



This section contains topics covered at our workshops. It is designed to give you a comprehensive overview of your project. Try to read through this section prior to attending our workshop. The workshop will include live animals to provide exhibitors with hands on experience. Note any questions or concerns that need to be addressed at the workshop.

Overview



Knowing what will be expected of the Exhibitor
 Ordering your show rabbits
 Preparing for the arrival of your rabbits

Guidelines

Fair Rules



Obtain a Copy of your Livestock Show Rules!

Be aware of all the provisions and regulations contained in your rules. Non compliance could cause your show pen to be disqualified. Some fairs will retain a part of auction proceeds for not following all of the rules.

Registration

Many livestock shows require you to register to participate. You may also be required to pay an entry fee.

Validation

Prior to your livestock show, usually when the rabbits are within 35 days/5 weeks of age, you will be required to have your rabbits Validated (their ears tattooed). The ear tattoo is used at check-in time on your show date to certify that your rabbits were actually entered as a project.

Workshops

Many 4H-FFA Clubs conduct clinics or workshops for exhibitors to assist them in managing their projects. In some cases, workshop attendance may be required in order to show your rabbits at your event.

Check-in

Prior to Judging, your 3 show rabbits will be:

- Weighed to ensure that they are within the correct weight limits stated in your rules.
- Checked for any problems that may disqualify them from competing in your livestock show.

Judging

Exhibitors are usually required to take their rabbits from the holding pens and place them into the judging cages. The judge will review all the animals and make their decision on the merits of each pen. When the judging is completed, a Grand Champion and Reserve Champion will be announced. The remainder of the pens will be placed accordingly.

Preparation**Ordering**

Always order early as to ensure better selection!

Quantity

Meat Pen entries generally consist of 3 show rabbits.
 Most exhibitors purchase 4-5 rabbits for their project.
 Exhibitors always purchase 1-2 "extra" rabbits in case a replacement is needed.
 Always check with your 4H-FFA leader as to the rules and regulations that apply to your livestock show.
 Contact the breeder and place your order at least 3 months prior to your Validation date.
 Breeders plan their matings months in advance based on the specific date of each county's livestock show.

Classes

Class	Age	Weight
Fryers	70 days to 90 days of age	3.5lb to 5.5lb
Roasters	90 days to 180 days of age	5.5lb to 8lb
Stewers	Over 180 days of age	Over 8lb

Pricing

Generally you will pay between \$30 to \$50 for meat pen rabbits.
 Price is no guarantee of quality
 Best practice is to purchase from an established breeder who has a good reputation.
 Some breeders request a deposit when you place your order.

Cages

Your Cage should be large enough to house 4-8 rabbits
 Your Cage should have 2-3 compartments to allow for weight separations of rabbits when needed
 A recommended Cage size for your rabbit project would be approximately 5'long x 24"deep x 18"high
 Always clean and disinfect Cages and Carriers with a solution of 50% Clorox(Bleach) and 50% hot water
 Always check your Cages for any broken wires and faulty door latches

Feed

Make sure your feed is fresh (Mill date on bag should be within 30 days of current date)
 To retain freshness, keep your feed in an airtight container

Watering

Clean and disinfect water bottles with a solution of 50% Clorox(Bleach) and 50% hot water
 Check the valves on the water bottles to make sure they are dispensing water

Weighing

You will need to purchase or have access to a reliable set of scales.
 It is very important to weigh your rabbits when you receive them.
 Keep track of weights to allow for adjustment of feeding rations.

Animal Selection



How to select the best rabbits for your project

Description of a Meat Pen

Meat Type

This is the most important factor in judging meat pens.
Fryers need to be compact and short, with a well filled body, rounded and firmly fleshed. Smooth, well filled hips and good depth of body are especially important.
Also needed are wide, deep loin, thickness in the hindquarters and well developed shoulders.

Order of Importance

Hindquarters, Loin and Forequarters. (Protruding hip bones or prominent "razor backs" are serious faults.)

Condition

All meat pen fryers should be in prime condition.
They should be firm and solid. They should show no signs of flabbiness, softness, looseness, or pottiness.
The pelt should be tight over the body and the animals should be clean and show no signs of neglect or disease.

Uniformity

Uniformity must be present in weight, size, appearance, condition, meat type and fur. They should be as similar in all respects as possible.

Fur

Fur should conform to the breed description and be uniform on all 3 rabbits. In stiff competition, the fur could be the deciding factor.

RabbitPedia : Anatomy of a Rabbit Detailed diagrams...

Breeds for Projects

The two most popular breeds for meat production are the Californian and New Zealand. These breeds are most popular because they combine white fur (preferred by processors) and good growth characteristics. New Zealand rabbits are slightly larger than the Californian, 9-13 pounds versus 8-10 pounds. Although these two breeds are the most commonly exhibited at livestock shows, some events allow the Champagne D'Argents and Satins as well.

Californian

Wikipedia : Californian Rabbit Overview...

Background:

After experimentation and crossbreeding, this rabbit was produced in 1923. It was bred as a meat rabbit to have broad shoulders, meaty back and hips and a good dressing percentage (percentage of edible meat). This rabbit is white except for ears, nose, feet and tail, which are a dark gray or black. The ideal weight for bucks is 9 pounds; does, 9½ pounds.

Description:

This is a white rabbit with colored nose, ears, feet and tail. Color is as dark as possible. The description of the body, to be of medium length, with depth equal to width and full over and around the hips, with firm, meaty saddle carried as full as meaty as possible to nape of neck and down sides over ribs and shoulders, with as little offal as possible. Mature bucks weigh 9 pounds; does, 9½ pounds.



New Zealand (White)

Wikipedia : New Zealand Rabbit Overview...

Background:

An American creation that appeared after the Red New Zealand, is one of the best all-around commercial breeds. It is an all-white rabbit whose fur can be dyed many colors for use as garment trims. The ideal weight of bucks is 10 pounds; does, 11 pounds.

Description:

The standard pretty well sums up the appearance by saying "the ideal type should create in the mind an impression of balance, uniformity and must exemplify meat producing qualities". The body combines good depth and width with medium length and should smoothly covered with flesh. Mature bucks weigh 10 pounds; does, 11 pounds.



Management



How to house your rabbits.
 How to keep them safe.
 How to feed and water them.
 What to do each day and each week.

Housing

The housing for your rabbits must:

- be clean at all times
- have access to plenty of fresh air
- have protection from hot or cold weather
- be protected from ALL dogs and other predators!

Design

- Rabbit pens [cages/hutches] should be kept sanitary at all times and located in an area allowing for plenty of fresh air and some sunlight.
- Each cage/hutch should protect the rabbits from bad weather, all dogs, other animals and must provide enough room for growth.

The most important point in building your rabbit cage/hutch is sanitation!

An open-air, self-cleaning cage/hutch is recommended. :A modern rabbit cage/hutch is constructed with welded wire.

The floor is made with 1/2-inch by 1-inch welded wire.

Sides and tops are built with 1-by-2-inch welded wire.

All-wire cage/hutches are more sanitary and durable than a wood cage/hutch.

Cages can be hung in a building with adequate ventilation.

This type of housing is more efficient than outside housing, especially when equipped with attached feeders and automatic watering systems.

Pelleted feed rations have eliminated the need for hay in rabbit cages/hutches.

The size of the cage/hutch depends on the size of the breed of rabbit. Cages and Hutches can be purchased pre-built.

Remember, it's easier to care for your rabbits in a well-built wire Cage or Hutch as opposed to temporary poorly built wood ones. Open-air, self-cleaning cages/hutches will help to keep your rabbits cool.

These cages/hutches can be kept cleaner and diseases can be controlled more easily.

To keep your rabbits from overheating, do not place the cage/hutch in direct sunlight.

Place the cage in partial or complete shade with good air circulation.

Cages should be approximately 24"D x 36"L x 18"H with attached feeders and water supply.

Temperature Control



Extreme Cold and Heat will Kill Your Rabbits!

On hot days [90 degrees and above], place frozen water bottles in the cage and have fans blowing on your rabbits.

On harsh cold days [38 degrees and lower], protect your rabbits from the elements. If a frost is in the forecast, bring your rabbits indoors (garage,etc) until the temperature rises back to 38 degrees or higher. Rabbits love the cold weather!

Predator Control



Be alert! - Protect your project...

Your cages must be protected from other animals, especially dogs!

Dogs kill an amazing number of unprotected 4H-FFA rabbits every year! Never allow ANY animal near your cages!

Dogs will pull the feet off of your rabbits through the wire flooring of an unprotected cage. This is a horrible death and can simply be avoided by making sure You have taken measures to protect your rabbits' cage area!

Environmental Control

Provide your rabbits with a clean and healthy environment!
 Prevent flies by removing the rabbit droppings at least every other day! This will also reduce the urine odor!
 Urine build-up will irritate your rabbits' breathing passages and burn their eyes!
 Rabbit droppings are a great fertilizer for gardens and flower beds!
 Just keep it clean!

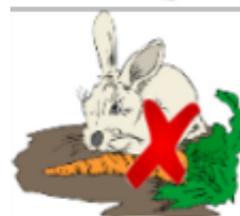
Feeding

Type of Feed



**Never feed your rabbits any "extras"!
 Not only will these "extras" stop your rabbits from eating their daily feed rations
 it will cause them to scour (diarrhea) and die.**

Use good quality commercial feed pellets.
 Purchase a feed that contains between 16% to 18% Protein!
 Pellets should be firm and not broken into small particles. The particles (fines) will not be eaten and will be wasted.
 Keep your feed dry, out of excess heat, free from insects and rodents.
 This can be done easily by storing in a container like a garbage can with a tight fitting lid.
 Do not store your feed for more than 3 or 4 weeks. It loses its nutritional value if it is stored longer than that.
 Do not let stale or moldy feed accumulate in feeders. If feed is dusty, try to sift it before feeding. The dust may harm your rabbit's respiratory system.



How Much Feed & Water

If raising a pen of 5 rabbits, a 50lb bag of feed should last 5-6 weeks.
 A household measuring cup of feed is a good ration measurement to feed each rabbit per day.
 Never let your rabbits be without water!
 Change the water often and keep the container clean.
 If the weather is hot, add ice cubes to the container throughout the day.

When to Feed

Feed your rabbits once a day in the Evening!
 Rabbits enjoy their "supper meal" just like you do!
 A good feeding habit/schedule would be to feed your rabbits just prior to your having your supper meal.
 Always clean and empty the feeder. Remove any uneaten feed before refilling.
 Your rabbits are nocturnal, which means they sleep during the day and eat at night.

Weight Gains

Your rabbits will weigh approximately 1 1/2 to 2 pounds when you get them.
 Weigh your rabbits when you get them and record their weights.
 Each rabbit should gain approximately 8-10 ounces per week.
 This is why we stress the importance of weekly weighing! Know and record your rabbits' weights!
 Weekly weighings will help you determine which 3 rabbits will be chosen as your show pen!
 The ideal weight on show day for your 'pen of 3' should be very close to 5 pounds per rabbit.

Tasks

Daily Tasks



You can have a very successful project if you give your rabbits the daily attention that they require!

- Evening Feeding . . . feed the recommended amounts!
- Keep the water container full and clean at all times!

Weekly Tasks



Attention leads to Prevention!

Do a complete check of each rabbit. Look carefully for any physical problems such as

- broken toenails
- eye problems
- earmites

Treat your rabbits' ears with mineral oil to prevent earmites

Weigh and record your rabbits' weights

Work and 'pose' your rabbits, preparing them for show day!

Health



How to recognize problems with the health of your animals.

Overview



An Ounce of Prevention!
Keep them comfortable - Keep them clean
Give them plenty of good feed - Provide clean cool water

Common health problems can occur.

Once again, keeping the rabbit cage/area clean and handling your rabbits on a daily basis will alert you to any health problems that could arise. Using certain "people products" have been found to be quite helpful in treating some of the following ailments.

Ears

Ear Mites will cause your rabbit pen to be disqualified on show day! Ear Mites can hit the very best and cleanest of show rabbits if simple and proper preventive measures aren't taken weekly.

Mineral Oil used on it's own is very effective. Or, if you prefer, mix one part Campho-Phenique with three parts Mineral Oil to help prevent and treat ear mites in your rabbits. If left untreated, ear mites can lead to a condition called Ear Canker and could cause severe illness or death for your rabbits.

Ear Mites-Pet Informed-Must Read... (<http://www.pet-informed-veterinary-advice-online.com/rabbit-ear-mites.html>)]



Applying Mineral Oil

You **MUST** treat your rabbits' ears weekly with Mineral Oil whether you see any ear mites or not.

Once again, as in weighing, set aside a particular day of the week to treat your rabbits' ears.

Place 2 to 3 drops of Mineral Oil deep into the ear canal of each ear...massage the ear, rubbing the oil out to the tip of the ear as well.

Stop using the Mineral Oil the last week prior to your show date!

You **DO NOT** want "greasy ears" on show date.

Eyes

If eyes are red and infected. Use a cotton swab and apply an over-the-counter Antibiotic Ointment

Teeth

Malocclusion, also referred to as buck' teeth or wolf' teeth.

The rabbits upper and lower teeth are misaligned so that the normal process of chewing doesn't wear down your rabbit's teeth.

Malocclusion in rabbits is either inherited (hereditary-breeder should have identified this problem) or acquired (biting the wire on cages).

Malocclusion is an immediate disqualification.

Feet

Dirty Feet?....Try Witch Hazel on cotton swabs to clean the feet

Sore Hocks (Back Pad of Foot)

Apply Zinc Cream to sore or rubbed feet.

Scouring (Diarrhea)

If one rabbit is scouring, it is possible that your other rabbits may scour as well.

Remove the rabbit/s that are scouring and put them into separate pens.

Using a dropper, inject 1-2 full droppers of Pepto-Bismol into the back of the rabbit's throat.

Treat daily until all signs of scouring have stopped.

Make sure your rabbits have plenty of FRESH water daily to prevent dehydration.

Judging



How rabbit projects are judged.
How to select your pen for showing.

Overview



Choose Your Meat Pen Wisely!

Your meat pen should consist of 3 rabbits that are uniform in size, weight and condition.

Bigger Isn't Always Better!
One large rabbit mixed in with 2 medium sized rabbits will be very obvious to the Judge.

Remember! Use your larger rabbit as a possible 'winner' in the Single Fryer competition!

Point Schedule

Meat Pen-3 Fryers	
Meat Type	40 points
Condition of flesh	30 points
Uniformity of body & weight	20 points
Fur	10 points
Total	100 points

Single Fryer	
Meat Type	45 points
Condition of flesh	35 points
Fur	20 points
Total	100 points

Roasters & Stewers	
Meat Type	35 points
Condition of flesh	35 points
Fur	30 points
Total	100 points

Terms**Meat Type**

Is the shape of the body.

Study and then examine as many fryers as possible till you understand what is meant by "commercial type."

RabbitPedia : Commercial Type Rabbit How to recognize good commercial animals

Condition of Flesh

Is how the animals look and feel: firm, solid, and clean.

Again all 3 should show the same condition.

Skin should be tight over the body.

Hopefully, the fryers have NEVER been picked up by the scruff of the neck....

that pulls the pelt away from the muscle, making for flabby-feeling shoulders.

Uniformity of Body & Weight

Is how well you have matched all 3 fryers.

They should look like carbon copies or tripletts.

A judge has advised that matching TYPE is the most important consideration.

It's nice to have them at the same weight, but not the top priority.

Do try to get them within 2-3 ounces of each other.

Fur

Is fur. It should be clean with no chewed or bare spots, and in "prime."

That means it should show the natural texture (what you feel) and density (what you see) as described for your breed of rabbit.

When in "prime," the fur will naturally fly back to its smooth natural position when stroked from tail to head.

Fur Appearance

Fur is often what determines Grand Champion from the Reserve Champion.

It's the final determining factor when the judge is looking at 2 identically-typed meatpens.

Stains

In a spray bottle you mix white vinegar and water together. Then moisten the fur with the spray bottle and with a soft clean cloth wipe a little white cornmeal into the stained or soiled spot. Using the soft clean cloth or a comb or stiff brush work the cornmeal out. Repeat as needed. Make sure you get all of the cornmeal out.

Sheen

If you want to give a nice sheen to the coat, take a very well used dryer sheet and wipe in the direction the fur lays. This will take out any static and the fur has a nice "sheen" to it without leaving anything behind.

Showmanship



Overview

Showmanship is a participant's opportunity to demonstrate his/her knowledge and ability to properly select and present rabbits to their best advantage.

The participant's confidence, ability and the rabbit's response are indicators of the knowledge and skills gained in handling and identifying quality animals, as well as defects, disqualifications, breed and variety characteristics....

Showmanship is an opportunity for a 4-H member to show how much he or she knows about rabbits and how well they can handle them.

The ultimate showman can handle any rabbit well, even if he or she has never before worked with it.

A good showman is a combination of their knowledge, manners, proper dress and handling skills.

They have learned the art of selecting, fitting/grooming and presenting rabbits to their best advantage.

The confidence and ability demonstrated by the showman and the rabbit's response and grooming indicates the amount of previous work done with the rabbit.

Knowledge is the response to questions about the rabbit parts, disqualifications, breeds and variety characteristics.