

COWETA COUNTY 4-H

Rabbit/Cavy Showmanship Manual

Guide for Showing at the Coweta County Fair



Includes

- Anatomy
- Score Sheet
- Questions by Age Group
- Step by Step Directions to Handling your Animal

Revised August, 2025



Important Reminder: All exhibitors and animals must be entered online via www.cowetacountyfair.net.

Congratulations for making the decision to show your rabbit or cavy! While it can seem intimidating at first, learning to properly handle your animal for show will build a greater bond between you, and allow you to be more familiar with its overall health and condition.

This guide was prepared to assist you in preparing for the 4-H Rabbit/Cavy Showmanship Contest and the Showmanship Sweepstakes at the Coweta County Fair. Information has been gathered from numerous sources but is not intended to serve as an official guide for showing in any other venue. The primary resource materials come from the American Rabbit Breeders Association (www.arba.net), both the Standard of Perfection and Raising Better Rabbits & Cavies. It is strongly recommended that this guide be used for the Coweta County showmanship competitions as this is the material by which you will be judged.

Animals being shown in Open Exhibits at the Coweta County Fair will be judged using the ARBA Standard of Perfection. Both rabbits and cavies may be entered in this competition and will be kept on exhibit until the last day of the fair. See www.cowetacountyfair.net for the most up-to-date information regarding entry dates, show times, policies, and more.

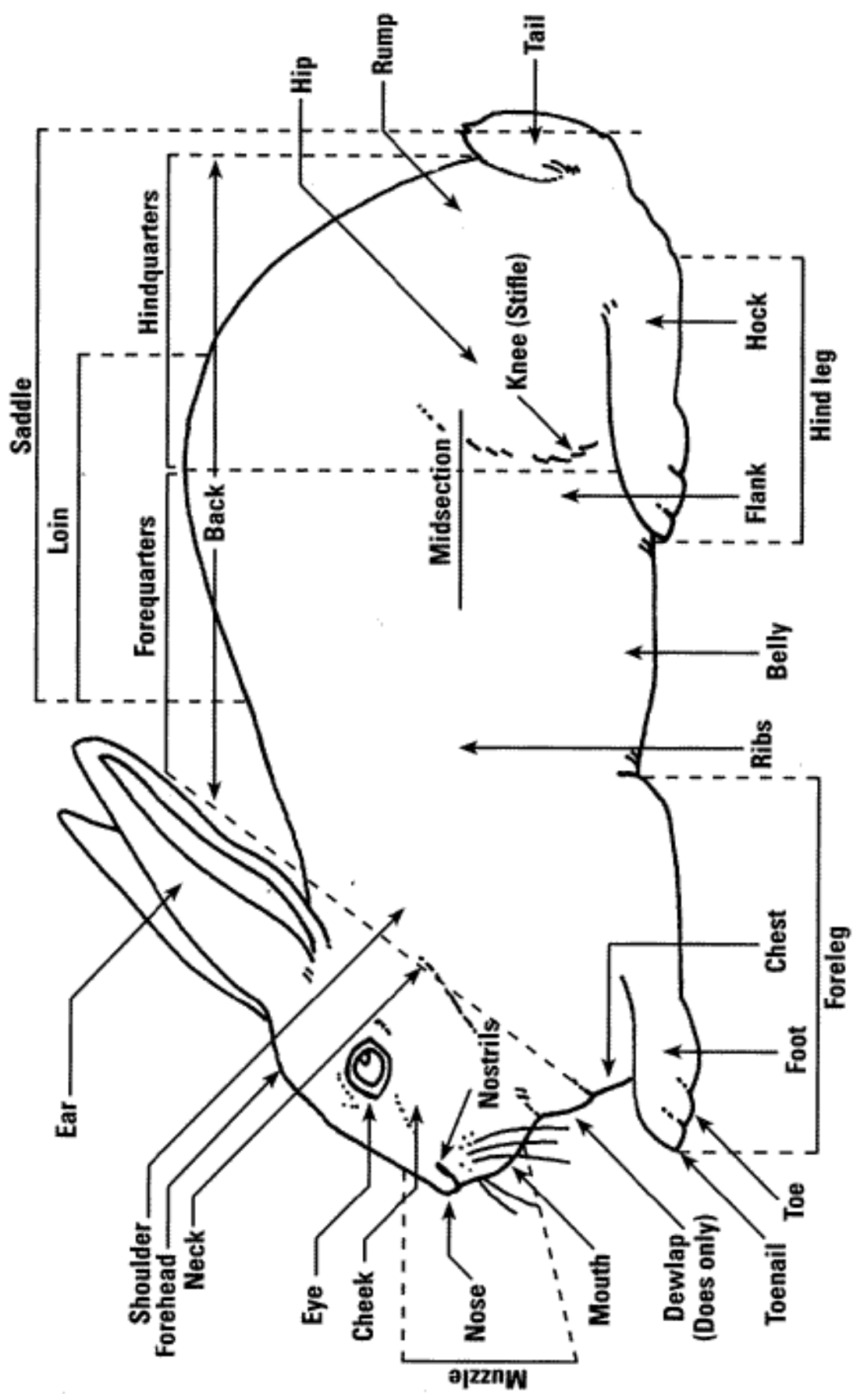
Best of luck to you all,

Mrs. Leigh

Top Ten Mistakes for Parents of Youth in Showmanship

“Doing the right thing” isn’t always easy. However, the following list can act as a guide for parents when it comes to teaching their children about the responsibilities of raising and showing animals.

- I. You are trying to teach your child responsibility. The animal is their responsibility, therefore, do NOT feed and water their animal.
- II. Forgive your child for making mistakes in the show ring, for you have made mistakes, too.
- III. Don’t get mad when your child forgets items in the show box, for one day you may forget the show box.
- IV. You shalt help the show management for they are doing a job that you would not want to do.
- V. Out of respect to all concerned, you should see that your child is on time for all show activities.
- VI. Be sure that your child has the animals entered and the registration papers in order by the designated time.
- VII. Teach your child that winning a blue ribbon is a desirable goal, but making friends along the way is a more worthy goal.
- VIII. Never complain about the judge or his/her decisions for you have sought out their opinion.
- IX. Remember that livestock projects are teaching projects, not necessarily money-making projects.
- X. And finally, the livestock project is a family project that should be enjoyed and supported by the entire family.



Anatomy of the Rabbit

Exhibitor's Appearance

Showmanship begins the moment you enter the show ring. While the contest is primarily concerned with how well you handle your animal and your knowledge of rabbits, your appearance speaks volumes as well.

Neatness is key – you don't want to distract from your animal. A confident manner and a smile tell the judge that you are going to do your best.

- Long pants, either neat, clean jeans or khakis are appropriate. Pants should not have any holes in them.
- A button front shirt is desired. Long sleeved is preferable – it may protect you from an excited animal.
- Hair should be worn so it won't fall into your eyes as you maneuver your animal. **Hats should not be worn.**
- Closed toe shoes are recommended.
- Keep jewelry to the minimum, nothing that will interfere with your presentation.

When your name is called, remove your rabbit from its cage and carry it to the table. The head should be tucked under your arm and your hand supporting its rump. Hold the rabbit steady as you approach the table. Once the rabbit is on the table, pose the animal and stand quietly, waiting your turn. The judge will notice if you are talking with your neighbor and will deduct points for your failure to pay attention.

When the judge reaches you, pose your rabbit and wait for instructions. Answer all questions in a clear voice, even if you are unsure of the answer. Being confident is half the battle!



Rabbit/Cavy Showmanship Score Sheet

Possible	Awarded	Category	Comments
10		Exhibitor's appearance and attitude	Long pants, shirt tucked in, closed toe shoes
10		Grooming and condition of animal	Animal should be proper weight for breed; free of hutch stain, sun bleach, molt, abscess, hernias, ruptures, mites, and fungus (ringworm). Nails should be trimmed; fur should have no matting.
5		Introduction	Introduce yourself and state your animal's breed, sex, variety, and age (junior, intermediate or senior).
5		Removal and carrying	Properly carry, handle and control your animal.
5		Pose for type; profile to judge	Pose your animal properly. Know the proper weight for the breed, senior weights, and know its weight.
5		Abdominal and neck check	Examine the entire body for signs of abscess, ruptures, abnormal lumps, or hernias. Check the dewlap for wet dewlap (if applicable).
5		Front legs and nails	Rabbits: Check for 5 toenails (4 toenails and one dewclaw) Check for proper color. Check for broken toes and straightness.
5		Rear legs and nails	Rabbits: Check for 4 toenails, all proper color. Check for broken toes and straightness. Check for sore hocks.
5		Sexing	Check the genital area of the animal and determine gender. If male, check for testicles (2 in seniors, and none or both in junior/intermediates).
5		Head (teeth, eyes, nose)	Check for malocclusion, broken or missing teeth. Check for proper color, check for mismatched, marbled, or discolored eyes. Look at the nose. Check for nasal discharge and foreign spots.
5		Ears	Rabbits: Check left ear for tattoo; right for registration. Cavies: Check left ear for tag; right for registration. Check for ear canker/ear mites, proper ear length and carriage, torn/missing portion, proper thickness and covering, proper coloring/markings
5		Fur	Check length, density, and texture. Check for foreign colored spots, stray white hairs and/or smut. Check for matted fur, an indication of snuffles or a cold.
5		Tail	Rabbits: Check the tail for straightness; check color.
5		Conclusion and exit table	Pose animal then return to cage.
5		Did exhibitor speak clearly, loud enough?	Speak clearly and don't forget to smile!
15		Knowledge of subject	Judged on your ability to answer questions correctly
TOTAL			

Rabbit Body Types

(excerpted from Standard of Perfection 2006-2010)

Cylindrical: Animals are to show a straight top line with no arch or rise. Side profile is to show no taper. The front feet are to be even with the eyes and the body stretched out with forelegs and hocks flat on the table.

Himalayan



Semi Arch: Animals are longer in body and have a well-defined rise starting at or near the back of the shoulders and continuing to round over the back and hips to the base of the tail. High point of the rise should occur at the top of the hips. The side profile is to be tapered from the hindquarters through to the shoulders.

American, Beveren, English Lop, Flemish Giant, Giant Chinchilla



Full Arch: Animals are to have an arch starting at the nape of the neck and continuing in a smooth, unbroken line over the shoulders, loin, hips, and finishing by rounding to the base of the tail. Most breeds will show more depth than width of body. The side profile will taper from the hindquarters through to the shoulders.

Belgian Hare, Britannia Petite, Checkered Giant, English Spot, Rhinelander, Tan



Body Types *(continued)*

Commercial: Animals are of medium length, with depth of body equaling width of body throughout. The high point of the top line should be over the hips. The side profile will taper from hindquarters through to the shoulders. Fullness of body and firmness of flesh are important qualities. French Angora, Giant

Angora, Satin Angora, Champagne D'Argent, Californian, Cinnamon, American, Crème D'Argent, French Lop, Harlequin, Hotot, New Zealand, Palomino, Rex, American Sable, Satin, Silver Fox, Silver Marten



Compact: Animals are lighter in weight and shorter in body length than animals of commercial type. Some breeds will have only a slight rise in the top line due to the depth of shoulders being slightly lower than the depth over the hips.

American Fuzzy Lop, English Angora, Standard Chinchilla, Dwarf Hotot, Dutch, Florida White, Havana, Holland Lop, Jersey Wooly, Lilac, Mini Lop, Mini Rex, Netherland Dwarf, Polish, Silver



Questions

Pre-Club (K-3rd grade)

The questions for the pre-club category are designed more as a conversation with the exhibitor, rather than to determine range of knowledge.

1. What breed of animal do you have?

If you don't know, use www.arba.net to help determine your breed. Rabbits that are crossbred are fine for showmanship.

2. What color is it?

Use the correct terminology whenever possible. Even a crossbred animal may have recognizable patterns.

3. What do you feed your animal?

Use correct terminology such as pellets (which is the usual rabbit food), hay, and fresh water. Include how much and how often you feed.

4. What are the proper terms to describe gender?

A buck is a male rabbit; the female is called a doe. Baby rabbits are referred to as kits.

Cloverleaf (4th through 6th grade)

The Pre-Club questions may be asked of the Cloverleaf exhibitor, but the answers should be more detailed. Additional questions may be asked as well.

1. Do you know how much your animal weighs? What is the correct weight for its breed and class?

Check your animal's weight prior to the show. A scale will be available.

2. What is the gestation period for your animal?

28-31 days for a rabbit.

3. How many toes should your animal have on each foot?

Rabbits: On the front feet, four toes and a dewclaw. On the hind, four.

4. How many teeth should your animal have?

Rabbits should have 28 teeth.

5. What are ear mites?

Also known as ear canker, it is an infestation of mites, an external parasite.

6. What are some symptoms of ear mites?

Head shaking, scratching at the ears, "scabby" material on the inside of the ear

7. What is the purpose of properly posing your animal?

Setting in the proper pose for its body type and breed allows you to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the animal's conformation.



Junior (7th and 8th grades)

Junior questions will continue building on the previous categories.

1. Name the five body types of rabbits.

Commercial, cylindrical, compact, fully-arched, semi-arched.

2. For most breeds, correct posing begins with what part of the rabbit's body?

For semi-arch, compact, and commercial breeds, the forelegs and the hocks should be flat on the table. The toes on the forelegs should be directly below the eye, and the rear toes should align the front of the hip. These are general guidelines that apply to most breeds but be aware of exceptions to the rule.

3. What is a malocclusion?

The teeth are not properly aligned and will not wear down consistently. Possible causes include heredity, trauma, a change in jaw formation or metabolic bone disease.

4. What are some signs of a malocclusion?

Pickiness about food

Dropping food

Drooling/wet fur on face or forelimbs

Eating or drinking less with change in fecal output

Changes in weight

Bad breath

Reduced activity or grooming

Poor coat condition

Accumulation of cecotropes (night feces) around anus

5. What is ringworm?

A fungal disease that is contagious, even to humans. It is usually seen on the feet and legs but may appear on any part of the body. Ringworm is characterized by a loss of hair in a circle with a sore in the middle.



Senior (9th through 12th grades)

Senior questions will continue building on the previous categories.

1. In what ear should your animal be tattooed for identification?

Rabbits: Left. If registered, there will be an additional tattoo in the right ear.

Cavies: Left. Metal ear tags are more commonly used rather than tattoos. The right ear is used for registered animals.

2. What causes red urine?

Incomplete metabolism of food. Does not indicate disease.

3. Describe warbles, treatment and prevention.

Caused by the botfly, it may be seen as swelling or lumps on the neck, shoulders, or possibly anywhere on the body. There will be a breathing hole for the larva. The opening must be enlarged and great care taken to remove the parasite. Trauma to the parasite may result in death to the rabbit due from shock. An antiseptic is then applied. Best management practices include controlling the flies in the rabbitry through the use of screens, fans, or other means.

4. What is the difference between a fault and a disqualification?

A fault is an imperfection that is not serious enough for a DQ. A disqualification is a defect, deformity, or blemish which makes the rabbit ineligible for competition or registration.

5. What is cecotrophy?

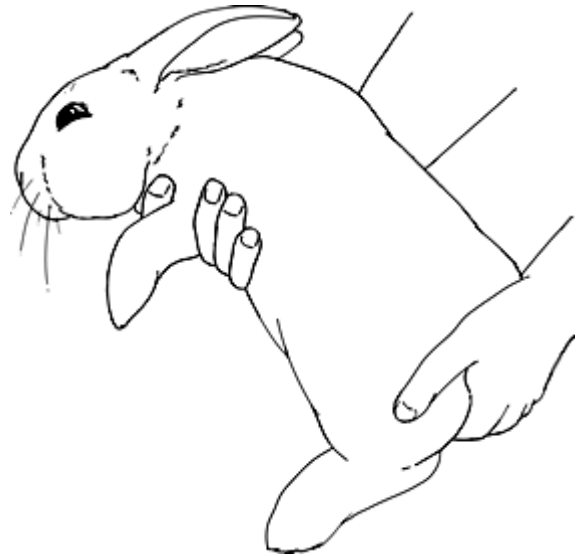
A function of the normal digestive system. Feces are produced in hard and soft form. The soft feces are reingested directly from the rectum due to the high concentration of B vitamins, fiber, and amino acids.



Showmanship Procedure

Rabbit showmanship is an important part of showing your rabbit and demonstrates how well you handle and know your rabbit. These procedures should be part of a routine to ensure your herd is healthy. You should also use this routine to check rabbits for health prior to making a purchase of a new rabbit.

Judging begins the moment you are called. To correctly remove a rabbit from the cage, if you are right-handed, place your left arm in the cage. Place your left hand palm-down on the rabbit's shoulders, with your thumb in front of its ears. Gently squeeze around the shoulders to the point where you feel that you have control of the animal. Then use your right hand under the belly to lift, NOT DRAG, the rabbit towards the cage door. Remove the rabbit head first from the cage. Remove from right hand from under the belly and place beneath the rump. Lift with your left hand, supporting the weight with your right, and tuck it under your right arm.



Mrs. Leigh's Note

*This routine may vary for the individual. These are guidelines, not rules. It's not crucial with the left hand, right hand, kind of Twister game, but that the rabbit is not harmed, is kept safe, and that you have control at all times. I do recommend that you return the rabbit to the cage, **rump first**.*

Set the rabbit on the table with its side facing the judge.



Introduce yourself to the judge, and state information about your rabbit including breed, variety, age, and sex. Begin maneuvers, explaining the “whys” of each procedure as you go. The more information offered, the higher your score. Pose the rabbit for evaluation. Check for overall balance from the front, rear and side views. Check hindquarters for fullness by stretching.



To turn the rabbit onto its back, use your right hand to grip the rabbit near the base of the ears. Your index finger should be between the ears, with the other fingers just behind the ears.



Place your left hand underneath the hindquarters to provide support, and slowly roll the rabbit onto its back.



Continue to maintain your grip with your right hand. Rest the weight of the rabbit on the table.



Check the rabbit's eyes for correct color and for blindness. Look for walleye, moon eye, unmatched eyes, spots or specks in iris/cornea, eye discharge, marbling (acceptable in some chinchilla breeds.)



Check the rabbit's nose for discharge that may indicate a cold. Matted fur on the inside of legs may also indicate a cold.



Check the teeth for malocclusion, butting or wolf's teeth, broken or missing teeth. The upper incisors should slightly overlap the lower incisors. An adult rabbit should have 28 permanent teeth. The incisors continue to grow so proper alignment is important.



Check the chin for lumps, sores, and abscesses.



Check the abdomen for lumps and abscesses. Abscesses may appear as lumps or sores in the belly area.



Push thumb into center of paw to check for broken nails, missing nails, and nails that are not consistent in color with breed standard. There should be four toes and one dewclaw on the forefeet and four toes on the rear. Each toe and dewclaw should have a toenail, correctly colored for the variety of the breed.



Check legs for straightness. Check the bottom of hind feet for sore hocks. Also check bottoms of front feet for sore areas. You are looking for sore, infected or bleeding areas, not just for bare areas.



Check the tail carriage. Make sure no breaks, and that the tail does not curve to one side. A screw tail or bob tail results in a disqualification.



Check the sex of the rabbit, and look to make sure the rabbit shows no sign of vent disease (scabby, reddened sex organ), or split penis. All adult male animals must show two normally descended testicles; juniors must show both or none as only one descended testicle is a disqualification.



Return your rabbit to the sitting position. Check for ear mites, ear canker, ear carriage and proper tattoo. Also check for torn or missing portions that distract from the general appearance.



Pose the rabbit, and groom with your hand. At this time, you may mention accepted colors or markings for the breed. Check surface color and undercolor, if appropriate. Excessive white hairs in a colored section are a disqualification. You can stroke the fur going towards the head to demonstrate flyback/rollback. You may also blow into hair to check density, if appropriate. Check for molt and stains on fur. When dismissed, return rabbit to cage.

Clipping Your Rabbit's Nails

Author: Abi Cushman

Since pet rabbits are not able to dig and wear down their claws inside your house or apartment, their nails will invariably grow too long. Keeping your bunny's nails at an appropriate length is very important. Long nails may potentially curl into your rabbit's foot, or they may snag on something, causing great discomfort to your pet.

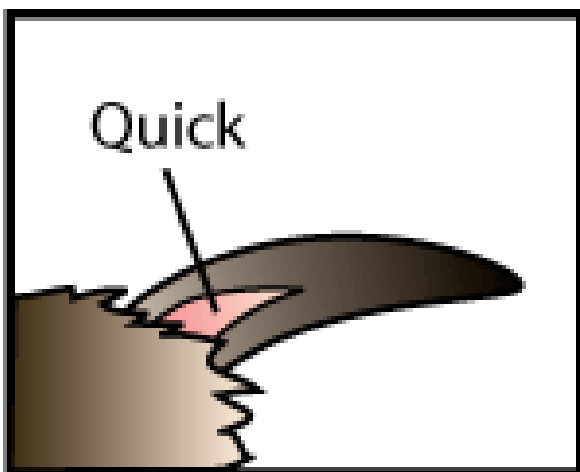
Clipping your rabbit's nails may seem a daunting task. And many rabbit owners elect to let their veterinarian handle it. Frequent vet visits can get expensive, however. So here is some advice on trimming your rabbit's nails yourself.



It is easier to trim your rabbit's nails quickly and effectively when the rabbit is properly restrained. If possible, ask someone to assist you and then wrap your bunny in a towel to reduce movement and to isolate each paw.

Examine the claw to locate the quick, or the vein. Some rabbits' nails are quite dark, so you will need a small flashlight to see it. Cutting the quick will cause your pet to experience some pain, and he/she will bleed. So your objective is to cut just above the quick. If you do accidentally trim

the nails too short, use flour or styptic powder to stop the bleeding.



Some bunnies are startled by the sound of clipping. In these situations, you may consider simply filing the nails down, but this may be a longer process if your rabbit's nails are quite long.

Vocabulary of Rabbit Terms (www.angelfire.com/tx3/rabbitpad/terms.html)

Base Color

The fur color next to the skin; undercolor.

Blemish

Any defect or fault which detracts from the appearance.

Flyback

A coat of fur which flies back to its smooth normal position when stroked from the hindquarters to the shoulders.

Gestation

The length of time between conception and birth. (Normally 31 days.)

The carrying of young.

Junior

A rabbit less than 6 months of age.

Lop Ears

Pendulous ears, carried below horizontal rather than upright.

Malocclusion

Teeth having the lower incisors extending in front of the upper incisors or meeting with no overlap. This condition may be hereditary and may also be known as buck or wolf teeth.

Molt

The act of shedding or changing fur.

Rollback

A gradual return of the fur to its normal position when stroked from the hindquarters to the shoulders. Slightly slower return than a flyback coat.

Senior

A rabbit 6 months of age or over in those breeds having 4 showroom classes. A rabbit 8 months of age or over in breeds having 6 showroom classes.

Sore Hock

An ulceration of the footpad. Can occur on either hind or front feet.

Variety

A division within a breed or group. Color determines the variety.

ARBA Rabbit Show Faults and Disqualifications

In an ARBA show, the animal is judged according to the standard for its breed and variety. A fault is points off the overall score of 100 points whereas a disqualification results in no score and being excused from a class.

General faults (all breeds)

Specimen in molt or otherwise out of condition (but not diseased)

Hutch stains

Stray white hairs in colored fur

Poor tail or ear carriage

Poor ear carriage

Poor eye color

Flabby or overly fat

Thin and extremely poor flesh condition.

Disqualifications (all breeds)

Ailments

Ear canker, slobbers, pot belly, vent disease, or abscesses

Mange or scurvy condition with flakes resembling dandruff or scale on the skin or at the base of the fur

Fungus growth or scabby condition. Infestation by mites, fleas, or lice

Colds

Rupture or hernia

Tumor or abnormal swelling

Abnormal eye discharge

Unworthy of Award

Any deviation from the standard to such a degree that is not representative of that breed's requirements, shall not be placed and a notation made by the judge, "Unworthy of an Award". It shall be either worthy of first place with only one in the class or not placed with the above remark. It is possible that more than one rabbit competing in the same class may be determined to be "Unworthy of an Award." The number in a class must be reduced for any animals excused for this reason.

Coweta County Fair Showmanship Sweepstakes (rabbit class)

The sweepstakes was created in 2008 to determine the overall showmanship champion for Coweta County 4-H. To compete, you must be the top Junior or Senior exhibitor in one or more of the livestock showmanship qualifiers at the Coweta County Fair.

You will be expected to show all of the remaining species, with the exception of the one with which you qualified. If you qualify in more than one show, it will be up to the competitor which species they will drop for the contest. Learning the procedure to show each species is the responsibility of the exhibitor. The rabbit study guide can be obtained from the Extension Office or at cowetacountyfair.net.

1. For the rabbit showmanship class, the breed of the animals being used will be announced on the first day of the Coweta County Fair. Information on breed standards will be available from the Extension Office or at the rabbit exhibit area.
2. Animals to be shown will be drawn by lot.
3. You will be expected to handle the animal in accordance with the Rabbit Showmanship Score Card.
4. Questions will be at the Senior level included in this manual, as well as the vocabulary terms and additional material contained in this handbook.
5. The first place Junior and the first place Senior winners are expected to compete in the sweepstakes and are responsible for acquiring and studying the appropriate materials.

Important Dates

Rabbit Showmanship Contest

Monday, September 12, 2025 6:30 pm

Showmanship Sweepstakes

Sunday, September 28, 2025 6:30 pm

Dutch Standard

Varieties: Black, Blue, Chocolate, Gray, Steel, Tortoise, Lilac

Schedule of Points

General Type: 25

Body: 17

Head: 5

Ears: 2

Eyes: 1

Fur: 10

Color: 10

Markings: 50

Cheeks: 12

Blaze: 5

Neck: 5

Saddle: 10

Undercut: 8

Stops: 10

Showroom Classes and Weights

Senior Bucks and Does: 6 months of age or over. Weight 3-1/2 to 5-1/2 pounds; ideal weight is 4-1/2 pounds. Junior Bucks and Does: Under 6 months of age. Minimum weight is 1-3/4 pounds.

General Type

A compact rabbit with flyback fur. The Dutch body should be short and close coupled. Feet and legs to be straight, medium in bone, and have proper length and size to balance body.

The color of a Dutch is a circle made by the saddle and undercut going to the rear all the way to the stops and the circle made by the blaze, cheeks, neck, and hairline on each side of the head continuing up the ears. The remaining portion of the rabbit is to be white. Markings are to be clear, distinct, and regular, free from drags from the colored sections into the white.

Disqualifications for All Varieties

Lack of surface or undercolor on belly. Extreme amount of white hairs found in colored sections. Bare spots or distinct white spots in colored sections. Colored toenails.