattern, a poorly defined or overly dark facial mask, spotted or overly pigmented back, poorly pigmented limbs. Minor color defects include lack of shine and intensity, dull, washed-out color, lighter eyes in the black sallander variety, or yellow-brown eyes in the other varieties, and unpigmented claws.

Major Defects. Any anatomical deformation or clear deviation from type, weight below 4.5 kg or above 6.5 kg, hair too long (>3 cm), head shape not corresponding to the sex, ears shorter than 12 cm or longer than 16 cm, drooping or floppy ears, complete absence of the marked pattern, monochrome head, colors other than those accepted, blue eyes in the black sallander variety, or brown eyes in the other varieties.

Conflict of Interest. Zsigmond Rákossy, Marcel Balan, Dorel Danciu, Valentin Filip, Costin Paru, Zsolt A. Grabán, Alexandru I. Pop, Alpár Fazakas, Sándor Brügger, and I. Valentin Petrescu-Mag are members of the National Federation of Pigeon, Bird, and Small Animal Breeders of Romania (Entente Européenne d'Aviculture et de Cuniculture).

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