

WHY BREEDERS DO NOT SELL RABBITS

Provided by Blue Ribbon Rabbitry

Recently I have noticed an increase in breeders announcing that they will no longer be selling rabbits. I started to write this article about this trend few days ago and stopped. This is a touchy subject for a lot of people and I was not sure I wanted to interject myself into it. But after reading an amazing satirical post about rabbit sales on Facebook I felt compelled to write about this topic. I want to say upfront that I have raised rabbits for many, many years and I can honestly say that the overwhelming majority of people I sell animals to are wonderful, kind people. The numbers of happy customers blow away any of the few complainers. I believe that is due to the fact that I not only sell great rabbits, but I also ALWAYS make sure at the time of delivery that the animal meets the person's expectations.

However, there are always a few difficult situations that arise. A few years back we sold a rabbit to a very nice, seemingly competent adult that had previous experience with rabbits. The rabbit was picked up around 10 am. At around 3 p.m. I received a call saying that the rabbit had "mysteriously" died in the car while they were shopping. Upon further inquiry I learned that they stopped at a nearby shopping center after meeting me and had left the rabbit in the hot car for nearly five hours. Oh, and it was July. To this day I am both completely heartbroken and horrified about the incident. Looking back I know that it was not my fault. I am still perplexed that there were no warning signs that this person would ever do something so careless.

It was after that incident that I mostly stopped selling animals. I am lucky that I am able to afford to maintain my herd without making any money from sales. I continued to place animals with a few family members or close friends, but I did not sell to the general public for a while. As much as I care about breed promotion, the health and safety of the animals I produce is of paramount importance. I realized that no matter how much I interview or research the potential buyer, ultimately I have no idea how that person will treat the animal once it leaves my care. That seriously concerns me.

Because I do want my breed to grow I have continuously fought with myself over whether or not I should start to sell animals to the general public again. Over time I have backed off my "no sales" decision and have started to selectively place rabbits in the homes of fellow breeders even if I have not met that person personally. I have focused my efforts on growing the breed in areas in which there are not many Tans. But I am noticing that more and more people (even breeders!) seem to have unreasonable expectations, a sense of entitlement and a weird feeling that they are doing me a favor by purchasing from me. This worsening attitude amongst buyers has left wondering what my next step should be.

Examples of Difficulties:

- Unpaid animals after many months (my fault for letting it go without payment in full).

- Requested deposit amounts not being paid and then angry behavior on behalf of the potential buyer for not holding said rabbits for them despite my clear sales policy.
- Violations of my sales policy. The most common violation is selling the rabbit to someone else without respecting my right of first refusal. Asking for first buy back rights is not a new thing. For years the etiquette has been to always offer the animal back to the original breeder first. No one is required to purchase a rabbit from me. Anyone can decide to not buy a rabbit from me if my sales policy does not suit them.
- Fraudulently portraying a rabbit I sold as being one the buyer raised.
- Forging of pedigrees using my animals' pedigrees.
- Anger that a rabbit I sold only won three Best in Shows in two months...that apparently was not enough. I have also had people become confused that a rabbit showed well for a year and then stopped winning. Well, Miss America won't always be young...
- Insulting me or my animals online or in person to others and then inquiring about sales rabbit. It's a small community. Trust me, it gets around.
- Too many "I absolutely want rabbits" and then never buying animals. Of course buyers absolutely have a right to look at a sales list and decide to pass. But if you email me 2-3x a month for a year and never follow through...come on...
- Emailing me multiple times to ask why I am unwilling to sell to you, despite the fact that I have offered numerous rabbits to you and you have never followed through with purchasing. I cannot understand this one.
- Making false identities or profiles to contact me about animals. No catfishing, please!
- Rabbits leaving my possession in great condition and perfect health only to look like they are nearing death months later due to the new owner's poor management practices. That breaks my heart.
- An increasing expectation for me to deliver the rabbits to the buyers. Rabbit breeders are not Jimmy Johns nor are they as common as Wal-Marts. You will have to travel to the breeder (or to a show the breeder is attending). I don't mind when someone asks me if I can meet them somewhere closer, but I do mind when they get angry when I politely say no. I work a lot of hours and I just do not have the free time to travel to meet people.
- Lack of respect for my time. A buyer called 5 hours before our agreed upon meeting time and told me she was about 30 minutes away. I rushed to get home and get the rabbits together so I could meet her. She showed up over two hours later. There was no regard on her end for my time (limited!) or convenience. She was not at all apologetic.

I could go on and on. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, these incidents represent a small minority of sales transactions. Most people are fantastic. But if you even just glanced through the list above I am sure you see how the few difficult people can ruin things for

everyone.

So, what now? Personally, I am not sure. But as an industry we need to see a change. If you are in the position of being a buyer in the future, below are some considerations.

Tips for Buyers:

- Be polite to the breeder. This should be a given, but it is amazing how many people say or do horrendous things and then try to purchase animals.
- Be honest. This includes portraying yourself as who you really are. Also, do not say a rabbit is for your child or a 4-Her if it is really for you. Dishonesty will get you on a mental "do not sell" list very quickly.
- Be clear with your goals and expectations. If you want a show rabbit only, say that. You might not get far with a breeder, but kudos for the honesty. Be specific regarding your needs. A black doe is not specific. A request for a black doe with excellent tan factor and crisp markings is better. If you are vague there will be little the breeder can do to assist you.
- Provide full details. What is your name? Where are you located? Why do you want rabbits? Why did you contact me? Are you wanting rabbits now, next month, next year? How will you get the rabbits (meet at show, drive, transporter, etc.)? Do you already have a herd? What traits are you wanting to improve upon? Etc.
- Have the potential owner contact the breeder. I am tired of hearing from parents. If your child is old enough to care for rabbits then your child is old enough to contact me. If it will be a family project that's fine, but you need to show rabbits in open only and not youth or 4-H. I am long past my 4-H years, but I still do my best to not contribute to anyone violating the tenets of the program (same with ARBA youth).
- Understand your rights and respect your responsibilities. When you purchase a rabbit that is a sales transaction with legal consequences even if do not formally sign a purchase agreement. You have both an ethical and legal obligation to follow any policies agreed to as well as any applicable state or federal laws.
- Be ready to work. Breeders that have produced animals that are nationally competitive have likely put in decades of hard work, many thousands of dollars and countless hours. Even if you purchase the best stock money can buy you are not going to achieve that level overnight (or within a few years). You have to be willing to work hard and put the hours into this hobby. If someone has unreasonable or lofty expectations (e.g., we want to win nationals this year) that is a red flag.

Learn to let it go. You are not entitled to purchase animals from anyone. Respect a breeder who does not have stock for sale and/or does not seem to want to sell to you. That is their decision and it should be respected. You are not owed an explanation. Nor is it reasonable for you to hold a vendetta against that person.