

**MARKET
RABBIT
PROJECT
BOOKLET**

A BASIC GUIDE FOR YOUR RABBIT EXPERIENCE

I have put this booklet together as a guide for youth showing market rabbits. This is not intended to be the only source you use but as a jumping off point for your rabbit project. I hope this helps you in your rabbit project. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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Housing

Your show rabbits must be housed correctly to perform to their best. Proper housing includes keeping your rabbits in conditions that are;

- Dry
- Free from drafts
- Away from extreme temperatures

Your cage should be made from specially made rabbit wire, do not use hardware cloth, chicken wire or a dog crate. The bottom must be 1 x ½ inch wire; the sides should be 1x1 or 1x2. Rabbit cages can be purchased at Walden Farm and Ranch, Tractor Supply or over the internet. If you are using a used cage make sure that the floor and all sides are secure, it should also be free from rust and sharp wires/edges. Your cage can be hung from the roof of a barn or porch using lightweight chain and “S” hooks. Some cages come with legs and a pan underneath that sit on the ground; if you use a cage with a pan you must dump it at least 2-3 times a week.

The size of your cage is very important. If your cage is too large you may have a hard time reaching your rabbit, if your cage is too small your rabbit will not grow as well. For a single rabbit you need a cage that is 24 x 24 or 24 x 30 inches, for a pen of 3 you need 2-4 cages that are 24 x 24 or 24 x 30 each.

Selection

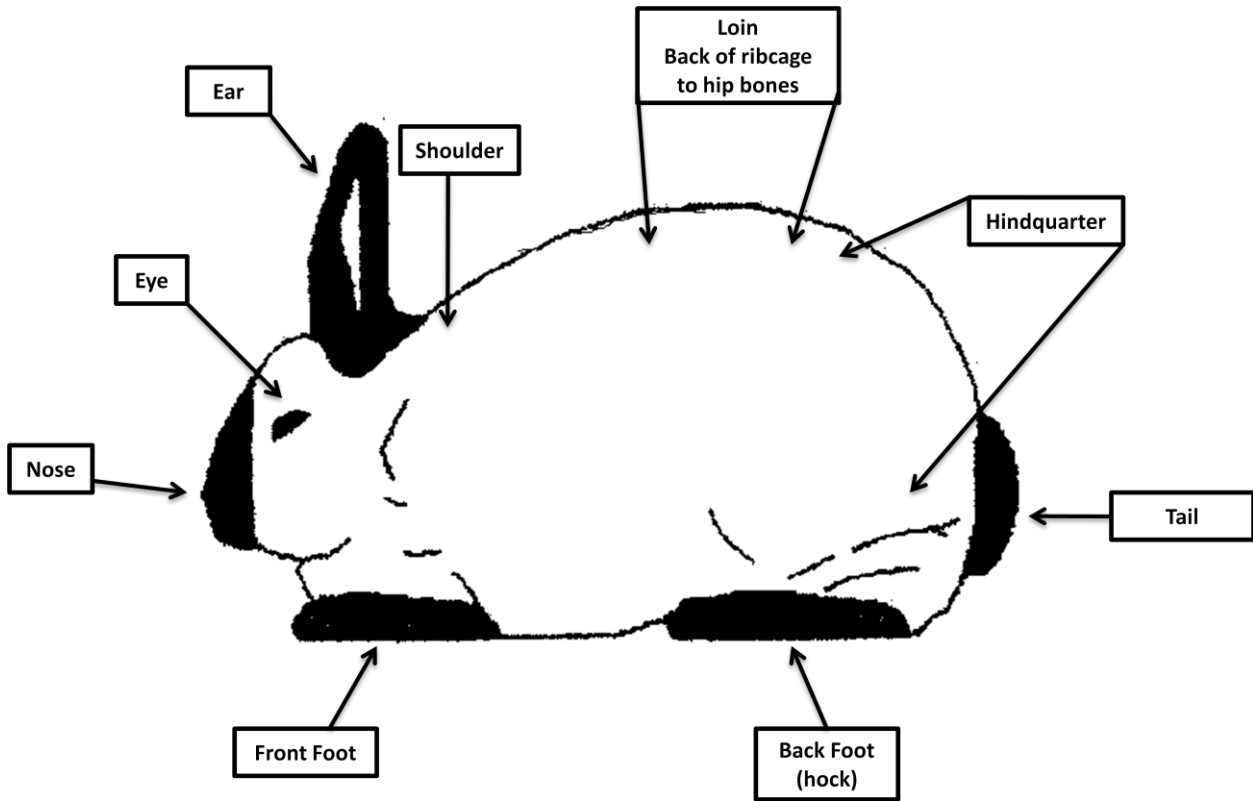
The selection of your rabbit is one of the most important parts of your project. If you chose a rabbit that has physical issues your project will not be the best it can be. Do not pick a rabbit that is very small or very large. Take your time picking your rabbit; it will pay off in the end.

Things to check

1. Teeth-the top 2 teeth should be in front of the bottom 2.
2. Tail-feel of the bone in the tail, it should be straight, it should not have a bobbed look to it.
3. Legs-all four legs should be straight, feel of the bone.
4. Feet-make sure that the rabbit has 5 nails on the front feet and 4 nails on back feet.
5. Shoulders-they should not look flat and when you put your hand across the shoulders they need to feel firm not loose.
6. Back-the back should arch starting at the base of the ears, peaking over the hips and ending in a nice round hindquarter. The back should not feel rough or bumpy.
7. Loin-place your hand over the loin and feel how wide and deep the meat is, the more the better.
8. Hindquarters-place your hand across the hip bones and slide your hand down to the table, a roll of meat that looks like a skirt should be between your hand and the table. You should not feel prominent hip bones.
9. Health check-the rabbit should appear healthy and alert-also go through all the health check steps in the showmanship section.

If you would like help picking out your rabbit feel free to ask the breeder or someone who is more experienced.

This is an ideal example of a
Californian rabbit



Feeding

Once you pick a good rabbit you must help that rabbit grow to the best of his ability. How well you take care of your rabbit will affect how well you do on the show table.

Fresh clean water is the most important thing to give your rabbit. Remember if you do not want to drink the water your rabbit will not drink it. You can use a dog bowl or crock or a water bottle. If you are using a bowl make sure the rabbit doesn't dump it over, if you are using a bottle make sure it doesn't leak and make sure that water does come out when the end is pressed. I personally prefer bowls as they are easier to keep clean and handle cold weather better. Ask the breeder what they use and try to use that.

For a feeder you can use a feed crock as long as it is not big enough for the rabbit to get in and dirty up. The easiest feeder to use is a "J" feeder, the metal ones are best and can be purchased wherever you get your cage.

The type of feed you use is very important. Your feed needs to be 16-18% protein. Use a brand like Purina, or Manna Pro. Ask your breeder what they recommend; they know what their rabbits do best on and you might be able to buy a bag from the breeder. Do not buy your feed at Wal-Mart or a pet supply, that feed is made for pets not show rabbits. Make sure the feed is not dusty or stale smelling, ask to open and check the bag at the feed store. Your feed should be pellets only, stay away from feeds with seeds or fruit in it, that is for pet rabbits not show rabbits.

Many people want to feed their rabbit treats such as veggies and fruit, that messes up your feeding program and should be avoided. Remember that you only have about 4 weeks to feed your rabbit and get ready for the show, make the most of it!

Handling

You need to work with your rabbit and train it to pose correctly and get used to being turned over and checked. The correct way to pose your rabbit is with the front feet even with the eyes and the back feet even with the hips. You only need to work on this at the most for 15 minutes per rabbit every day. If you do not work with your rabbit it will be almost impossible for the judge to evaluate your rabbit. If you handle your rabbit too much the muscle tone will be compromised. When you get to the show do not be playing with or petting on your rabbit or letting other people handle your rabbit before the show.

Grooming

How you groom your rabbit will affect the quality of the fur. Remember that the coat of fur will be first thing a judge touches, if it is good the judge will like it, if it is bad it can ruin your chance at winning.

Things to remember

- Never bath your rabbit
- Don't use powders or soaps
- Make sure your cage stays clean as that will make grooming much easier

The best way to groom your rabbit is to lightly mist the rabbit with water (use a small spray bottle) and run your hand from the base of ears over the back and sides down to the hindquarters until the rabbit is dry. This needs to be done twice a week and an hour or two before the show.

Showmanship

The purpose of the showmanship competition is to exhibit your skills with a rabbit. Part of the routine is a health check:

- look deep in each ear for crust or scabs (ear mites)
- check the nose for any discharge (snot)
- check the rear end for scours (diarrhea) and irritation
- check both eyes for white spots or weepy eyes
- check teeth for missing or chipped teeth
- feel of the belly for abscesses.

Even if you decide not to compete in showmanship you should go through the process every day with your rabbit to do a health check and prepare your rabbit to be handled by the judge. For a complete list of what the showmanship contest includes see the Texas 4-H Showmanship score sheet at the back of this booklet.

Transportation

How you transport your rabbit is very important, if you use the wrong thing to transport you can ruin all your hard work. If you are using a pet carrier get a piece of bottom wire like is in your cage and use it to make a raised floor, this will help to keep your rabbit clean. Never use a solid container or bucket, this will cause your rabbit to overheat. You can buy a “carrier” cage for your rabbit, this is a small cage with a built in pan for droppings. Also think if you would be comfortable riding in the back of a truck before you put your rabbit back there.

Remember the most important thing is learn something new and HAVE FUN!

I hope you enjoy the project.

Rachel Molder

Links

www.arba.net

Facebook-search for Rachel's Rabbits and Palo Pinto County rabbit project

http://3crossesranch.com/hoppy_new_year.html

<http://bassequipment.com>

<http://www.klubertanz.com>

<http://kwcages.com>

Books

Your Rabbit. A kid's guide to raising and showing by Nancy Searle

Story's guide to raising rabbits.