

# Chapter 10:

## Show Preparation

### Introduction

Raise or purchase purebred rabbits for show that are of a breed recognized by the American Rabbit Breeders Association. Crossbred rabbits, or rabbits of unknown or mixed breeding cannot be shown in ARBA sanctioned shows. An ARBA sanctioned show insures exhibitors that rabbits will be judged by comparison to the same ARBA *Standard of Perfection* for their breed. ARBA licensed judges are required to use the *Standard of Perfection* as a basis for evaluating rabbits, which helps insure uniformity of judging.

Youth may begin their showing experiences at the county fair. ARBA judges judge many county fair rabbit shows following the *Standard of Perfection*. Counties offering these types of 4-H rabbit shows promote interest in breeding and exhibiting purebred rabbits, and help youth learn about their rabbits' good qualities, as well as their faults. County and state fairs may also offer showmanship classes, judging contests, rabbit skillathons, knowledge bowls, educational poster contests, and other learning opportunities. Enter these classes to increase your knowledge about rabbits and develop new life skills. Fun contests, such as a rabbit costume class, allow you to further enjoy your 4-H project.

Rabbit shows offer many other opportunities for 4-H members. In addition to learning about your own rabbits' qualities, showing rabbits also helps you learn about rabbits in general. Rabbit shows are a great place to meet knowledgeable rabbit people, rabbit breeders, and make life-long friendships. Shows are a good outlet to advertise, sell, buy, or trade rabbits. At many shows, rabbitry supply businesses

sell rabbit cages, equipment, books, and other rabbit supplies not readily available locally.

### Selecting and Grooming

Show preparation begins as soon as you acquire your rabbits. Rabbits must be in good overall physical condition when they are exhibited at shows. "Condition" as defined in the ARBA Standard is in relation to the rabbit's health, cleanliness, fur, and grooming. Therefore, begin by always keeping hutches and cages clean. Give the rabbits quality daily care and protect them from direct sunlight to prevent their fur from becoming faded.

Carefully inspect your rabbits and select those for show with the fewest faults, and without disqualifications. These rabbits will be the most competitive at shows. Breed, group or variety (color), sex, and class (age and weight) determine in which class a rabbit will be shown. You must know this information prior to entering your rabbit. Review the ARBA's *Standard of Perfection* for your particular breed to become familiar with the point scale your rabbit will be judged against.

Begin grooming the rabbits you have selected at least six weeks before show time. Grooming should be done in the cool part of the day to prevent the rabbits from getting too hot. Handling rabbits when it is hot can cause unnecessary stress and heat stroke. Practice the proper method of picking up and carrying your rabbit. (Refer to the Handling section in Chapter 7.)

A small table covered with a carpet remnant can serve as a grooming stand. For the first few days of grooming, moisten your hands and rub them through the rabbit's fur until it is damp.



Once the fur is damp, gently and repeatedly stroke the rabbit from head to tail to remove loose fur. This may bring about molt, but it is better for the rabbit to molt then instead of at show time. There will be plenty of time for the fur to grow back by beginning the grooming process far in advance of the show.

After the first few days of grooming, stroke your rabbits from head to tail without dampening the fur. Stroking the rabbits on a daily basis will make their fur glossy and tight. Do not stroke the rabbits' fur going backwards (from tail to head). Rubbing against the grain of the fur can break the guard hairs.

Daily grooming does more than improving the appearance of your rabbits. It tames them, making them easier to handle at shows. As you are grooming, place your rabbits in the preferred pose for their breed and encourage them to stay in that position. Different breeds have different posing positions. Talk to someone familiar with your breed to find out how to best position your rabbit for show.

The purpose of posing a rabbit is to determine the rabbit's conformation and bone structure. To put a rabbit in the most common pose, position it on the table facing either right, if you are left-handed, or left, if you are right-handed. This makes it easier to pick the

rabbit back up when you are done. Position the tip of the front feet so they are even with the rabbit's eyes. Position the tip of the hind feet even with its hipbone. Make sure the rabbit's tail is showing and not tucked under its body.

## Showmanship

Showmanship is a combination of the 4-H member's appearance, sportsmanship and show ring ethics, knowledge of good rabbit husbandry and presentation of that information, and the ability to handle and show the rabbit according to its ARBA breed standard. Showmanship also includes the cleanliness and condition of the rabbit. A rabbit with faults and disqualifications will not be discounted or eliminated during showmanship. However, the exhibitor is expected to know his or her rabbit's good qualities, as well as any faults or disqualifications.

Practice showmanship and show ring procedures with your 4-H rabbits long before taking them to their first show. Work with your rabbit on a regular basis, sometimes with other people present. A rabbit that is used to being around different people, as well as being posed and handled on a table prior to being taken to a show, will behave much better than one that



is not. Practice can protect your rabbit from potentially dangerous situations, and can save you a lot of frustration.

A 4-H member showing his or her rabbit should wear a long sleeve shirt or coat, long pants or skirt, and shoes with closed toes and heels (no sandals or clogs). Remove any loose or dangling jewelry. Following these recommendations will help prevent injury while handling rabbits. Youth should also be well groomed, maintain eye contact with the judge, and communicate in a clear and confident voice.

Exhibitors will be expected to answer questions related to proper care, production, breed, variety, and class and fur descriptions. They should know other information contained in their project books or ARBA *Standard of Perfection*, according to the project they are enrolled in, and their age and experience in the project.

New members should not be overwhelmed by the vast amount of information available. Expectations should be based on age and experience. Most shows divide youth by age and experience levels for this contest.

Ohio 4-H has the goal of members being able to evaluate their rabbits used in the showmanship class for faults and disqualifications according to the ARBA *Standard of Perfection*. This should be done in the following manner with members verbalizing their inspection, showing the inspection, and exhibiting confidence, poise, and proper handling techniques.

When asked to examine a rabbit for disqualifications and general conformation, begin by checking the following:

### Ears

- Ear canker
- Illegible or missing tattoo in left ear
- Size and carriage (according to breed standard)
- Torn or missing portion



### Eyes

- Wall eye (white cornea)
- Spots on eyes
- Mismatched eye color
- Wrong color for breed standard
- Runny or weepy eyes





### Nose

- Colds (white nasal discharge)



### Front Legs

- Bent, bowed, or deformed



### Teeth

- Malocclusion (buck or wolf teeth)
- Simple malocclusion (butting teeth)
- Broken or missing tooth



### Front Feet and Toenails

- Missing toenails, including dewclaw (5 each front foot)
- Broken toenail(s) (too short to determine color)
- Unmatched toenails on same foot or corresponding foot, including dewclaw
- Nail color not meeting breed standard



### Chin/Neck Area

- Dewlap
- Abscesses



### Abdomen

- Mastitis or swollen teats
- Tumor, rupture, or hernia
- Abscesses



### Hind Legs

- Bent, bowed, deformed, or severely cow hocked



### Hocks

- Sore hocks (Bloody)



### Hind Feet and Toenails

- Missing toenail(s) (4 each hind foot)
- Broken toenail(s) (too short to determine color)
- Unmatched toenails on same foot or corresponding foot
- Nail color not meeting breed standard



## Sex

- Vent Disease
- Missing testicle(s) on Senior Buck
- Junior Buck with only one testicle showing
- Split penis



## Tail

- Stub, broken or wry tail

