

Guidelines for the Texas 4-H Rabbit Showmanship



Texas 4-H Rabbit Project Team

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Showmanship is a participant's opportunity to demonstrate his/her knowledge and ability to properly select and present rabbits to their best advantage. The participant's confidence, ability and the rabbit's response are indicators of the knowledge and skills gained in handling and identifying quality animals, as well as defects, disqualifications, breed and variety characteristics.

Rabbit showmanship should be performed individually or with two participants at a time.

The following procedure is explained step by step along with what the participant will do and what the judge will be evaluating. The participant should follow the steps below as though they were examining the rabbit by themselves. **Order is not as important as a smooth, organized flow of presentation.** Prior to beginning the contest, judges should read the material thoroughly to ensure their judging will support the work of the leaders who have taught their youth based on recommended procedures available to all youth.

When selecting your rabbits for showmanship, you should check the rabbit over thoroughly. The rabbit should be free of diseases, parasites and disqualifications. If the participant is young or new to the rabbit project, the judge may have to prompt some. Extra points may be given for thorough knowledge; or points may be deducted for missed areas or incorrect reasons.

STEP

Carry rabbit to judging table and pose it.
(Continue the following steps, explaining each step taken and its purpose.)

PARTICIPANT WILL

To properly carry a rabbit, tuck the head under one arm and support the rabbit's weight by placing the other hand under the rump. One hand supports the weight of the rabbit, while the other hand controls the rabbit. You may keep a firm grip since a rabbit dropped from this position can easily break its back. You may want to remove your hand when you feel confident about being in control. If the judge asks you to move to a different spot on the table, always pick up the rabbit for carrying before moving to a new location.

When you arrive at the exhibit table place the rabbit on the table immediately and pose it. For proper pose, front feet should be even with the eyes. Rear feet should be firmly on table with toes even with haunch (thigh joint) with tail up. Facing left is the natural position for a right handed presenter.

STEP	PARTICIPANT WILL
1. Check Ears	Check the ears for: ear mites, proper tattoo (tattoo should be in rabbit's left ear), torn or missing portions of ears , that distract from general appearance, proper ear carriage, tattoo obliterated by ink , that is unreadable.
2. Turn rabbit over.	Properly turn the rabbit over, supporting the rabbit on the table or against your body. The rabbit will remain in this position from steps #2 through #10.
3. Check teeth.	With your hand over the area of the eyes, place a thumb and index finger on each side of the split lip and push back lips to expose teeth. You are checking for tooth defects such as malocclusion or simple malocclusion, broken or missing teeth.
4. Check eyes.	Check each eye for signs of blindness or abnormalities . You are checking for wall-eyes or moon eye (this is an eye with whitish cornea given a milky appearance to the eye), unmatched eyes (two eyes not of the same color), spots or specks in iris or on cornea, off colored eyes (eyes other than color called for in breed standard), abnormal eye discharge , must be noticeable and pronounced and marbling , a mottling of eye color, except in some chinchilla breeds allowing blue-gray eyes.
5. Check nose.	Check nose for sign of cold . The animal must show a white nasal discharge to be evidence of a cold. Matted fur on inside front legs may indicate presence of a cold.
6. Check toenails on all feet.	Check toenails by pushing thumb into center of paw. Push back fur with index finger if necessary to see toenails. Don't forget to check dew claws . You are checking for missing toenails, unmatched toenails on corresponding feet, (including dew claws), proper color toenails for the breed as stated in the breed standard.

STEP	PARTICIPANT WILL
7. Check hocks and front feet.	Check the bottom of the hind feet for sore hocks. Also check bottoms of front feet for sore areas. You are checking for sore, infected or bleeding areas , not just for bare areas.
8. Check legs.	Extend front legs to check for straightness . Run index finger and thumb the length of each front leg. Extend rear legs out straight by placing your cupped hand ahead of the rear legs and pushing toward the feet. Legs should not be bent, bowed, deformed or cow-hocked.
9. Check body for ruptures and abscess.	Run your hand over the chest and abdominal area to check for any abscess, tumors, or abnormalities . Ruptures may appear as lumps or large bumps under the skin, normally in the belly area. Abscess may appear as red lumps or sores in the belly area or the neck or chin area or under the arms, normally.
10. Check sex.	Check for the sex of the rabbit. Place thumb below vent area and push toward front of rabbit with index finger. You are also checking for signs of vent disease (as indicated by a scabby, reddened sex organ), split penis and testicles . All male animals in the regular showroom classes must show two normally descended testicles at the time of judging. Juniors must show both or neither testicles (because juniors showing only one descended testicle at time of judging would be disqualified from competition).
11. Check tail.	Restore the rabbit to its posed position. Check to determine if tail is straight. Permanently set to either side, permanently out of line, screw tail, or bob tail are disqualifications from judging competition.

STEP**PARTICIPANT WILL**

12. Check for proper surface color, undercolor, ring color, foreign spots, or smut.

You are checking the fur for foreign colored spots (white spots in colored animal, or colored spots in white animal, unless specifically excepted in the breed standard). Inspect fur for smut on the usable portion of the pelt on a Pointed White, Californian, or Himalayan marked breeds and varieties. Check for proper color. Check surface color. Check undercolor and/or ring color by stroking fur forward or blowing into fur over the entire body. Tan Pattern: any tan pattern marking appearing in the marking pattern of Pointed White, Californians, or Himalayan marked breeds or varieties, is a disqualification. **Wrong under color, color other than called for in the breed standard, white hairs** (excessive white hairs in a colored section) are also disqualifications.

13. Fur quality and cleanliness.

Stroke fur toward rabbit's head to show fur going back into natural position, either **flyback/rollback**. Check density standing/upright fur, such as Rex and Mini Rex, by patting and blowing into several areas. Some wooled breeds, such as Angoras and Fuzzy Lops should be felt and blown into to check density. Stroke rabbit from head to rear for a molt condition. Check for stains on fur.

14. Pose rabbit for evaluation of overall balance.

Pose the rabbit for evaluation of overall balance. Check front, rear and side views for overall balance. Locate each of the following with your hand: shoulders, ribspread, and fullness of loin. Check hindquarters for fullness by stretching your hand across width and depth of the rump. Check hips for smoothness and fullness by running your hand over the top of the hip to the tail.

15. Participant's Appearance.

Participant should demonstrate good posture, good eye contact with judge throughout presentation, smile/pleasant expression, neat dress, remove chewing gum, hats or caps and long hair should be pulled back.

STEP

PARTICIPANT WILL

16. Participant's Actions.

Carry out actions in a confident manner, always being considerate of your animals, fellow showman, and the judge. Demonstrate a gentle and smooth flowing presentation.

17. Participant's Knowledge.

Demonstrate quick, confident, and correct response to questions asked about your rabbit.

At all times extra points could be given for detailed information freely given or points deducted for failure to explain each procedure.

In addition to the above procedure, the judge may ask the exhibitor two or three specific questions. If questions are asked, they will be age appropriate and might cover such topics as the breed being handled by the participant, rabbit care and health, breeding, rabbit equipment, variety characteristics, and disqualifications. This information can be found in the current ARBA Standard of Perfection, the ARBA Domestic Rabbit Guide and the ARBA Official Guidebook to Raising Better Rabbits and Cavies, all of which should be used to prepare for the showmanship competition. You may want to contact your county Extension agent or a local breeder for more information.