

Roan Rat

Presentation Towards Unstandardized November 4, 2017

ROAN - 20 points for roaning, 15 points for markings, 10 points for top color, 5 points for blaze or headspot

Roan rats to be shown in any recognized color and come in Berkshire, Blaze Berkshire, or striped markings. Berkshire and Blaze Berkshire to conform to existing standards. Striped Roan to have the body a pure clean white (devoid of creamy tinge or staining) and free from spots or brindling, with a colored stripe extending in an unbroken line from the head to the tail, be of moderate width, and be free of ragged edges or brindling. Striped Roans will also have a white blaze on the face to conform to existing standards. The color should be confined to the head and back only, not appearing on the underside (throat, chest, belly) or sides.

Roan is to be judged on evenness and symmetry of Roaning, not amount of Roaning, as older animals will have more white hairs. White hairs shall be evenly distributed throughout the coat, though a darker center line down the spine is acceptable but not desired. Roan not to be confused with silvered animals. Eye color to match base color, though a ruby cast is common (to be accepted, but not desired).

Clearly distinct from existing varieties, Roans are born a solid color. During the first molt, juvenile animals start to exhibit roaning. This is a steady increase in the amount of white hairs intermingling with the solid color, starting with the sides, face, and tail root, then working up to the nape of the neck and back. With each individual molt, the rat becomes progressively lighter, the final effect not fully complete until well into adulthood, at which point the animal is almost completely white.

Faults: Patchiness, brindling, uneven or insubstantial roaning, colored spots in white areas/white spots in colored areas; too little or too

much white on face on Blazed versions; other faults as to respective markings; Striped Roan: stripe too wide or too narrow; stripe broken, ragged/brindled edges to the stripe, any suggestion of a Hood marking.

Genetics: recessive

Note: a.k.a. Husky; always comes in Berkshire/Blaze Berkshire or Striped (with Blaze) markings. When Roan is bred with Self, you get Self, not various types of markings.



A 2-month-old light Cocoa Roan rat exhibiting the ruby glow commonly seen on Roan. The eye color is exaggerated by the camera flash. Rat owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2017 Nicole Housel.

Early information about the variety is scant. The early origins are unknown, but the variety originated somewhere in Europe in the mid-1990s. Early in its development the variety was called “Husky” due to its resemblance to some dogs of that breed. Later the name was changed to “Roan” as it is still known today. At a rodent festival in 2000, eighteen Roan rats were shown. By this time the variety had also made its way to the U.K., as well as

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other parts of Europe. By the early 2000s the variety could be found in North America.

Information from the beginnings of the variety mention megacolon; however, this appears to be misinformation. Perhaps Roan rats were mixed or confused with Chinchilla rats (as some descriptions for “Roan” appear to be describing what is actually standardized as Chinchilla), which can produce bloat/megacolon. Breeders today who keep clean lines of Roan not mixed with other markings have not reported megacolon. In fact, no health issues have been reported in association with Roans, and what issues do occur appear to be “line issues” as opposed to variety issues.

Roan rats are born fully colored with Berkshire or Blaze Berkshire markings. A “striped” variety also occurs. With each



A litter of 11-day-old Roan and Striped Roan owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2016 Nicole Housel.



Two Black Roans showing different degrees of roaning. Rats owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2017 Nicole Housel.



A 4-month-old female Roan showing greater amount of roaning. Longer color holding is desirable. Rat owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2017 Nicole Housel.

successive molt, starting around 6 weeks of age when the rats molt into their adult coat, more white (silvered) hairs come in causing the animal to become more white with age. Some Roan rats will become entirely white by adulthood. The ideal Roan rat should not only have proper markings, but also have an even distribution of roaned hairs. The roaning should also be slow enough that the animal retains some color into adulthood. Roan is unique because of this change in color, and thus breeders should take care to select for slow roaning, as opposed to quick roaning which results in Black-Eyed White rats. Breeders should also take care to avoid mixing Roan with colors that won’t hold for long, such as lighter colors (i.e. Pearl, Champagne, Fawn, etc), patterned colors (i.e. Siamese, Himalayan, Merle, etc), or markings that will cause excessive white (i.e. Essex, Capped, Dalmatian, etc).

Roan is a simple recessive gene. The gene is responsible for not only the roaning, but also the markings. Thus Roan cannot be separated from the markings, it



A 16-day-old Pearl Roan—markings are *just* visible. Light colors are not ideal for Roan as they do not show the markings or the roaning. Rat owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2017 Nicole Housel.



A 17-day-old Black Essex Roan kitten with faded color and wild markings. Essex and Roan are not an ideal combination. Rat owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2017 Nicole Housel.



... and the same Essex Roan at 11 weeks. Photo ©2017 Nicole Housel.



... and the Essex Roan at 5½ months of age. Photo ©2017 Nicole Housel.

is a part of the gene, and all Roan rats will be marked. Roan can be combined with any color, pattern, or markings, however,



A 12-day-old Striped Roan kitten with excessive white markings. Rat owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2015 Nicole Housel.



... and the Black Striped Roan 12-day-old kitten sibling to the Striped Roan above with excessive white markings. Rat owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2015 Nicole Housel.

Roan does not show well on all varieties. Adding other marking genes to Roan can cause excessive white markings. Some marking genes will also affect the symmetry of the Roan markings. The Hooded, Irish, and possibly the Hooded extreme alleles appear to cause Striped Roan when combined with the Roan gene. Other marking genes, such as Essex, appear to not only increase the amount of white, but also affect the distribution of white—Essex in particular appears to cause some pretty wild markings when combined with Roan, as well as excessive fading. These higher white/higher fading combinations are not ideal when trying to breed Roan. Most Roan rats are blazed, but early examples also showed head spots. Because Roan is a simple recessive gene, a Roan rat bred to an unmarked rat with no Roan in its background will produce no Roans. Two Roans bred together will produce an entire litter of Roan, while Roan carriers will produce a combination of Roan and non-Roan.

Although Roan has been in the United States for over a decade, it has only recently (since about 2013–2014) gained popularity and become more widely bred. In AFRMA, Roan was first introduced in the early 2000s (2003/2004), and 11 animals have been shown in four shows at that time. There are now a number of breeders throughout the country who have or are actively breeding for Roan, including several in California. Only nine animals need to be shown toward standardization, and with this increasing popularity, standardization should be achievable within the next year.



A Black Berkshire Roan Standard owned by Helen Pembrook. Photo ©2003 Craig Robbins.

Additional information:

- “The European Husky”
www.nenuphar.plus.com/pendragon/features/husky/index.html
- “Roan” <http://ratvarieties.com/roan/>
- “Will the Real Husky Please Stand Up?” <http://rodentfancy.com/pets/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/huskies.pdf>

I acquired my first Roan rats in May 2015 and had my first litter in July of that year. In my experience, it does work as a simple recessive. I have produced Roan in combination with Black, Agouti, Russian Blue, Russian Blue Agouti, Mink, Pearl, Essex and another Hooded locus gene (probably the Irish allele or Hooded extreme allele). Roan shows best on darker colors, and is lost on light colors. Essex causes the markings to become exaggerated, and the roaning combined with the Essex color fades, causes the color to be lost too quickly (though this could be an alternate way to achieve Black-Eye



A Blaze Berkshire Roan Standard owned and bred by Helen Pembrook. Photo ©2003 Craig Robbins.

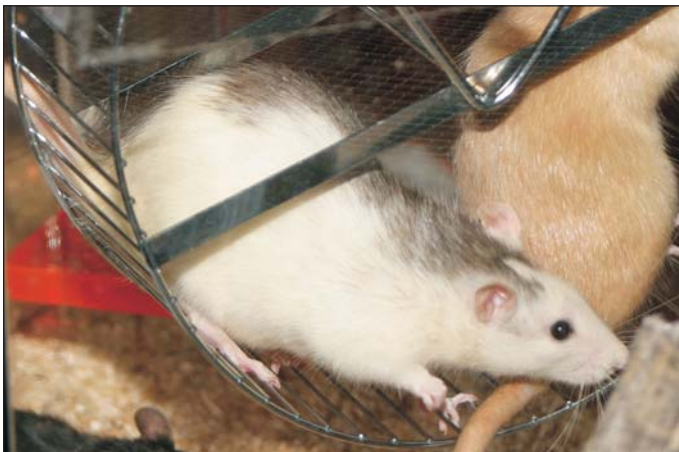


A 9-month-old Agouti Blaze Berkshire Roan Standard female with short Blaze and large head spot. Rat owned by Nicole Housel, bred by Bobbi Jo Zammit, Rambling Rats, Canada. Photo ©2015 Nicole Housel.

White). Roan combined with some other H-locus markings, such as Irish, creates a Striped Roan, though care must be taken to select for enough color. I suspect combinations with higher white genes (such as the notch allele responsible for Capped, or Dalmatian) will have a similar effect to Essex, causing exaggerated markings, as well as unevenness in the markings.

To date, I have not noted any problems associated with the Roan variety. One litter produced two

babies with hydrocephaly, but a repeat of that breeding did not produce any. All litters prior to and after that one have had no



An Agouti Striped Roan Standard female owned by Gina Hendricks. Photo ©2003 Craig Robbins.



An Agouti Blaze Berkshire Roan Standard male at 10 weeks 6 days old that is almost white. Rat owned and bred by Emily Grammar, The Rat Cave Rattery. Photo ©2014 Karen Robbins.



Facebook Album Name Change

Karen Robbins, Editor

Changed the name of the rat album “Russian Blue vs. Russian Blue Agouti” to “Russian Blue Rats: Agouti vs. Non-Agouti Versions” www.facebook.com/pg/afirma/photos/?tab=album&album_id=844839632211955.

Send in your questions, comments, articles, etc., related to colors, markings, or coats to the Editor or e-mail editor@afirma.org.

issues. I suspect this to be a “line issue” and not a variety issue.

My original Roan stock were imported from Canada, and originated from European-bred rats. To date I have produced 15 litters over 5 generations.



Russian Blue Blaze Berkshire Roan kittens at 14 days of age with the one on the right in the photo below. Rats owned and bred by Nicole Housel, Black Wolf Rattery. Photo ©2015 Nicole Housel.



... and the Russian Blue Blaze Berkshire Roan Standard at 4 months old. Photo ©2016 Nicole Housel.