

HUTTO FFA
RABBIT EXHIBITOR HANDBOOK



CONTENTS

Page 2: Important Dates

Page 3: Market Rabbit Project

Page 4-6: Basic Rabbit Supplies

Page 6: Cost Summary

Page 7-8: Handling and Exercising

Page 9: Market Rabbit Feeding

Page 10: Judging Rabbits

Page 11: Getting Ready for Show & Showmanship

Page

IMPORTANT DATES

Entry Forms & Fees: County entry dates are usually in September.

Market Bunny Pick-Up: TBD

Validation

Show Date: 1st week of December.
<http://www.wmcolivestock.org/>

MARKET RABBIT PROJECT

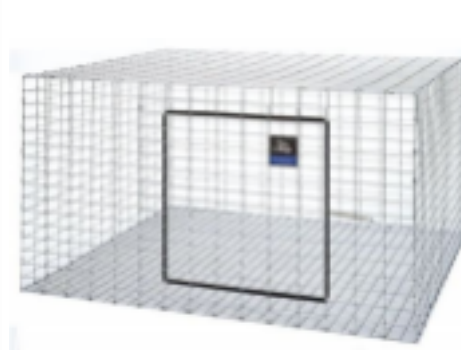
- Raised predominantly for meat production
- Can be shown as a meat pen and single fryer
 - Meat Pen – 3 rabbits that are of the same breed, age and size and are shown as a unit. They have to weigh 3.5-5.5 lbs.
 - Single Fryer – a single rabbit that doesn't weigh more than 6lbs.
 - A rabbit in your meat pen CAN NOT show as a single fryer.
- Breeds most commonly shown:
 - White New Zealand
 - Californian - this is the breed you will receive
- Generally, a short-term project.
- Rabbits shown as market rabbits which place in the show, will be in the Livestock Sale on that Saturday evening. However, they are not actually “buying” your rabbits. They will still go home with you that night. The buyers are truly making a donation for the hard work you have put into your project.
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- You need to have a plan for what you will do with your rabbits after the show. Some options are to:
 - Keep them as pets for yourself.
 - Harvest rabbits yourself for consumption by friends and family.
 - Sell the rabbits to others who are considering breeding their own rabbits.
 - Sell them to other 4-H or FFA members to use as a rabbit pet project.
 - Many times the breeder will offer to take them back.

BASIC RABBIT SUPPLIES

Equipment Needed BEFORE picking up your rabbits:

Rabbit Cages Water Bowls Feeder Feed Bedding/Composite Kitchen Scale Grooming Supplies

Hutch/Cage Examples:



Market rabbits are recommended to have their own cage but can be paired up, & it is advised to have 2-3 cage's prepared (for 4 bunnies) so that they can be separated for feeding or behavior issues as needed. **All** cages should have wire floors. Solid dividers can be made/used in standard sized cages (30"x 30") to separate rabbits for short term periods, but not advised for full time keeping. Before buying new, check craigslist and Facebook for used cages.

Water Bowls:



A heavy ceramic bowl approximately 6 - 8 inches in diameter is highly recommended. Small dog bowls can be used as long as they are heavy enough so that rabbits can't flip them over (*TJ Maxx or other discount stores often carry these bowls for less than \$5*). Most of our exhibitors use water bottles but some do not recommend it due to quick mildewing, possible teeth chipping (*automatic DQ*), and the work it takes the rabbits to drink, possibly discouraging them to drink as much as they could. Water should be refilled twice a day with fresh cool water and crocks should be cleaned daily. Vitamin and Electrolytes designed for poultry that are in a powder form can aid in stress relief and weight gain. Mix 1 teaspoon of powder to 1 gallon of water. You can start off with a little less and work up to full strength.

Water Info Resources:

<http://www.therabithouse.com/equipment/rabbit-water.asp>



http://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/236/65935/4H1509_4-H_RabbitTracks_Water.pdf

Feeders:

Self feeders (with wide openings and screen bottoms) are recommended. Food must be checked daily to be sure it is not stale. Plastic and/or metal bowls are not

recommended, to prevent unnecessary waste & chipped teeth from biting.

Bedding/Composites: (optional)

Rabbits are NOT to be kept on bedding of any sort. It is ONLY to be used in drop trays or under cages to help collect urine/feces for easy cleaning. Composite or pelleted bedding, and even puppy pads, make the best options. Bedding should be changed often, and dirty bedding/feces should NEVER be able to touch the floor of the cage. Rabbits kept on bedding or solid surfaces could experience sore hocks and stained feet/underbellies, which could impact your rabbits quality.



A small kitchen scale that is able to weigh in ounces is highly recommended to keep track of your rabbits' progress. Market rabbits can NOT weigh more than 6lbs for the Wichita County show, but you want them as close to 6lbs as possible.

Records! It is important that you start weighing each rabbit and keeping a chart on how much they are gaining. It is easier to slow one down or push one if you have 4 weeks to work with the rabbits. (It is difficult if you email 2 days before the show with a big weight problem.) They can gain as much as 4 oz. a day the last week. At first you will need to weigh them twice a week. Try weighing them at least once a week at the time you will be weighing them in at your show. For example, if check in is at 11:00am for your show, then you will want to weigh your rabbits at 11:00am. It must be done at the same time so that you will have an accurate weight. Remember they usually eat 8 oz. a day. If you weigh them and they weigh 5.15 lbs. and then you feed them 8 oz. they will be over weight when you go to weigh them in. You will need to weigh them daily the week before the show approaches. You want your bunnies to weigh 1-4 oz of each other.

Grooming Supplies:

Not much should be needed for grooming if a sanitized environment is maintained. A damp hand to work the rabbits fur, always wiping from head to tail, works great when done as needed, usually only done during the last week before show. Baby wipes can be used when controlled moisture is needed, and worst case scenario, hydrogen peroxide can be used to help remove stains on the feet. Brushes are not necessary.

Transport in Carriers: (optional but recommended)



Rabbits should be transported in transport carriers. It is recommended that the bottom pan of the rabbit carrier be lined with puppy pads to absorb urine. Carriers can be secured from FFA or 4-H members who are no longer showing rabbits, online or at feed stores.

COST SUPPLY SUMMARY

Bunnies (4 in a group) \$200

Grower Feed - \$20

Black Sunflower Seeds (optional) TBD

Electrolytes (optional) \$5-\$10

Rabbit Feeder with screen bottom for 4 cages Approx. \$40

Waterers for 4 cages Approx. \$30

Kitchen Scale \$15

Transport Cage (optional but recommended) Approx. \$50

Cages TBD

HANDLING + EXERCISE



Market rabbits should not be handled more than necessary. With the exception of their weekly weigh-ins and as-needed grooming, it is not recommended to pet/handle them or ever allow them out of their cage to roam. The more a Market Rabbit is handled, the less tense they are during judging, which diminishes how their muscles will feel for the judges.

Rabbit Handling:

1. Wear long sleeves to protect your arms from getting scratched.
2. Handle your rabbit with care.

3. Handle your rabbit but not too often.
4. NEVER lift or carry a rabbit by its ears. This is painful for the rabbit. Lifting by the ears causes damage to the ear veins. Also, without the entire body being supported, when a rabbit kicks to free itself, it may cause bone fractures in its back or hind legs, and cause injury to nerves or tendons.
5. NEVER lift a rabbit by its legs. This is painful, as well as can cause injury as mentioned in No. 4.
6. NEVER lift a rabbit by the scruff of its neck without supporting the entire body weight, as injuries can occur as mentioned in No. 4.
7. Put a rug or piece of carpet on the table or area where you are handling your rabbit, so it can get a foothold when being worked with. Smooth surfaces cause a rabbit to slide, making it hard to handle, groom, and pose. A rabbit will not feel secure on smooth places, and may become afraid.
8. Handle your rabbit during the cool part of the day.
9. Handling rabbits when it is too hot can cause unnecessary stress and heat stroke.
10. Carry your rabbit by tucking its head under your arm while supporting its body between your side and your same arm. The rabbit's eyes should be covered by your elbow. Support the hindquarters with your free hand.

Rabbit Grooming:

1. Groom in the cool part of the day.
2. Use a table covered with a rug or piece of carpet as a grooming stand.
3. Moisten your hands and rub them through the rabbit's fur (from head to tail) until it is damp.
5. Once the fur is damp, stroke the rabbit from head to tail several times to remove dead fur.
6. Do not rub the fur backwards (from tail to head) as that can break the guard hairs.
7. Then continue to groom your rabbit by stroking the fur from head to tail without dampening the fur. This makes the fur shiny and tight.
9. Grooming improves the appearance of your rabbit. You know your rabbit has good fur condition when you rub the fur in the opposite direction of its natural lay and it will "flyback" to its original position and appear that it has never been touched.

Do not over work their fur. They have natural oil in their fur and we do not want to destroy that beauty. A week before the show you can put a very little corn starch in the fur but then discontinue. Always work the fur for a few seconds with water before they go on the table. This will take out any static electricity the fur may have in it.

Also, check for any ear mites/canker that might be down in their ears. It will look crusty. If they do, put one drop of mineral oil in each ear.

Posing Your Rabbit:

Put your rabbit in the proper show position and teach it to stay in that position. To put it in proper position:

- a. Place it on the table on a piece of carpet. Face the rabbit to your left.
- b. Place the tip of the front feet so they are even with the rabbit's eyes.
- c. Place the tip of the hind feet even with the rabbit's hip bones.
- d. Make sure the rabbit's tail is showing and not tucked under its body.

Try to spend some time handling and posing the bunnies. We want the bunnies to not get scared when handled but again not handled too much so that they still tense up for the judge. Scared bunnies will not pose correctly for the judge. In big classes of rabbits, many times judges will not spend much time with "wild" bunnies, and just place them at the bottom of the class.

Try to always have your bunny posed when you have it of the cage working the fur, etc.

MARKET RABBIT FEEDING

Feeders should be checked 2 -3 times daily and filled. Do not put more than a day's feed out at a time. Rabbit feed absorbs moisture from the air and goes stale in a matter of hours. Bunnies want fresh dry feed. Once a day, generally evenings, it is recommended that you empty any remaining feed and fill feeder. It is recommended that you feed in a rabbit feeder with a screen bottom to allow dust to fall out of the bottom. Rabbits are very picky about feed and will not eat well if only given stale food. The more often the feed is filled, the more likely they are to eat well. Keeping an accurate measure of how much your rabbits are consuming is also essential to market projects to accurately gauge which rabbits are gaining efficiently and at what rate. Using labeled feed scoops and bowls will assist in tracking their feed intake.

When purchasing feed look at the date of manufacture on the label, if the date is more than 30 days old, select a different bag. Feed older than 30 days when purchased could be stale and rabbits are less likely to eat well. Remember it may take you a month to finish feeding that bag of feed. The rabbits must have clean fresh feed at all times when feeding out a rabbit meat pen.

Whatever feed brand you use, it needs to be a grower and not a general purpose rabbit feed. If switching from breeders brand of feed, be sure to mix over a few days to allow the rabbits to get used to the new feed.

Feed Recommendations:

Bluebonnet Rabbit Booster - 16% Martindale Rabbit Feed - 18% Found at Feed & Garden Store or Found at Feed and Garden Store Holliday Feed Store

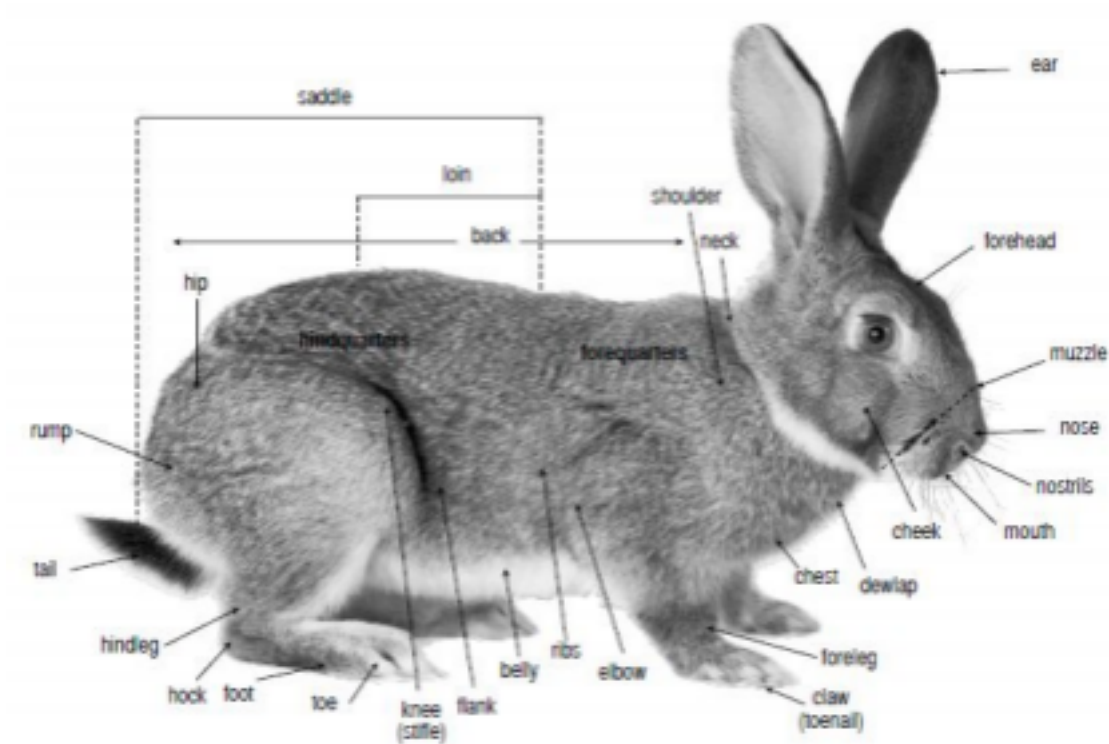


Supplements:

Black oil sunflower seeds are one of the best supplements that you can add. Start slow so that the rabbits do not scour. Work up to about 10 per rabbit. (No more than this) I recommend a cup to put the supplements into so they will not scratch out their feed to get to the goodies. I like the cups that clip on the cage so it is easy to take out after they finish their supplement.

JUDGING RABBITS

Parts of the Rabbit:



What Judges

are looking for in Meat Pens:

Meat pens consist of three rabbits shown as a group. They are judged on having a good body type, and for having uniformity among the three individual rabbits. Basically you are looking for 3 identical triplet rabbits based on weight, width, depth, frame, and fur. Two exceptional rabbits shown with a fair rabbit normally will not beat three good rabbits. Since you have to show 3 identical rabbits, it is best to have a few spares to choose from to pick the ones that look alike.

<https://www.facebook.com/TheRabbitShowLive/videos/2065647380140198>

<https://www.facebook.com/TheRabbitShowLive/videos/554255008807408>

GETTING READY FOR SHOW

It's recommended that you have more animals than you actually need for the show so that you can select the best rabbits for that show.

Be sure that the validation tattoos remains visible for the show to verify upon arrival Show Checklist:

- Carrying Cage(s)
- Wagon/cart for moving cages
- Feeder
- Waterer
- Feed
- Puppy Pads for carrier

Once you arrive at the show make sure you do the following:

- Check-In
- Place rabbits in assigned area (some shows have committee members who handle the animals once they are checked in)
- Be courteous to other people's space and animals
- Be respectful of the judge(s) and those who are working the show
- While your rabbits are being judged, be present at the judging

SHOWMANSHIP

Showmanship is a combination of: (1) your appearance; (2) knowledge about rabbits; (3) handling and showing your rabbit, including knowing its faults according to the ARBA breed standard; and (4) sportsmanship and show ring ethics.

To Learn more about showmanship, check out these videos:

<https://youtu.be/ZFQu7rw8pGQ>

<https://youtu.be/XK3RsRz59ME>

<https://youtu.be/sqodpNT-fW8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQGJ9jQy3h4>

WILLIAMSON COUNTY LIVESTOCK SHOW RULES

RABBITS

1. Exhibitor must have ownership and possession at validation.
2. The top 35% of rabbit pens will make the auction.
3. Each rabbit must weigh between 3.5lbs-5.5 lbs.
4. Rabbit Breed date is in August. The county show announces it in July.
5. All rabbits will be tattooed by the county show. You must take them the date and time the WCLA picks.
6. Meat pen entry shall consist of three (3) rabbit fryers. Exhibitors can enter two (2) meat pens. Exhibitor will be allowed to sell one (1) meat pen in the auction.

CLASSES:

1. Meat pen of 3 fryers. To be broken in classes by weight: light, medium, heavy.
2. Grand Champion Pen of 3.
3. Reserve Champion Pen of 3.
4. Breeding rabbits broken up by age.
5. Grand Champion Breeding Rabbit.

6. Reserve Champion Breeding
Rabbit

7. Jr./Int./Sr. Showmanship.