

# Rabbit Project Guide

Helpful information for your goat project (Richwood version)

## Rabbit Project Overview

There are several rabbit projects that you can enroll in as a 4-H member. Here's a brief summary of each project:

#	Title	Description
225	Breeding Rabbit	Raise any breed of Rabbit for breed or production purposes.
226	Market Rabbit	Raise a meat breed of rabbit to harvest weight. The exhibit for this project is a pen of 3 so you must have a minimum of 3 meat rabbits.
227	Pet Rabbit	Raise any breed of rabbit as a pet. Note: This rabbit project does not participate in the Rabbit Show, instead can participate in Special Interest Judging, and does not stay in the Rabbit Barn during Fair.

## Project Literature

You will need the following project materials for your rabbit project:

- **Rabbit Project Handbook** (\$15), Designed to be used for all years of your rabbit projects
- **Rabbit Project and Record Book**, (\$8) Obtain and keep for the resource info it contains Note: do not use for your annual record keeping.
- **Union County Livestock Project Record Book** (free) Download this document and use as your Record book for your project. Keep a new one each year.

In Summary: obtain the first two books listed above and keep and use them for all years you are taking a Rabbit Project. Each year: download a new Livestock Record book and use it to keep your annual project records.

Note to those with Food Animal (Market) Projects: as a food animal producer you are required, by law, to keep a record of any treatments, medications, drugs, etc that are used for the health of your animal. Use the Treatment Record within your Union County Livestock Record Book to keep this information.

## Participation in Richwood Junior Fair

If you are interested in exhibiting a rabbit project at the Richwood Fair,

You need to know and meet the exhibition requirements. Basic exhibition requirement include:

- You must participate annually in Livestock Quality Assurance Education, by the deadline of July 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - You must be a member in good standing of your 4-H Club: meaning attending a minimum of 5 meeting, doing a demonstration, etc.
  - You must own your animal(s) by June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 (Breed Rabbits) or by Aug 1<sup>st</sup> (Market pens).
  - In coordination with your 4-H Advisor you must submit a Fair entry card
- By the Fair entry deadline of August 1<sup>st</sup>.



### **Goal of the project**

**Market Rabbits-** You want to show 3 rabbits that are very close to identical in every way. They should look, weigh, and feel the same. One way to evaluate your rabbits to make the best trio is by weighing them and measuring the width of their loin and hindquarters.

**Breeding Rabbits-** You do not have to breed (produce offspring) with your rabbit but can if you so choose. The animal must show breed characteristics, but does not have to be registered. Find a reputable breeder who can provide you with a quality rabbit. Avoid purchasing from pet stores as they are often low quality or mixed breeds.

### **Find a Breeder**

- Make sure you contact breeders well in advance and let them know the date of the fair so that your rabbits are the correct age for showing. You can sometimes find reputable breeders on Facebook or at ARBA.net under the member resources tab

### **Market**

- You must show 3 rabbits, as a pen, at the fair and can tattoo up to 6 rabbits. It is advisable to start with at least 4 if not 5-6 rabbits in the case of sickness and to have more options for matching up the rabbits.
- You must own your rabbits by August 1<sup>st</sup>.
- You must bring your market rabbits to be tattooed. The date is usually the first Saturday in August. Tattooing is mandatory and is held at the Fairgrounds.

### **Breeding**

- Must own by June 1st. The number of rabbits you can take depends on your 4H age. Junior age exhibitors (8-10 yr olds) can show 2 plus a meat pen. Intermediates (11-13) can show 3 plus a meat pen, and Seniors (14-18) can show 4 plus a meat pen.
- For exhibit purposes the Breed Rabbit Show is divided into 2 divisions: Commercial Breeds and Fancy Breeds. In each division there will be classes for Junior Bucks, Senior Bucks, Junior Does and Senior Does. A rabbit age 6 months of age or over is a senior.

### **Cages**

- You should have a cage at least 24x36 inches for one rabbit and size should increase with more rabbits
- Rabbits should be kept in a cage with a wire bottom so droppings can fall easily to the ground or tray. Wire bottom cages are the most sanitary choice.
- Determine where you will house them- they need to be in a cool shaded area and out of direct sunlight
- if they are going to be in a garage or building, make sure they have proper ventilation
- Be sure that your rabbits cannot reach any hazards (wires, strings, any chemicals they could bite into) outside of their cages as they will chew on things. On this note, giving your rabbit a NON treated piece of wood is a good thing to chew on to keep them busy and to keep their teeth short.

### **Food/ Water**

- Complete pelleted feed- you can buy this at any feed store 16-18% protein is recommended- check with your breeder on what they feed
- Breeders typically give "switchover feed" which is used to gradually switch your rabbit to a new pelleted diet. Do this over the course of a few days, slowly mixing the old feed with the new feed so the rabbits have time to adjust

- Water- decide if you are going to use a crock or hanging bottle- make sure your rabbit **ALWAYS** has access to fresh water. Check with your breeder to see what they use. If you choose to use a water bottle it is always a good idea to start your rabbit with both a bottle and a bowl underneath it until you know the rabbit can use the bottle.

### **Bringing your rabbits home**

- Rabbit carrier- you will need a carrier to transport your rabbits. Many people purchase a wire carrier that will fit their 3 rabbits. This carrier will also be used to transport to the fair and during show day.
- Even though they are not required to be tattooed for Fair purposed; Breeding rabbits must be tattooed for identification purposes as well. Check with your breeder before taking your rabbit home; they may be able to tattoo a rabbit for you.

### **During Project**

- **Care for your rabbits daily!!** Fresh water is a must and proper feed.
- You will want to make sure that your rabbits are checked regularly for any signs of distress.
- **CLEAN-** Their cage/ hutch should be kept clean to keep pests and diseases away. This can include cleaning out the pan (if you have one), cleaning feces from under the cage, scraping the wire if they mess, and cleaning urine guards if you have them as well. Keeping a clean area will keep pests and odors away.
- **Market Rabbits-** You should check their weights regularly and compare rabbits to find the best three that you have. Remember, you will only take 3 rabbits to the fair. Richwood Fair requires rabbits to weigh 3.5 to 5.5 pounds each. Weighing outside of that range will not allow your rabbits to sell in the sale.
- **Breeding Rabbits-** These rabbits have specific weights depending on their breeds. The required weights can be found in the ARBA Standard of Perfection or on ARBA.net
- You will also want to practice with one rabbit or two that you will take for showmanship.

### **Working with your rabbit- Showmanship**

- Start when you get your rabbits!
- Make sure you are comfortable with at least one of your market rabbits so that you can participate in showmanship. This is where the judge looks at you, the exhibitor. You can look at your rabbit resource book to gain knowledge on this but finding an older rabbit exhibitor who is willing to help you learn is good too.
- For showmanship you will be asked to turn over and pose your rabbit, so become familiar with both of those things. Also know basic information about your breed.
- Make sure you know the proper way to pose your specific breed of rabbit. You can look at tutorials online, in books, and attend clinics. It is also helpful to attend a rabbit show or find an older member to help out.

### **1 month before fair**

- Make sure you get your rabbit's ears tattooed. If market projects aren't tattooed on the tattooing day, you will be ineligible for show. See your 4-H Newsletter in the summer for the time of tattooing; it will be approx 8am.
- **MAKE SURE YOU SHOW UP ON TIME!!!!**

### **1 week before fair**

- Complete your record book.
- Make sure you have proper show clothes.
  - Exhibitors must follow the Fair Dress Code when showing. For rabbits:
    - The most common and recommended show shirt is a long sleeve, button down shirt
    - Short sleeved white shirt can also be worn but the long sleeve is preferred

- Pants should be black or nice jeans
  - Pants: legs reach the exhibitors shoes, no holes
- Shoes: shoes are close toed

### **Fair week**

- Things to pack/bring
- Feed and water bowls
- Check fair pens ahead of time to know what will work
- Haul in water if needed. Change in water can cause loose stool or lack of water consumption.
- Bring feed in each day or have a lockable storage on site
- Grooming supplies- suggested items are nail clippers, rags/ wipes, spray bottle, brush/comb if needed
- Study Guides- to make sure you are always able to study if you need to brush up on anything.

### **Valuable Rabbit Resources**

- The Rabbit Resource Handbook (can be purchased from county 4-H office)
- The ARBA Standard of Perfection (purchased from ARBA.net or is often sold by vendors at ARBA rabbit shows)
- Purchasing an ARBA (American Rabbit Breeders Association) membership is a valuable tool as you will receive a magazine about rabbits and a book. (A membership can be purchased from ARBA.net)

### **Fair Entries and Fair Rules**

4-H Advisor coordinate the submission of Fair entry cards. Discussion of and completion of Fair entry cards will likely take place at one of your club meetings (another reason it is very important to attend meetings). It is your responsibility to communicate with your 4-H Advisor about what you want to enter in the Fair and the details of your entry (example; breed and age of your breeding rabbit entry).

Richwood Junior Fair entries are due to the Fair Board on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Therefore: completing entry cards will take place in July. Your Advisor will be able to answer questions about the Fair entry process.

When you choose to become a Jr Fair Exhibitor; you are responsible for knowing the general Fair rules and the Department rules for the project you are exhibiting. These can be found on the Richwood Fair website or in the fair paper under Jr Fair Rules.

You should also be familiar with Ohio Revised Code Sections 901.70, 901.71, 901.72, 901.73, 901.74, 901.75, 901.76, 901.99 and 2925.94. These govern all livestock shows in the state of Ohio.

It is important to note that at the fair, the only people permitted to care for, fit, clip, or groom your animal are your immediate family members, 4H advisors, or other members of your club and assistance is limited to explanation and minimal demonstration (ORC 901.19.31).

### **Drug Use Notification Form (DUNF)**

If you are exhibiting a Market pen you are required, by the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) to submit a DUNF immediately prior to the Fair. This form requires you to declare the use of any medication that has been given to your meat rabbits. An online link will be sent to you by email to use for completing your form. You are not eligible to exhibit a market animal until this form is submitted to ODA.

### **Activities that will take place at the Fair**

The following Fair related activities are described below: Arrival/departure, Barn Meeting, Weigh-in, Classes Posted, Skillathon, Showmanship and Show, Jr Fair Sale

### **Arrival & Departure**

Check the Fair Schedule and/or ask your Advisor to confirm the window of time you must arrive with your animal to the Fairgrounds. Upon arrival, find your assigned cage and unload your rabbits efficiently so as not to create a line. There are Barn Superintendents in the Barn on arrival day to answer questions.

If you are not going to sell your rabbit through the Jr Fair Livestock Sale; check the time that animals are released at the end of Fair week; meaning this is the time you can re-load and take your animal home.

### **Barn Meeting**

Check the Fair Schedule for the time of the Barn Meeting. Usually, a Barn Meeting for all Rabbit Exhibitors will be held on Tuesday evening of the Fair, prior to weigh in.

### **Weigh-In**

Only market animals are weighed.

Check the Fair Schedule, and listen at the Barn meeting, for the weigh in time for market rabbits. You MUST bring your rabbits to the scales at the correct time to be eligible to show. There will be Barn Superintendents in the Barn to direct and help you get to the scales, but you MUST be present to get your rabbits weighed. Your picture will also be taken with your rabbits during weigh in.

### **Classes Posted**

Once all rabbits are weighed classes will be created by dividing in approximately equal size classes based on their weights. These Classes will be posted on the rabbit barn bulletin board. It is your responsibility to review the Class posting for accuracy. Check to see that weights are correct. If you have questions about the Class Posting contact the Jr Fair Board office immediately for assistance.

### **Showmanship and Show Classes**

There are 3 different types of Classes within the Rabbit Show:

1. Showmanship Classes: in these classes the Judge is evaluating the showmanship skills of the Exhibitor (you!). These classes are therefore divided by the age of the exhibitor. These classes will be posted in the rabbit Barn. Check the posting for accuracy. Participation in your Showmanship class is highly encouraged but is not mandatory.
2. Breeding Rabbit Classes  
Classes for breeding rabbits will be divided into commercial and fancy divisions, based on breed of rabbit. Each division will offer 4 classes: Jr. and Sr. Bucks and Does, based on age of your rabbit. (Richwood does not offer breed specific classes).
3. Market Rabbit Classes: in these classes the Judge is evaluating the conformation of the rabbits. These classes are divided by the weight of the rabbits. Following weigh-in, these classes will be posted in the Rabbit Barn. Check the posting to see which Class you are in. It is required to participate in showing your rabbits to be eligible for awards and to be eligible to sell your Rabbit in the Jr Fair Livestock Sale.

The Rabbit Show will begin with Showmanship Classes, then Breeding classes, followed by Market Classes. Check the Barn Bulletin Board and listen for announcements on Show Day for any updates.

### **Skillathon**

This is where you have the chance to shine as an exhibitor. This is a contest to show what you have learned about your project. You will study various topics on rabbits and at the fair, you will go into the skillathon and answer the questions they pose for you. There are typically 3 levels: juniors (8-10 years old), intermediates (11-13 years old), and seniors (14-18 years old.) The exhibitors with the highest scores can earn outstanding ribbons and then have a chance to earn cash prizes.

- The goal of the Skillathon is to facilitate learning about your rabbit project and practice other life skills (interviewing for example). It is *expected* that you participate in the Rabbit Skillathon.
- A Rabbit Skillathon Study Guide is available which outlines what each topic and station in the Skillathon will be about. The Study Guide can be found on the Union County 4-H web site <https://union.osu.edu/program-areas/4-H-youth-development/study-guides-skillathon-information>
- Information for the Rabbit Skillathon can be found in your Rabbit Resource Handbook or is attached to the Study Guide.
- Prizes are awarded to exhibitors who do well in the Skillathon. Prizes typically include cash and rosettes.

#### **Premier Exhibitor Award Qualifications**

- Premier Exhibitor is an award given to 1 Exhibitor per specie which recognizes the individual which has the best overall Combination of Skillathon score (40%), Showmanship (40%), market class placing (20%).
- To be eligible an exhibitor must; show a market animal project, participate in Skillathon, and participate in Showmanship.

#### **Jr Fair Livestock Sale**

The Richwood Fair Jr Fair Livestock Sale is held on Monday, the last day of the Fair.

Exhibitors with market animals are eligible to sell ONE animal (one pen of 3 market rabbits) through the Jr Fair Sale, if they have met eligibility criteria (shown their animal, animal is within correct weight range, turned in Sale Designation form on time, etc).

During the Rabbit Show: Sale Designation Forms will be made available to all Exhibitors. If you want to sell your pen of 3 Rabbits through the Jr Fair Sale, you must complete the Sale Designation Form and turn in the Form by the end of the Rabbit Show.

You MUST be present during the Jr Fair Sale on Monday in order to sell your Rabbits.

A Sale Catalog (list of animals for sale) will be created and posted. It is generally posted in the Barn on Sunday of the Fair. Check the posted Catalog to see where you are in the Sale order so you can be ready.

Once your Pen is sold through the Sale, the Sale Committee will handle loading and transporting your animal. Market Rabbits are a “terminal” project meaning all must go to harvest at the conclusion of the sale. Your responsibility is to keep your animal watered and comfortable until it is loaded, and to clean your cage once the animal is loaded.

**Finishing your rabbit project** When the project year is concluded its time to thank the people that have helped you with your project. It's a great idea to send thank you notes to:

- the buyer of your animal if you participated in the Jr Fair Sale
- Your 4-H Advisors
- Other folks who helped you with your project
- The sponsors of any awards, ribbons, banners, or other recognition you received.