

4-H Rabbit Showmanship

Handling

1. Wear long sleeves to protect your arms from getting scratched.
2. Handle your rabbit with care.
3. Handle your rabbit 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.
11. Refer to the Rabbit Resource Handbook, 228R, pages 54-55 for proper handling techniques.

Show Preparation

Grooming

1. Start grooming your rabbit at least six weeks before the show.
2. Groom in the cool part of the day.
3. Use a table covered with a rug or piece of carpet as a grooming stand.

4. 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. Repeat steps 4 through 6 for several days.
8. Then continue to groom your rabbit daily by stroking the fur from head to tail without dampening the fur. This makes the fur shiny and tight.
9. Daily grooming improves the appearance of your rabbit, and tames it, making it easier to handle.

Posing Your Rabbit

1. While grooming, put your rabbit in the proper show position for its breed, and teach it to stay in that position.
2. If you do not know the show position for your breed, put it in the most common pose as follows:
 - a. Place it on the table. Face the rabbit to your right if you are left-handed or to your left if you are right-handed. (This makes it easier to pick the rabbit up.)
 - 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.

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.

1. Once your rabbit is used to being handled, begin practicing showmanship.
2. Work with your rabbit every day or every other day.
3. Get your rabbit used to being around other people, strange noises, other rabbits.
4. Refer to the Rabbit Resource Handbook, 228R, Chapter 10, Show Preparation, beginning on page 83.

Showmanship Steps

1. ***Carry rabbit to judging table or removing rabbit from cage.***
2. ***Properly pose your rabbit.***
2. ***Examine your rabbit in the following order. Tell your judge what you are looking for.***
 - a. ***Ears – Check for:***
Ear canker; Illegible or missing tattoo;
Size and carriage of ears; Torn or missing part of ear
 - b. ***Eyes – Check for:***
Wall eye (white cornea); Spots on eyes; Mismatched eye color;
Runny or weepy eyes
 - c. ***Nose – Check for:***
Colds (white nasal discharge)
 - d. ***Teeth – Check for:***
Malocclusion (buck or wolf teeth); Simple malocclusion (butting teeth);
Broken or missing tooth
 - e. ***Chin/Neck Area – Check for:***
Dewlap (does); Abscesses
 - f. ***Front Legs – Check for:***
Bent, bowed or deformed
 - g. ***Front Feet and Toenails – Check for:***
Missing toenails (5 on each front foot), including dewclaw; Broken
toenails (too short to determine color);
Unmatched toenails; Nail color not meeting breed standard
 - h. ***Abdomen – Check for:***
Mastitis or swollen teats; Tumor, rupture or hernia;
Abscesses
 - i. ***Hind Legs – Check for:***
Bent, bowed, deformed, or severely cow hocked
 - j. ***Hocks – Check for:***
Sore hocks (bloody)
 - k. ***Hind Feet and Toenails – Check for:***
Missing toenails (4 on each hind foot); Broken toenails (too short to
determine color); Unmatched toenails
Nail color not meeting breed standard
 - l. ***Sex – Check for:***
Vent disease; Missing testicle(s) on Senior Buck; Junior Buck with only
one testicle showing; split penis
 - m. ***Tail – Check for:***
Stub, broken or wry tail