

# Kalamazoo County 4-H

## Rabbit Project Guidelines

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**Project Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/195384267151802>**

### Project Objectives & Life Skills\*

- The 4-H rabbit project can provide youth with the opportunity to learn about selection, management, health, marketing and careers in the rabbit industry.
- Learn the basic principles of animal science by owning, caring for and keeping records on one or more rabbits.
- Explore knowledge of sound breeding, feeding and management practices.
- Investigate marketing and project expansion and discover how you can start a career in the rabbit business.
- **Head**
  - Record keeping
  - Planning/Organizing
  - Goal setting
  - Service learning
- **Heart**
  - Communication
  - Social skills
  - Concern for others
  - Sharing
- **Hands**
  - Leadership
  - Marketable skills
  - Self-motivation
  - Teamwork
- **Health**
  - Self-esteem
  - Disease prevention
  - Personal safety
  - Stress management

*\*note these life skills are just some examples of what 4-H members will learn in this project*

### Additional Resources:

[MSU Rabbit Project Snapshot](#)  
[Showmanship Video](#)  
[Breed Id Practice Cards](#)  
[Rabbit Breed Id Kahoot](#) - Game Pin: 01265708  
[Showmanship / Skillathon Questions](#)  
[Choosing Your Meat Pen](#)  
[Success With Market Rabbits](#)

[Shop 4-H Curriculum](#)  
[Showmanship Guide, Step-By-Step](#)  
[Cavy Breed Id Quizlet](#)  
[Rabbit Breed Id Quizlet](#)  
[Meat Pen Basics](#)  
[Evaluating Single Fryers](#)  
[4-H Rabbit Leaders Guide](#)

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## **Rabbit Project**

### **Guidelines:**

- All 4-H members must complete either a notebook or an educational poster (if you show market animals, this is in addition to your market notebook)
- All Breed, Pet, Cloverbud, and Agility rabbits must be in the 4-H Member's possession by June 1st of the current year.
- Market Rabbits must be in the 4-H Member's possession at least four weeks prior to the beginning of the fair.
- Breed Rabbits must be purebred and an ARBA recognized breed. Each rabbit may only be entered and shown in one class except for Progeny. If more than one rabbit is being exhibited, each individual rabbit must be entered separately on the fair entry form.
- **Rabbit entries will be limited by the number of cages available. If entries exceed cage space, the Superintendent(s) will determine the most fair and equitable way to reduce the number of entries.**
- Rabbit Fitting and Showmanship is required for all 4-H members including Cloverbuds.
- **Responsibilities of all rabbit project members/families**
  - All rabbit members
    - Youth need to sign up for at least one 2–4-hour barn duty shift during fair week. Members under the age of 11 must always have a parent present. It is mandatory that each 4-H member and/or family help with the setup and tear down of the barn before and at the end of the fair.
  - All rabbit members (breed, market, and fitting and showing)
    - cleanup of the show arena after the completion of the rabbit shows. This includes trash pickup and putting tables and chairs away.
  - Youth who are selling rabbits in the auction
    - helping clean the show arena prior to the auction day and following the auction.
    - bring in two 4" x 6" photos of you and your project animal(s) for each sale. The photo is to be turned into the Rabbit Superintendent no later than Fair check in. Please dress neatly, SMILE, and print on photo paper. Put your name, class and ear number on the back of each photo. These photos are often displayed in the buyer's place of business, so they need to look good!
- The rabbit project is open to ALL Cloverbuds 5-7 years of age by January 1st of the current year. Cloverbuds may choose any rabbit project but cannot sell market animals in the 4-H Livestock Sale. Cloverbuds may choose a rabbit science notebook or poster to satisfy their rabbit science requirement.
- **Project Animal Verification**
  - Breed, Pet, Cloverbud, and Agility rabbits will be verified by tattoos at the MANDATORY animal check in.
  - Rabbits not verified by the Rabbit Superintendent, at the breed check in, will not be allowed to show at the Kalamazoo County Fair.
  - Market rabbits will be weighed and verified by tattoos at the MANDATORY Market Rabbit check in 3 weeks prior to the fair. Those Market Rabbits not verified by a Rabbit Superintendent will not be allowed to show or go to auction at the Kalamazoo County Fair.
  - Rabbits that have not met the above tattooing requirements may not be exhibited at the fair.
  - All project rabbits must be permanently and legibly tattooed in the left ear. It is the responsibility of the 4-H members to tattoo their project animals or make a request to a Rabbit Superintendent for their rabbits to be tattooed at the mandatory check in.

- **Show attire**

- The show attire for rabbits in all classes (showmanship, market, breed, show jumping, and agility) is black pants (preferably jeans), closed toe shoes, and a white long-sleeved shirt (preferably button down and tucked in). It is preferred that this shirt is covered by a white lab coat or show apron.
- No jewelry is allowed.
- Long hair should be pulled back away from the face
- The appearance of the 4-Her overall should be clean, neat, and tidy. Exhibitors may also choose to wear a white show (lab) coat, but it is not required.
- Black jeans and white button-up shirts can typically be found at a great price at local resale shops if they aren't something you have on hand and don't want to buy new to wear once or twice.
- The rabbit project has a closet of donated items that will be available at the pre-fair check-in.

#### Section A –Rabbit Showmanship

- All members are encouraged to enter the appropriate showmanship class based on their age.
- Make sure to review the showmanship guide and video in the additional resources.

#### Section B-Market Rabbits

- **Market rabbit records are required to be completed for the market project.**
- Market Pens will consist of three (3) fryer rabbits of the same breed (or crossbreed of commercial breeds) and variety to be sold at the 4-H livestock auction.
- Fryer Rabbits must weigh between 3.5 – 5.5 lbs and be 12 weeks old or less by the week of fair.
- Roaster Rabbits must weigh between 5.5 – 9.0 lbs and be less than 6 months old.
- Stewer Rabbits must weigh over 8lbs. and be older than 6 months old.
- Market classes include: Market Pen (3 fryer rabbits), Single Fryer, and Single Roaster.
- Market animals exhibiting a non-health related disqualification will receive a B rating but may still sell at auction. Disqualifications affecting the meat quality will receive a C rating and may not be sold in the 4-H livestock auction.
- 4-H Members must be 8 years old by January 1st of the current year to sell in the 4-H Livestock auction. Grand Champions and Reserve Champions market pens are required to sell in the 4-H livestock auction and will not count toward the maximum number of sales allowed.
- Members selling in the 4-H Livestock auction are expected to assist on the sale day to transport animals, serve buyer refreshments, etc. Members must be present at the 4-H Livestock auction to sell their project(s). The only exception to this rule would be members that are participating in the 4-H horse show or other 4-H animal project that requires their presence. Please see Rabbit Project Superintendent if you will not be able to be at the sale.
- Two 4" x 6" photo of you and your project animal(s) is needed for each sale. The photo is to be turned into the Rabbit Superintendent no later than Fair check in. Please dress neatly, SMILE, and print on photo paper. Put your name and rabbit's class and ear number on the back of each photo. These photos are often displayed in the buyer's place of business, so they need to look good!

#### Section C–Breed Class Rabbits

- Breeding rabbits must be purebred and meet the guidelines set forth in the ARBA standard of perfection.
- Rabbits will be exhibited by breed, sex, and age (Senior bucks, Senior Does, Intermediate Bucks, Intermediate Does, Junior Bucks, Junior Does) as designated by the ARBA Standard of Perfection.
- Rabbits exhibiting disqualification will not be placed or receive ribbons.

#### Section D–Championship Class

Youth will not enter this class in the fair entry program. These placings will be determined during the

rabbit shows.

#### Section E–Progeny

- Progeny class entries must consist of a purebred Senior buck or Senior Doe AND a Junior Buck or Junior Doe that is an offspring of the senior animal.
- The senior animal must be shown in its appropriate breed class. The junior animal must be shown in its appropriate breed or market class.
- The object of the class is to show the members’ progress in improving the quality of their project. The junior rabbit must show improvement over the senior rabbit.

#### Section F–Pet Rabbits

- The pet rabbit project is designed for members that cannot breed or improve the quality of their project animals but still want to participate in 4-H Rabbits. Pet rabbit entries, for families with other rabbits entered, may be limited based on space in the barn.

#### Section G–Rabbit Science

- Information should be presented in a neat and readable manner.
- It is required to do either a notebook or a poster/3-D exhibit to show your rabbit. If you have market rabbits it is required to do either a notebook or poster/3-D exhibit and the market rabbit record journal.
- **Notebook (non-market)**
  - Your notebook should have a cover page that contains all relevant information about you as a 4-H member (name, age, years in project, community club, etc.)
    - Please do not put any personal information on this page, like your address or phone number.
  - All the pages should be numbered, and you should have a corresponding table of contents
  - If you have more than one year represented, the most current year should be in the front and the years should be separated by labeled tabs
  - Your notebook should reflect a descriptive (illustrations and photos), detailed, complete best effort
  - For this guide, “years” refers to years completing the notebook, not in the project.
    - Year One
      - Your 4-H story: how did you come to be in the rabbit project area?
      - What is your rabbitry like? What kinds of rabbits do you have? Include the Standard of Perfection for your breed of rabbit if applicable. Where do your rabbits live, how do you feed and water them, and what do they eat and drink?
      - What is your favorite part about raising rabbits? The most difficult part?
      - What is something that you learned about raising rabbits this year?
      - What is one goal that you have for the future of your rabbit project?
      - What life skills from the life skills wheel did you grow this year through your rabbit project? Explain how.
    - Year Two
      - How has your project grown or changed since last year?
      - Describe and tell the important characteristics of three breeds of rabbits. Start with your own and add two others. Include origin, breed standard, and uses.
      - Using a diagram, locate and identify the parts of the rabbit.
      - What is something that you learned about raising rabbits this year?
      - What is one goal that you have for the future of your rabbit project?

- What life skills from the life skills wheel did you grow this year through your rabbit project? Explain how.
- Year Three
  - How has your project grown or changed since last year?
  - Describe the cause, symptoms, treatment, and prevention for three common rabbit ailments.
  - Describe the difference between a disqualification and a fault and provide examples of each.
  - What is something that you learned about raising rabbits this year?
  - What is one goal that you have for the future of your rabbit project?
  - What life skills from the life skills wheel did you grow this year through your rabbit project? Explain how.
- Year Four
  - How has your project grown or changed since last year?
  - What is ARBA? Explain their goals and describe how they help you as a 4-H rabbit raiser.
  - What is a rabbit show like? Describe the process, order, experience, etc.
  - What is something that you learned about raising rabbits this year?
  - What is one goal that you have for the future of your rabbit project?
  - What life skills from the life skills wheel did you grow this year through your rabbit project? Explain how.
- Year Five
  - How has your project grown or changed since last year?
  - What is a pedigree and why is it important? Create a sample pedigree and label the parts / explain what each shows and why it is important.
  - Describe the rabbit reproductive cycle from conception through weaning.
  - What is something that you learned about raising rabbits this year?
  - What is one goal that you have for the future of your rabbit project?
  - What life skills from the life skills wheel did you grow this year through your rabbit project? Explain how.
- Years Six and Beyond
  - How has your project grown or changed since last year?
  - Add knowledge of two of the following per year (in any order):
    - Body types
    - Fur types
    - Infectious diseases
    - Zoonotic diseases
    - Parasitic diseases
    - Tattooing and tattoo systems
    - ARBA Registration / Grand Champion
    - Rabbits breed other than your own
    - Sanitation
    - Genetics
  - Illustrate a class of four rabbits of a single breed (or market class). Place the class in order and then write a sample of reasons as to why you placed the class the way you did. Use correct terms.
  - What is something that you learned about raising rabbits this year?
  - What is one goal that you have for the future of your rabbit project?

- What life skills from the life skills wheel did you grow this year through your rabbit project? Explain how.
- **Poster or 3-D exhibit**
  - Educational posters can cover anything related to rabbits and rabbit husbandry. This is your chance to teach the public about rabbits. You should increase your knowledge yearly.
    - Some good topics to consider are:
      - Breeds
      - Basic Care (housing, nutrition, equipment, grooming and handling)
      - Anatomy of a rabbit
      - Body types (arched, semi-arched, compact, commercial, cylindrical/snaky)
      - Fur types (normal, rex, satin, wool)
      - Market carcass parts (**nothing graphic**)
      - Nutrition
      - Diseases & ailments
      - Behaviors
      - Showmanship
      - Breeding basics

#### Market Rabbit Records

- Youth will use the [Kalamazoo County 4-H rabbit market journal](#) and complete the appropriate areas for the number of years they have been in the rabbit project.
- The market journal must be in a three-ring binder or portfolio. Loose papers will not be judged.
- A page with the Standard of Perfection for the breed that your market entry as well as a 100–200-word explanation of why you chose that breed of market rabbit. The word count is intended for the intermediate and senior exhibitors. Use discretion in modulating them down for juniors and up for seniors as is age appropriate.
- A minimum of 5 photos are required throughout your notebook, but more are preferred.

**Commented [VB1]:** We'll add the link once we have it on the website.

#### Section H–Rabbit Agility

- Agility is laid out in a square with various obstacles, including but not limited to jumps, an A frame, a seesaw, an open tunnel, a hoop, and a bridge
- Rabbits will run the course once clockwise, and then again counterclockwise. The rabbit and handler with the lowest combined time, plus penalties, is the winner.
  - Penalties
    - Exhibitor stepping on the course
    - Exhibitor moves from inside of the course to the outside or from the outside to the inside
    - Rabbit refuse to do an obstacle
    - Rabbit repeats an obstacle
    - Rabbit must be rescued from an obstacle
    - Unsafe handling behavior (examples like tugging or shoving their rabbit, exhibitors touching the rabbit with their feet)

- Allowed encouragement
  - Gentle pats on the hindquarters
  - Verbal cues
  - Treats
- Additional information along with tips and tricks found on page 9.

Section I Rabbit Show Jumping

- The show jumping course is laid out in a straight line and features only jumps of varying styles and heights.
- Rabbits run the course three times. The rabbit and handler with the lowest combined time, plus penalties, is the winner
  - Penalties
    - Exhibitor stepping on the course
    - Exhibitor moves from the left to right or right to left of the course
    - Rabbit refuses to do a jump
    - Rabbit repeats a jump
    - Rabbit knocks a bar down on a jump
    - Rabbit must be rescued from a jump
    - Unsafe handling behavior (examples like tugging or shoving their rabbit, exhibitors touching the rabbit with their feet)
  - Allowed encouragement
    - Gentle pats on the hindquarters
    - Verbal cues
    - Treats
- Additional information along with tips and tricks found on page 9.

Section J–Rabbit Fur

- Exhibitors may enter one of their breed class rabbits into the fur competition.
- Rabbits will be judged on the fur guidelines outlined in their breed standard of perfection.



## **Agility and Show Jumping Additional Information, Tips, and Tricks**

- Each 4-H member will be allowed to bring either one pet or breed rabbit to the fair to participate in rabbit agility. Each rabbit will need to be verified with a tattoo and follow all other requirements within the Rabbit Project guidelines.
- In both agility and show jumping, members compete in one of two classes novice (first year) or legacy (second year and beyond).
- Cloverbuds also compete using the same course, but they have three important concessions: 1.
  - They are not timed and do not receive a place
  - They may have adult assistance
  - They may step onto the show mats
- Novice and legacy members compete using the same course and rules.
- Everybody who participates receives an award and there are special awards for the overall champion in each class.
- All rabbits should have a well-fitting harness (not collar) as well as a leash of appropriate length for the rabbit and the handler.
  - Popular options are the H harness (featured [here](#)) and the vest harness (featured [here](#) and [here](#)). Leashes and harnesses should be the exhibitor's preference and the one that fits their animal the best/that they are comfortable getting them in and out of.
- Beginners or veterans with new rabbits should make sure to follow the proper steps to ensure success.
  - The first step is picking the proper rabbit. While the cuddliest, calmest rabbit might be good for showmanship, they are typically not good choices for agility. The best agility rabbits are often hyper or feisty to some degree; the ones who are constantly on the move and do not like to sit still. The right personality will clearly have fun doing it and require little encouragement.
  - Introduce your rabbit first to the harness by having it wear it for a set period of minutes and free roam while you supervise it closely. Gradually increase the number of minutes that you do this.
  - If you live in an area where racoons frequent your yard, do not allow your rabbit to be on the grass due to the risk of raccoon roundworm, which is both contagious and fatal to your rabbit and your herd.
  - Once your rabbit has had several comfortable free-roaming harness sessions, add the leash and hold it loose and upright while you follow your rabbit around where it wants to go.
  - After several comfortable sessions like this one, try to direct or encourage your rabbit in a particular direction. **Never tug your rabbit.** Rabbits are prey animals and easily frightened, and one bad experience can be difficult to unlearn.
- If you have the time and space, setting up a home course can be beneficial for a variety of reasons.
  - It can be walled on both sides, it allows the rabbit to free-explore the area during their harness adjustment time, which can help them see it as a fun activity from day one
  - It allows for more practice
  - Obstacles can be made with a variety of readily available and low-cost items.
    - Examples of readily available obstacle items: hula hoops, pool noodles, pool noodles cut into thirds and taped into a pyramid, and shoeboxes / Tupperware tubs all make great obstacles.
    - Example of potential obstacles to be used: jumps, A frame, seesaw, open tunnel, hoop, and a bridge