

Ontario County 4-H Rabbit Showmanship Overview

Introduction

4h rabbit showmanship is a combination of a 4H members knowledge of good Rabbit management, and care, and how that information is presented to a judge.

In other words, condition and cleanliness of the rabbit, the 4H members ability to handle and show the rabbit, knowledge of the rabbits good qualities and its faults or disqualifications according to its ARBA Breed standard. Showmanship also includes the 4-H members appearance, showing ethics and sportsmanship.

Show preparation

Show preparation begins with proper care and handling as soon as the rabbits are selected for your 4H project. Rabbits need to be in good condition, which refers to their health, cleanliness, fur, and grooming. In order to accomplish this hutches and cages need to be kept clean, the rabbit needs to have fresh water daily, as well as a diet that is properly balanced for their age and purpose. They need to be kept out of direct sunlight to prevent their fur from fading, and they need to be monitored daily to note any changes in their behavior or condition. Part of that daily monitoring should be consistent, gentle handling.

Handling

- Wear long sleeves to protect your arms from getting scratched
- Always handle the rabbit, humanely never lift, or carry by the ears or legs, always make sure that the entire body is being supported.
- Put a piece of rug or carpet on the table or area where you're handling your rabbit, so they can get a foothold when being handled, smooth surfaces cause the rabbit to slide, making it hard to handle, groom, and pose as it will not feel secure, and will become afraid and untrusting
- handling your rabbit during the cooler parts of the day in two or three short sessions, rather than in one long session is best.

Grooming

- Begin grooming your rabbit at least six weeks before the show. Use a study table covered with a piece of carpet or rug or towel.
- For the first few days of grooming, or during molt, moisten your hands and rub them through the rabbits fur from head to tail until it is damp, then continue to stroke the rabbit head to tail several times to remove dead fur. •Do not rub the fur backwards from tail to head as that can break the guard hairs.
- Once a good coat is established, continue to groom your rabbit by hand, daily, stroking from head to tail without dampening the fur. this will make the coat shiny and tight. Daily grooming, improves the appearance of your rabbit, and also helps to tame it, making it easier to handle.
- During your grooming sessions, also work regularly on posing your rabbit, and turning your rabbit over for a health check of its underside regularly.

4h rabbit showmanship

Posing

Gently and consistently put your rabbit in the proper show position for it's breed and teach it to stay in that position. If you don't know the show position, the most common pose is as follows:

- Place the rabbit on the table with the tip of the front feet even with the rabbit's eyes.
- Position the tip of the hind feet even with the rabbit's hip bones.
- Make sure that the tail is showing and not tucked under the body.

Time to show!

During the showmanship class, a 4H member should wear a white, long sleeve shirt or show coat such as a white lab coat. Black pants, and sturdy shoes with closed toes should be worn. There should be no dangling jewelry to get in the way and long hair should be tied back in such a way that it does not interfere with the presentation of the rabbit.

The 4h member will present and discuss an examination of the rabbit as laid out in the point system from the American rabbit breeders association. They will then also be asked age-appropriate questions related to the subject matter, such as proper care, health, nutrition, production, the rabbits breed, variety, class, and fur descriptions along with other possibilities at the judges discretion.

After the class

The rabbit should be returned to the cage with fresh water and a bit of feed and allowed to relax, cool down, and unwind. Showing can be mildly stressful for any animal as they tend to pick up on their handler's cues so it's important to offer them a good break when finished.

Market rabbit showmanship extras

- Members should be prepared to discuss their animals strengths and weaknesses AS a market prospect.
- They should know about types of market rabbits, i.e. fryer, roaster, stewer
- They may be asked about different breeds of rabbits used for meat, and why some are preferred or not
- They should also have some knowledge of their own animals "daily rate of gain"
- They may be asked questions about their own particular raising plan or protocol and experience
- They should be able to answer questions about the nutrition aspects of rabbit meat, why someone might want to raise Rabbits, the typical meat cuts on a rabbit, possible ways to prepare and cook the meal, possibly some facts on the rabbit industry around the world, and how the United States ranks in that industry.