

Angora Fiber Rabbits

By Shawna Marie Vencel



Baby French Angora surrounded by Angora yarn, all yarns are made by Shawna Marie Vencel and the Angora is also owned and Bred by Shawna of Shawve French Angoras.

Angora rabbits are cute, fluffy, cuddly, friendly; these are all words many people would use to describe Angora rabbits. If you dig deeper there is a lot more to them. Much like Sheep there are different breeds of Angora rabbit with very different fiber types. These different fiber types will produce different end products just like the diverse sheep's wool breeds. There are always common myths that surround all fiber animals like the saying that "all sheep's wool is scratchy". There are many myths about Angora as well and we shall explore those quickly before talking about the individual breeds.

One of the most common myths I hear is "Angora has little or no crimp", I am here to say that is not true and that just like sheep wool a good quality Angora rabbit has tons of crimp.



Typical 6-week-old French Angora kit showing crimp in the coat-Shawve French Angoras owned by Shawna Marie Vencel.

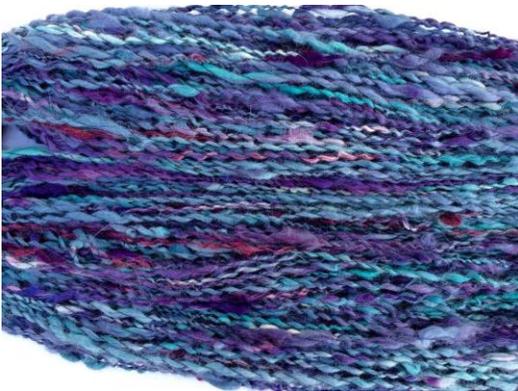


Senior French Angora coat showing excellent crimp-Shawve French Angora Owned by Shawna Marie Vencel

Another Common myth that I Hear a lot of people say is Angora takes dye Very poorly. Angora takes dye exceptionally well the trouble most people have in dyeing angora is it's so light it just floats in the water. This can be worked around by weighing the fiber down or making sure it is thoroughly wet before you begin dyeing.



Rainbow Angora Fiber Dyed by Shawna Marie Vencel of Shawve French Angoras.



100% angora rabbit yarn hand dyed by Shawna Marie Vencel.



Deep purple hand dyed 100% angora scarf made by Shawna Marie Vencel of Shawve French Angoras.

Yet another myth I have heard that always bugs me is people saying angora is a short-stapled fiber. While the commercial German Angora fiber that is sheared every 90 days is often around 3-4 inches some of the other breeds have much longer staple lengths. Quality French and Satin Angoras often have 5-9-inch-long coats. English and Giant angoras can easily have 9-12-inch-long staple coats.



French Angora doe with 8-inch staple coat bred by Eric Stewart and Gabriel Hernandez of HGF farm, Owned by Shawna Marie Vencel of Shawve French Angoras.



English Angora with approx. 11-12-inch staple Heart Felt Hares Owned by Debbie McCormick

The last myth I wanted to talk about briefly is angora lacking color. Many people complain that angora is pale and washed out in color and while I will say some animals are if you look for the right another you can find some beautifully colored animals out there with deep intense color.



Shawve' Fuzzy Frank- "Frankie" high rufus tort-Shawve French Angoras owned and bred by Shawna Marie Vencel.



High Rufus Tort French Angora off Frankie-Shawve French Angoras



High Rufus Tort on the bobbin-Frankies coat-Shawve French Angoras.

Enough about myths let's talk about the breeds and their individual characteristics.

English Angoras per ARBA standard should look like a ball of fluff so let's talk about what that texture is like and how it will translate into that yarn. English Angoras should have a soft, silky, lively coat. This is very different from the silky texture of Satin angoras; the English has a warm silky texture to it. I hear a lot of people say English doesn't have guard hair and this is wrong. English should still have a guard hair but it will be much softer, more delicate, and finer in diameter than your other angora wool breeds. The under wool on the English coats should not have a dry, cottony, or powdery texture to it. The wool should have a certain moistness to the wool to show that it is healthy. That moistness means the wool was still full of life and not brittle or dry at all. A wool that is healthy and has that "moist" quality to it will make a healthy livelier yarn compared to a dry yarn which will be more brittle and snap easier. A dry coat made into a yarn will not be as strong and will have less elasticity and will wear prematurely. When I say the under coat is moist it should first feel cool to the touch and then quickly warm up as you leave your hand there. Due to the delicate nature of English Angora wool it may not do well in mill processing. The resulting yarn from English Angora wool should be exquisitely soft and should have a nice slight drape to it. English Angora wool yarns will be best suited for lace shawls and lace scarves. A quality English will grow exceptionally long staple lengths and have a very dense coat. English Angoras have fully tasseled ears, furnished face, and wooly legs.



Young English Angora by Heart Felt Hares owned by Debbie McCormick



Junior English Angora by Heart Felt hares owned by Debbie McCormick.



A lovely Group of English Angoras by Heart Felt hares owned by Debbie McCormick.



English Angora yarn spun by Shawna Marie Vencel

French Angoras per ARBA standard should have a wool that has protruding guard hair and should fall free. A quality French Angora has a very distinct crisp edge to the guard hairs in the coat. You often find animals with very soft coats that are hard to tell apart from the English Angora and while these soft coats still make lovely yarn this is not true quality French type. That guard hairs crisp texture will translate into a strong robust yarn that is full of life. There is a certain thickness that is hard to describe in the under wool on a quality French Angora. This thickness gives it a completely different texture than the other breeds, a strong robust wool. The guard hairs and thickness of the guard hairs give the French Angora yarns their characteristic halo. The yarn will be stronger than an English yarn due to that thicker diameter wool and guard hair. French Angora yarn should have a more robust lively drape and a crisper texture (note not harsh but a certain crispness). French Angora yarns can still be used for lace work but they will also work great for other garments that get more wear due to it being a stronger wool. French Angora would do well in milling processing due to its stronger nature. I learned from a spinner who had French Angora and he spun amazing yarns he used as warp on a loom. If you know anything about weaving the warp yarn must be strong to withstand the force put on it while weaving. French Angoras have a clean face with minimal tufts on the end of the ears and clean front legs with minimal wool allowed below the hock joint.



Baby French Angora-Shawve French Angoras Owned by Shawna Marie Vencel



Junior Tri Color French Angora Bred by Angela Hendrix and Vanessa Rich Owned by Shawna Marie Vencel of Shawve French Angoras.



Junior French Angora by Shawve French Angoras Owned by Shawna Marie Vencel.



Chinchilla Senior French Angora doe by Shawve French Angoras Owned by Shawna Marie Vencel.



French Angora texture- Chinchilla senior doe by Shawve French Angoras owned by Shawna Marie Vencel



Halo on a French Angora yarn-Shawve French Angoras

Giant Angora wool is to have 3 distinct types of coat all in one rabbit. This breed is so unique that you should be able to tell its wool apart from the others very easily if the wool has the right characteristics. The guard hair per ARBA Standard should be strong. A strong guard hair by nature is thicker in diameter and thus will have more texture. This texture should not be confused with a French texture. The awn fluff on the giants should be wavy and strong with a certain thickness to it to aid in its strength. The under wool on a giant should be medium fine. Giant Angora with its strong robust nature should mill process well. Giant Angora wool should make a strong robust yarn which will make it better suited for any product that will be worn often. Giant Angora yarn could easily be used in garments that get more wear due to its strength as well as excel in woven applications. Giant Angoras have some tasseling on the ears, furnished cheeks, and wooled legs.



Baby Giant Angoras by Heart Felt Hares Owned by Debbie McCormick



Baby Giant Angoras by Heart Felt Hares Owned by Debbie McCormick



Senior Giant Angora by Heart Felt Hares owned by Debbie McCormick



Dyed Junior Giant Angora by Shawna Marie Vencel

Satin Angoras are a wonderful breed who per ARBA standard should have a fine, soft, silky coat. Satin Angora should have a fine diameter soft guard hair with high sheen. The under wool to feel silky, soft and slick. That hollow hair shaft gives this breed its characteristic sheen. The wool has a cool, silky, moist feeling to it at first touch. Satin Angora wool translated to yarn will have a definite silky drape to it. A Satin Angora wool that exhibits correct characteristics will wear similarly to English Angora but have a little more drape to it due to the slick and silky texture it has. Satin Angora being a more delicate fiber may not do well in mill processing. The resulting yarn is best suited for lace patterns and any garment you want lots of drape in it. Satin Angoras much like the French Angora have clean faces, minimal tufting on ears, clean front legs, with minimal wool below the hock joint.



Baby Satin Angoras by Ostara's Loom Owned by Amy Williams



Junior satin Angoras by Ostara's Loom owned by Amy Williams



Senior Satin Angora by Ostara's Loom owned by Amy Williams.



Sheen in wool by VanHaitsma's Pixie Place owned by katelyn Vanhaitsma



Beautiful skein of Satin Angora by Katelyn VanHaitsma

Last but certainly not least the German Angora rabbit a true commercial wool producing animal. The IAGABR (International Association of German Angora Rabbit Breeders) Standard States the German Angora should have a synchronized coat, this means the coat should all grow at the same length over the body. The reason they want this characteristic is so when they shear and send the wool into the mill they do not have short pieces. Short pieces and cuts in the wool make for a yarn that sheds more and that would make for unhappy customers in the product. This breed has 4 parts to the coat structure; The guard hair, The awn hair, the awn wool, and the under wool. The guard hair is a strong robust hair that protects the wool and helps prevent matting. The awn hair is another strong fiber that has a pronounced strong tip on it to further more protect the awn wool and under wool and prevents matting. The awn wool is a softer wavy hair that still has a pronounced strong tip on it. The under wool is the soft crimped down fiber in this coat. The German Angora should have a soft but strong fleece easily able to withstand mill processing. Germans have been specifically bred for max wool production. To be able to register a German they use a 90-day shearing test. Every 90 days the animals are sheared and they must produce at least 325 grams which is 11.46 ounces of wool. The average staple length is 3-4 inches. The German Angora has a thick dense fleece and has similar features to the Giant Angora. The 2 breeds have a different body type and different wool properties per their standards. Germans have tasseling on the ears, furnished cheeks, slight bangs, and well wooled legs.



Baby German Angoras by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.



Baby German Angoras by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.



Junior German Angoras by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.



Senior German Angora by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.



Senior German Angora being shorn by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.



German Angora wool yarn by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.



Knitted hat out of German Angora wool by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.



Knitted scarf from German Angora wool by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.



Knitted mittens by Goff's Country Critters and Fiber owned by Lora Goff.