

# 4H RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

## A PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE FOR MEMBERS

MILO AND LULU



BY- CHLOE RILEY

ACHIEVEMENT TEST  
WRITTEN & HANDS  
ON TO EARN YOUR  
ACHIEVEMENT HAT  
PIN!

- GLOSSARY OF TERMS
- DISEASE & TREATMENT
- SHOWING 101
- BODY & FUR TYPES
- GENERAL CARE
- HOUSING
- SHOWMANSHIP
- EQUIPMENT ID



*I pledge . . .*  
16 U.S.C. 707  
*. . . to my club, my community,  
my country, and the world.*

# **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction .....	1
Equipment .....	2
Housing .....	3
General Rabbit Care .....	5
Feed and Nutrition .....	8
Health and Disease .....	9
Glossary of Terms .....	16
Showing Your Rabbit .....	19
Showmanship .....	25
Type Profile of Rabbits .....	29
Feed and Equipment ID .....	31
Rabbit Parts .....	32
Resources .....	33

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the wonderful world of rabbits. This study guide will help you understand basic information needed to take proper care of your rabbits. Once you have completed both the written and skills tests and pass, you may earn either a pin for your hat or a ribbon. I hope this guide is helpful and that you will use it as a point of reference when needed.

1. Study the glossary of terms in this Study Guide for the written test. Study the picture of the rabbit body parts so that you will be able to identify various parts of the rabbit anatomy. Study the rabbit body types and breeds in each category.
2. Go over the equipment ID page and be familiar with all the items listed on the page in the Study Guide. There will be a table with several items on the equipment ID list on it that you will need to be able to identify.
3. Be familiar with the different rabbit breeds.
4. It is suggested that you use this Study Guide in total. The current ARBA OFFICIAL GUIDE BOOK is the source of information used in the glossary. The American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) publishes a BOOK OF STANDARDS with all the rabbit breeds that are recognized by the association. Your leader should have these books available or you can look at the ARBA website.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **EQUIPMENT**

The rule of thumb for choosing your rabbit's cage is that rabbits should have at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  square foot of floor space per pound of body weight. Rabbits do best with their own cages, but sometimes two does or neutered rabbits can live in the same cage, provided there is ample room. The cage floor should be of wire, so the droppings can fall through. Chicken wire is not suitable for rabbit cages, as dogs and raccoons can tear right through it. If your rabbit is in a barn or a house, you can place a drop pan beneath the cage to collect the droppings. Fill the drop pan with an absorbent material such as pine shavings. Do not use cedar shavings because cedar can cause respiratory problems. Use crocks or J-feeders for feed. A crock or a water bottle supplies water. Make sure the bunny knows how to drink from the bottle!

### **RABBIT NECESSITIES**

- cage
- drop pan
- feeder or crock
- water bottle or crock
- transport carrier
- toenail trimmer
- shavings or pellet bedding
- measure cup for feed
- contact with experienced breeder
- a quiet, sheltered environment
- brush

# **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

## **HOUSING**

When determining where to place the rabbits, keep in mind that the Central Valley has extreme heat in the summer. Whether the rabbits are inside or outside, they need proper airflow or ventilation. Inadequate airflow can lead to upper respiratory infections, such as pneumonia and “Snuffles.” Coolers and fans are great for moving air through the rabbitry as long as the air is not blowing directly on the rabbit. Proper ventilation is just as important during the winter and cold months as it is in the summer. Fresh air helps the rabbits to breathe easier, helps with fly control, and reduces the risk of disease.

Housing locations can vary depending on how much time, work and money you want to spend. Pet rabbits and show rabbits can live comfortably inside your home, garage or outdoors provided they are under a shade tree or canopy and never in direct sunlight. If you decide to keep your rabbit outside, always remember to keep the cage up off the ground and away from large animals, especially aggressive or overactive dogs.

Temperature and lighting are also important factors when deciding where to keep your rabbits. As previously mentioned, high temperatures can affect your rabbit in several different ways. A male rabbit (buck) can become sterile if exposed to temperatures in excess of 80° for five consecutive days; their semen may not have any live sperm for 60 to 90 days after exposure. Since the Central Valley can be in the triple digits during the summer months, there are steps you can take to ensure your rabbit’s safety:

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **HOUSING (cont.)**

1. Invest in an outdoor thermometer to place in your rabbitry to keep track of excessive heat.
2. Place frozen liter water bottles in each cage for your rabbit to rest against and cool as needed.
3. Install a swamp cooler with a garden timer (can be purchased at Walmart, Lowes or Orchard Supply). Set the timer for the appropriate hours to keep temperatures as low as possible.

Lighting is another key factor to consider when setting up your rabbitry, especially if you plan on breeding and showing your rabbits. Lighting is an important part in priming the animals' fur and has an effect upon the receptiveness of the breeding doe. A decrease in daylight hours may require a low intensity artificial light if you want to breed during the winter months.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **GENERAL RABBIT CARE**

It is important to check your rabbit on a regular basis to make sure it is healthy. When feeding, take time to look into the cage. Look for any runny stool, dirty drop pans, bright eyes and nose with discharge. Empty cages with drop pans weekly and scrape the cage wire if there is built-up manure. Wipe the cage floor down with an iodine water solution or a five parts water/one part bleach solution. Allow to dry before putting the rabbit back in the cage. Plastic resting mats (Mighty Mat available at TSC or KW Cages) help to prevent sore hocks: Sores occur when the fur wears away and the foot pads break and bleed. Remove mat and clean with the same above-mentioned solution. Apply a small amount of antibiotic cream to the hocks and add additional hay or straw so the rabbit can rest off of the wire. Clean water and feed crocks on a weekly basis to remove green mold or sludge so your rabbit has the cleanest water and feed possible.

In addition to cleaning the cage and feed dish, examine your rabbit weekly. Remove it from the cage. Check the ears for mites, tears or cankers, check the body for abscesses, sore hocks, for mites and check the rabbit's bottom for manure build up. If your rabbit has had runny stool, it can cake on their bottom without you knowing. This can prevent it from eliminating or going to the bathroom, which is another reason you should remove your rabbit from the cage and examine it closely. Remove build up by gently wiping with warm water and a rag. In the worst case, put the rabbit's bottom under slightly warm water to wash it off, but be careful to get as little of your rabbit's fur wet as possible, then dry with a blow dryer on warm to cool. Check the rabbit's nose, eyes and front legs for white discharge – front paws may be matted or wet from wiping nose and eyes. Lastly, check the rabbit's vents (refer to the glossary of terms

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **GENERAL RABBIT CARE (cont.)**

and rabbit disease section for definition). At a minimum, clean vents monthly. Vent cleaning can be a very unpleasant part of rabbit care, but it is crucial. Ask your rabbit or teen leader for assistance the first couple of times so you know what you're doing. To clean vents you will need a Q-tip, peroxide and diluted iodine solution. Clip toenails as needed and check your rabbit's teeth for malocclusion (see glossary). Remember your rabbit can't ask you for help, so you must be proactive and aware at all times.

Groom weekly as well. The type of rabbit you have will determine the amount of time you will spend on brushing. If you have an Angora or Fuzzy rabbit, plan on spending a lot of time brushing and grooming. Satins require less brushing. If you are planning to show your rabbit, you should start grooming and feed adjustments at least six weeks before a show. KW Cages offers grooming solutions and all the tools you need to prepare your rabbit for show.

An important reminder: Disease and illness can be transferred from rabbit to owner or owner to rabbit. Always wash your hands after handling your rabbit and be aware of who is handling your rabbit. Make sure anyone who is handling your rabbit has washed their hands. Be gentle and loving while handling your rabbit so it doesn't feel stressed. Develop a routine so that your rabbit gets used to the process of rabbit care.



# RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

## HEALTH CHECK

	When Healthy	When Unhealthy	When showing this sign, research this problem:
EARS	Active, well-furred, clean and white inside.	Red-brown waxy material inside Sores and scabs due to scratching	<i>Ear Mites (psoroptes cuniculi)</i> Mange or fur mite
EYES	Bright, clear, alert	Cloudy cornea Tearing, squinting, watery	Blindness, nest box eye Injury, weepy eye,
NOSE	Dry and active	Clear discharge Thick whitish opaque discharge	Irritation, allergies, minor cold Snuffles (bacterial infection)
TEETH	Top incisors overlapping bottom ones	Broken or misaligned teeth Slobbers	Malocclusion Tooth abscess
FEET	Well-furred	Missing hair, sores, tenderness	Sore hocks
BELLY		Distended stomach	Pot belly, enteritis
BACK	Spinal vertebrae feels like faint smooth bumps	Rough over spine	Underweight. General poor condition due to illness, dehydration, malnutrition, or parasites.
GENITAL AREA	Clean, normal coloration.	Scabs or sores, discharge Chapped, chafed, dirty, possible sores	Vent disease (sores found on face in later stages) Hutch burn (urine burn)
COAT	Clean, well-textured, fine, soft, glossy, full of life.	Patchy or bare spots Dull, lifeless, stiff or dead coat	Fur chewing, mites General poor condition or ill health (not to be confused with coat about to molt normally)
SKIN	Smooth, white, clean.	Flakes or dandruff Lumps or swellings	Mange Abscess, warbles,
APPETITE	Hungry at feeding time	Significant appetite loss	Digestive illness, hair block,
DROP PAN	Small, round, dry fecal pellets	Red urine Pinworms Diarrhea Jelly-like material	Not a problem. Excess protein in diet Pinworms Digestive system imbalance, many other conditions Mucoid enteritis

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **FEED AND NUTRITION**

A commercial rabbit pellet is the best choice for your rabbit. Check the labels on the back of the feed bag to find the protein and fiber content. Rabbits for pets or show need between 15-17% protein and at least 17% fiber. Feeds bought in small amounts at pet stores may or may not contain the nutrients your rabbit requires. You will find a much better value and probably a better formula if you buy a name brand of show rabbit feed. Ask the breeder from whom you bought your rabbit what brand they feed. Store all feed in pest-proof, waterproof containers. Stored feed begins to lose its nutritional value after a month or so. A rabbit needs about 2 ounce of feed per pound of body weight each day (4 oz. = 1/2 cup) this may vary depending on the breed. Growing rabbits may need more. Do not overfeed your rabbit, as a fat rabbit is not healthy. To tell if your rabbit is too fat or thin, run a hand down its backbone. You should be able to feel the individual bumps of the vertebrae. If the bumps are sharp or pointed, the rabbit may be too thin. If you cannot feel the vertebrae, the rabbit is probably overweight. You should not be able to pinch rolls of your rabbit's skin.

In the winter months when temperatures reach approximately 56°, your rabbit will burn more energy to sustain its body temperature. Increase feed as needed to keep your rabbit nourished.

Water is the key nutrient in a rabbit's diet, making up as much as 85% of the living body. Water in the blood stream serves as a means for transporting nutrients to cells and returning waste to the lungs and kidneys. Water carries waste from the body, lubricates the joints, and helps maintain body temperature. Water also keeps eyes moist, protecting them from dust and other foreign objects. Providing clean fresh water 24 hours a day is crucial to the overall health of your rabbit. Water deprivation

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

for even a few hours can stress an animal, leading to health problems and reduce performance in breeding.

### **HEALTH AND DISEASE\***

The key to successful herd health is a detailed management program that is evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure minor problems do not become major disease outbreaks. Develop a spread sheet and track things like, deworming, vent cleaning weight, nail trimming, cage disinfecting, and physical examination for fur mites, ear mites, sore hocks. Use your phone calendar to remind you when to start checking your rabbits again or to follow up on those that need extra attention. It is important to look at your rabbit daily. Pay attention to how much food your rabbit is eating. When a rabbit stops eating, it is a good indication something is wrong. Vent disease is one of the most common diseases overlooked in a rabbitry. Keeping your rabbit's cage clean and sanitized is crucial, along with proper ventilation and clean feed and water crocks. You will find many of these diseases in the glossary of terms.

---

\* Information found in this section comes from the ARBA Official Guide Book section by Dr. Chris Hayhow.

# RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

## RABBIT DISEASES

DISEASE/ CONDITION	SIGNS	CAUSE	TREATMENT	PREVENTION
<b>CANNIBALISM</b> (During or after kindling)	Appendages may be missing or entire carcass consumed except the head. Most common in first litter of does.	Inherent nervousness. Mishap of consuming appendages while assisting with mouth during kindling process. Presence of predators or rodents in kindling area. Does deprived of sufficient water.	Provide ideal kindling conditions.	Select does with good mothering instincts. Restrict rodents and predators from kindling area.
<b>CANNABALISM</b> (During growing stages)	Chewing on each other while caged together. Sometimes to the extent to cause death.	Overcrowding sexually mature males in growing cages; lack of adequate drinking water.	Relieve overcrowding. Castration of male animals. Fresh water at all times.	Cage growing rabbits that mature early and gain at a slower rate individually. Supply fresh water.
<b>EAR MITES</b> (Ear Canker)	Shaking head, scratching of ears, "scabby" formation inside of ear due to accumulation of serum and blood, secondary bacterial infection.	Infestation of inside outer ear with mites. <i>Psoroptes cuniculi</i>	Daily placement of oil in ear for 3 days, repeating treatment at 10 day intervals will be effective in suffocation of mites. Addition of parasiticide, such as Malthine or rotenone will increase the effectiveness of the treatment.	Isolation of herd. Medication placed in ears of every rabbit in herd once a month will rid the rabbitry of the parasite.
<b>FOOT ABSCESSSES</b>	Small nodular abscesses on the feet, legs and toes of infected rabbits. Initially a small number of animals infected that increases in incidence with time.	Infection and irritation of bruised area with <i>Staphylococcus sp.</i>	Soak infected feet in an iodine solution every 3-4 days. Open abscesses, if necessary.	Strict sanitation.
<b>FUR MITE</b>	Loss of fur around face, neck and back.	Fur mites – <i>cheyletidia parasitovora</i> . <i>Listrophorcy gibus</i>	Application of cat flea powder. Repeat 10 days after initial treatment to insure total control of life cycle.	Herd isolation, good sanitation, selective bedding materials. Rodent control.
<b>HAIR BLOCKAGE:</b> "Fur Ball" or "Fur Blockage"	Intermittent diarrhea, poor appetite or periods of no appetite, loss of weight, moult, pulling fur, appearance of above sign in only one animal in herd.	Physical blockage of small intestines that will not allow ingested food to flow through the intestinal tract.	Daily dosing animal with ½ teaspoon of mineral oil for three (3) consecutive days. Repeat once a week.	Daily feeding roughage to animals prone to this condition (Angora, kindling does, etc.). Periodic (weekly) administration of small amount of Vaseline or mineral oil to animals susceptible to this condition.
<b>HEAT PROSTRATION</b>	Increased respiratory rate. Wet around the mouth that may be blood tinged. Holding head high and blue tinge to ears and mouth. Prostration and death.	High temperature. Usually accompanied by high humidity. Animals sitting directly in sunlight without air movement.	Remove animal to cool place. If completely prostrate, submerge in cool water.	Keep air moving around the animals. Use of plastic bottles filled with water that is frozen solid.
<b>HUTCH BURN</b> (Urine burn) (Often confused with Vent Disease)	"Chapped" or "galded" area around external genitals and the inside of hind legs. Secondary bacterial invasion common that causes the area to become infected.	Dirty, wet hutches or urine guard that splashes the urine back on the rabbit at times of urination.	Correct cause. Apply antibiotic cream to infected and "burned" areas.	Strict sanitation. Close attention to the angle of urine guards.

# RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

## DISEASES (cont.)

DISEASE/ CONDITION	SIGNS	CAUSE	TREATMENT	PREVENTION
* <b>MALOCCLUSIOON</b> "Buck teeth" "Wolf teeth"	Elongation of upper and/or lower teeth. Oftentimes to the extent that the animal will fail to eat.	Inherited condition in some animals, may be much more complex than originally thought. Breaking of one or more opposing teeth and tooth elongates without being worn off. Rabbits incisors grow ½ inch or more per month if not worn off.	Cull those animals from herd that have the inherited condition. Clipping teeth can be done; but not an ethical or intelligent practice with inherited malocclusion.	Selective culling to eliminate those defective genes from the herd.
<b>PASTEURELOSIS</b> (Expresses itself in severe forms) I. "snuffles" (chronic)	Persistent "sneezing" with a productive nasal discharge that is thin or thick and white in nature. Precursor to many other conditions. Decrease growth rate and production. Primarily an upper respiratory infection where pneumonia is often a secondary complication. Death associated with secondary infection.	<i>Pasteurella sp.</i> organism infection associated with stress factors. <i>Pasteurella sp. and/or Bordetella bronchisepticum</i>	No specific treatment with medication successful. Improve ventilation of rabbitry. Administration of antibiotic to prevent secondary infection. Reduce stress factors	Excellent ventilation, strict culling, development of resistant animal. Minimize stress factors. Isolate sick animals. Chlorinate drinking water.
* <b>SORE HOCKS</b> (Ulcerated foot pads)	Ulcerated area on the bottom of the foot pads that has secondary bacterial infection. Sits on any rock or object that is in the cage. Sits cautiously. Loss of condition, fails to mate and be active.	Small foot pad area for size of body, thin fur covering for pad, nervous animal, long toe nails.	Difficult! Use dry solid surface for animals to rest. Treat ulceration with astringent material on a daily basis until healed.	Selective culling for large, well furred feet. Calm animals. Try not to depend on resting board.
<b>WRYECK TORTICOLLIS</b> (Otitis media)	Turning of the head to one side, lose of balance, continuous roll when excited. Usually does not interfere with the appetite of the animal until later stages of the disease.	Inflammation of the middle ear, the balance mechanism of the body. The bacteria usually isolated is a <i>Pasteurelia sp.</i> Often associated with the extension of upper respiratory infections.	Very difficult. Daily instillation of tetracycline ointment as otic drops, about 60% successful. Usually not associate with ear canker.	Proper ventilation. Keep incidence of respirators infections to a minimum.
<b>"SLOBBERS"</b>	Rabbit salivates profusely and face, chin and dewlap area become very moist or wet.	Abscessed tooth. Feeding of excessive amount of "greens" that have been sprayed with certain insecticides or pesticides.	Correct tooth condition. Remove green feed from the diet.	Feed dry ration. Avoid feed that has had chemical treatment.
* <b>VENT DISEASE</b> (rabbit syphilis)	"Scabby" inflammation of genitals – both sexes – can have scabs on nose and mouth in later stages. "Scabby nose." Refuse to mate and /or conceive. Abortions.	Spirochete organism <i>Treponema cuniculi</i> . Usually spread through mating.	Daily application of penicillin ointment to the external genitals or daily administration of Penicillin G intramuscularly for three (3) days. 2000,000 IU/10 lbs. body weight	Always check breeding animals before mating for signs of this disease and do not use if infected.
* <b>PNEUMONIA</b>	Difficulty in breathing. Bluish color to lips, tongue, and ears. Necropsy: inflamed lungs.	Any type of bacterial or virus invasion of respiratory system. Usually at times of stress and often the final stage of "Snuffles".	Broad spectrum antibiotic, isolation, eliminate stress.	Assure adequate ventilaton. Minimize stress.
* <b>FUR CHEWING</b>	Chewing of fur on body or other body parts. Fur can be chewed by self or other animals in pen.	Low fiber diet; boredom; vice, developing enteritis.	Increase fiber in diet by feeding hay or straw; remove individual chewing fur from pen. Addition of 5 lbs. of Magnesium oxide per ton of feed "sometimes" will stop fur chewing.	High fiber ration. Addition of Magnesium oxide to regular ration.

## RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

### DISEASES (cont.)

<b>COPOPHRAGY</b> (eating of night feces)	Usually seen at night or early morning where animals will consume the few material (soft) directly from the rectum.	Normal	Don't want to disrupt	None. The rabbit's way of increasing the absorption of some nutrients of the diet.
<b>ENTEROTOXEMIA</b> (described by Oregon State University in 1978)	Acute (24 hr.) fatal diarrhea dehydration – on necropsy an enlarged cecum that sometimes has red discoloration.	Specific bacterium uncertain, but associated closely with high energy feed with low fiber feed content.	Replace pelleted diet with rolled oats and gradually increase the portion of pellets on a daily basis. Treatment with Oxytetracycline in drinking water may temporarily correct condition.	Feed diets that are high in fiber (18%) and relatively low in total energy.
<b>HINDQUARTER PARALYSIS</b>	Rabbit drags rear legs and does not have any (motor control) movement in rear legs. Control of urinary bladder and bowel may be absent. A violent "scream" from rabbit usually is heard at the time of injury. Can happen during tattooing procedure or may just be present in cage without apparent cause.	Discoloration or fracture of spinal vertebra. Often seen when rabbit struggles or becomes excited and "thrusters" hind legs backwards.	None – should be humanely euthanized.	Proper handling techniques.
<b>INFECTIOUS MYXOMATOSIS</b>	Primarily seen in coastal areas of California and Oregon during May to August. Severe conjunctivitis, fails to eat, high temperature; inflamed and edematous genitals and ears, respiratory infection in later stages and death.	Virus - transmitted by mosquitoes.	Depopulate herd, burn and bury affected animals. Seek professional assistance.	Mosquito control, control the brush rabbit.
<b>MASTITIS (Blue breast)</b>	Inflamed, swollen, hot, discolored mammary system – all or individual sections. Abscessation of gland is common. Normally occurs just after kindling or after weaning.	Any bacteria within the mammary system. Usually a <i>Staphylococcus sp.</i> or <i>Streptococcus sp.</i>	Treat for three (3) days in succession with Penicillin G injections, intramuscularly at 200,000 IU/10 lbs. body weight. Strip glands free of milk. Hog-Pak application 3-4 times daily.	Prevention of caked breast and trauma to the breast (see caked breast).
<b>SCATTERING OF YOUNG AT KINDLING</b>	Poor mothering instinct due to hereditary causes. Rodents or predators in rabbitry. Vitamin A deficiency. Very young does. Incompatible nest.	Fostering the young or feeding the kits as orphans.	Select replacement animals with excellent mothering instinct. Use of subterranean nest boxes. Control predators and rodents in rabbitry. Routine use of water supplemented with vitamins.	



## RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

### DISEASES (cont.)

#### METRITIS

Metritis is inflammation of the uterus and is usually caused by a local bacterial infection. Oftentimes, it is associated with a difficult birth and/or a retained placenta or feti. It has been associated with herds that have an increased incidence of “snuffles.”

Clinical signs: Low conception rate, small litter size, and abortions are sometimes seen. Some does may fail to lactate 3-5 days after kindling.

Prognosis: With early treatment the prognosis is excellent. Culture the reproductive tract to ensure the appropriate antibiotic is used.

Prevention: Close observation of does at kindling.

#### INTERNAL PARASITES

***Pin Worms* are caused by the parasite *Passalurus ambiguus*.**

Clinical signs: Normally infestation is not associated with a disease syndrome unless an overwhelming infestation occurs, which may lead to slow growth rate, poor condition, and a decrease in resistance to other enteric diseases. Rabbits may be difficult to get in fur condition.

Prognosis: Excellent to good. Seek professional advice for an appropriate dewormer.

Prevention: Sanitation and periodic use of an appropriate dewormer.

## RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

### DISEASES (cont.)

***Tapeworm* Larva are caused by *Taenia Pisiformis* and *Taenia serialis* (dogs) or *Taenia taeniaeformis* (cats).**

Clinical signs: Normally no clinical signs are visible. The rabbit is the intermediate host for 2 tapeworms in dogs and 1 in cats. On necropsy, a cyst may be found in the viscera, mesentery, or under the skin.

Prognosis: Seen only on necropsy or during processing.

Prevention: Do not allow dogs and cats in the rabbitry. Place rabbit feed in a container to prevent contamination. Do not feed viscera to dogs and cats.

***Whipworms* are caused by *Trichuris sp.***

Clinical signs: Infestation is rarely a problem. Poor growth rate, rough hair coat, and increased incidence in diarrhea may be observed.

Prognosis: Seek professional advice.

Prevention: Strict sanitation, and isolation of the rabbitry from pets, rodents and predators.



## RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

### DISEASES (cont.)

#### WEEPY EYE

*Weepy Eye (conjunctivitis) is inflammation of the conjunctiva.* Breeds with “Bulldog” head type are predisposed to this problem. It is associated with blockage of the tear duct between the lower eyelid and the nasal area. Oftentimes there is a previous history of respiratory infections.

Clinical signs: Matted fur may be observed at the medial corner of the eye, and under the lower lid of the eye. A discharge may be seen on the surface of the eye. The tissue around the eye may appear red or irritated.

Prognosis: With early aggressive treatment the prognosis is excellent. Apply local ophthalmic ointment 2-4 times per day for 3-4 days, as needed. Opening of the naso-lacrimal duct by a professional may be indicated. Look closely to rule out predisposing causes such as an ulcer or trauma.

Prevention: Control respiratory disease and eliminate any source of trauma in the cage. Quarantine new additions to the rabbitry for up to 30 days.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**ABSCESS** – A hard swelling or isolated collection of pus occurring in the rabbit’s skin, accompanied by localized fever and heat.

**AGOUTI** – A group of colors characterized by a light colored belly, dark color over the back, and a banded hair shaft resulting in rings when the fur is blown into.

**ARBA** – The American Rabbit Breeders Association, Inc. is a nationwide, non-profit organization devoted to promoting every aspect of the rabbit fancy and industry.

**BEST OPPOSITE** – An award at a show. If the best rabbit is a buck, the best opposite will be a doe and vice versa. Can refer to breed, variety, or group.

**BROKEN COAT** – A coat with guard hairs missing or broken in spots, which exposes the undercoat. Areas where the coat is affected by molt that exposes the undercoat.

**BUCK** – *A male rabbit.*

**CHARLIE** – A rabbit with the double broken gene. Looks like a very lightly marked broken, having only slight color on the ears and/or eyes and a “moustache” on the nose.

**CONDITION** – The overall health and cleanliness of a rabbit. A well-conditioned rabbit has life in the coat and firmness of flesh. It is free from stain.

**CULL** – To select the animals the breeder wants to keep and remove the others from the herd by sale or other means. Cull does not usually mean kill.

**DAM** – The mother of a rabbit.

**DENSITY** – The property or quality of a thick coat.

**DEW CLAW** – The fifth toenail on the inside of the front feet.

**DEWLAP** – A fold of loose skin that hangs from the throat in some does.

**DISQUALIFICATION** – A condition that renders a rabbit ineligible for competition in a show.

**DOE** – A female rabbit.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)**

**FAULT** – A defect or undesirable trait that detracts from the ideality of a rabbit on the show table.

**FLYBACK** – A coat that returns almost instantly to original position when rubbed from tail to head.

**GESTATION** – The carrying of young. The period between conception and birth – usually 31 days for rabbits.

**GRAND CHAMPION** – A rabbit that has won at least three Grand Champion legs and has been registered with the ARBA may achieve a Grand Championship certificate.

**HOCK** – The back portion of the hind feet that carries the rabbit's weight.

**HUTCH STAIN** – Stain on the coat because of urine, manure, or rust from the hutch or cage.

**JUNIOR** – A rabbit under six months of age.

**KINDLING** – The process of giving birth to young rabbits ("kits").

**KIT** (*kitling*) – A baby rabbit.

**LOIN** – Section on the upper sides of the body between the last rib and the hip joint.

**MALOCCLUSION** – An improper meeting of the teeth. Normally, a rabbit's top incisors overlap the bottom ones.

**MITES** – Three different types affect rabbits – fur mites, mange mites and ear mites. All require different treatment.

**MOLT** – The process of shedding or changing coats.

**PEDIGREE** – A written chart of the male and female ancestors of a rabbit showing the date of birth and the parents, grandparents and great grandparents of the specimen in question.

**RABBITRY** – A place where domestic rabbits are kept.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)**

**REGISTRATION PAPERS** – A certificate issued to a rabbit by the ARBA when the rabbit has met certain qualifications of lineage and has been examined by a licensed registrar. Not all pedigreed rabbits are registered, or even qualify for registration.

**ROLLBACK** – A coat that returns to normal position more slowly than a flyback when stroked from tail toward head.

**SHEEN** – A characteristic of satin coated breeds. Satins have translucent hair shafts that allow light to pass through and results in a shimmery look to the coat.

**SIRE** – The father of a rabbit.

**UNDERCOLOR** – The base of the hair-shaft next to the skin.

**VARIETY** – A division within a breed. (Usually color.)

**WOOL** – Rabbit wool is usually 1½ to 5 inches long.

**WRY TAIL** – A permanently curled tail. A disqualification from competition.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **SHOWING YOUR RABBIT**

One of the greatest parts of participating in the rabbit project is that there are shows throughout the Central Valley. Taking part in these shows allows for quality time with rabbit friends and family. You can usually find a show averaging once a month if you are willing to travel. The cost for show entry will vary depending on the club putting the show together. When I first started, I did not realize there is more than one show a day; prepare to show two to three times per day. The cost will be minimal unless you plan on bringing several rabbits. Look on the ARBA website under "Shows Search CA" and you will see shows listed for the year. Next to the show location, look for the show secretary's email. Sometimes the show catalog will be posted; otherwise, you must email the secretary and request one. Read the catalog thoroughly. It will give important information such as time, location, cost, parking, names of judges, and it will inform you of any youth contests like breed ID or showmanship contests. You can email the show secretary before the entry deadline with all of the information on the show entry and report (see insert). The show secretary will send you a confirmation email that will tell you your cost for the show. Be prepared to pay the morning of the show before it starts. Participating in education classes and contests can be noted in your record book under project skills. Please review the rabbit show manners and etiquette. To show your rabbit, it does not need a pedigree but it must have an ear tattoo placed in the left ear.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **ARBA RABBIT SHOW MANNERS & ETIQUETTE**

- **THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN ENTERING A RABBIT SHOW**

Please remember to read through the ARBA catalog and register early for the rabbit show don't wait until one day before the cutoff. This makes things much easier for the show secretary who has to put all the show entries together for the show. Remember each rabbit needs a show card and sometimes there are hundreds of rabbits at one show.

Always arrive early to the show to ensure a good place to sit close to the show tables where you will be showing your rabbit. Look around before you set up so you know what show tables you will be showing on. A list is always attached to each table. This helps get your rabbit to the proper table on time so judges don't have to wait to judge your rabbit's class (everyone has to wait on you to start that show). Some shows do not allow you to set up chairs until the show actually starts. This usually happens at the big shows and will be indicated on the show catalog.

Most times fees are due the day of the show but check the show catalog to confirm. The show secretary will send you an entry confirmation once they have received your entry. There will be an exhibitor number on your show report as well as all the information for your entries. Each rabbit will be listed including ear tag #, variety, sex, and breed of your rabbit. Your show report will always have a total due before you can show your rabbit. See example of show report attached.

## RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

### ARBA RABBIT SHOW MANNERS & ETIQUETTE (cont.)

- THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOUR RABBIT IS ON THE SHOW TABLE

Listen for announcements during the show; often it is very loud and many things are going on at once during a show. Announcements will be made throughout the show calling certain breeds to show tables, typically by judge names but sometimes numbers. Example: "ALL HOLLAND LOP YOUTH TO ALLEN MESICK TABLE"

Be sure your rabbit is ready! Check the bottom for possible mess at the last minute.

Look for the score card laying on the table with your name and rabbit's information. Once you find your card, put your rabbit in the corresponding holder and turn your card over (so the side with the information is face down). This helps to keep your information private as well as making sure the show is fair.

**Do not point to your rabbit or reference your rabbit in front of judges. Do not stand directly behind your rabbit to indicate it is yours. Step away from the judging table enough to allow some space and listen quietly while the judge speaks through his judging of each rabbit. Do not remove your rabbit (unless asked to do so) or until the entire class is finished.** The judge may answer questions after the show if they have time. Please remember to be respectful and celebrate other people who win and remember we can't win all the time and good sportsmanship is a key component to being a good 4H member. How do you know if your rabbit stays for further judging or not? If your rabbit is finished at the judging table, your score card will be placed on top of your rabbit holder on the show table. The last rabbits on the table will be will be BOB Best of

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **ARBA RABBIT SHOW MANNERS & ETIQUETTE (cont.)**

Breed and Best opposite (so basically the best Buck and Doe) of the class. It is always nice to wait and applaud the winner at the end. If your rabbit placed 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> (sometimes even 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>) take your show card to the ribbon table and they will give you your ribbon (again each show is different so it depends on the show if they are handing out ribbons). Remember to write down the information on the back of the ribbon, location, date and rabbit to keep track of how well your rabbit did at the show.

- **KEEP TRACK OF YOUR SHOW REPORTS & SCORE CARDS**

Even though ARBA shows are not 4H events, you can get project skill points for attending. Make sure you write them down in your record book. Sometimes shows have breed ID contests and showmanship workshops. After the show is over, look over the comment card for your rabbit. This will help you to understand what the judge saw in your rabbit and the reason for placement. Understanding the comment card is important so you can work to improve your rabbit for the next show. Always keep in mind this is only an opinion; each judge may see your rabbit differently and judge it according to the Standard of Perfection Book by ARBA.

Take time to talk to other people and meet new friends at the show. Look around at the different vendors and get familiar with them. Purchasing supplies like cages and medication can be more cost effective than buying at the local pet stores. Attending rabbit shows gives you the opportunity to meet rabbit breeders from all over the country and this is a great way to learn from the very best!



## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **ARBA RABBIT SHOW MANNERS & ETIQUETTE (cont.)**

REMEMBER TO HAVE A GREAT TIME AND BUILD MEMORIES!!! MAKE NEW FRIENDS AND BE FRIENDLY TO OTHERS! LEARN GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP AND CELEBRATE OTHERS' SUCCESS.



## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **SHOWMANSHIP**

Showmanship is a big part of the rabbit project. Fresno County has two main showmanship opportunities for competition – Fresno Fair and 4H Fair. During competition you will have the opportunity to:

- Show respect to the judge and other exhibitors
- Have pride in your animals
- Only show well groomed, conditioned, and tattooed rabbits
- Work with your animals often to train them
- Make an effort to help out and learn at shows
- Always be attentive to get your animals on the table
- Never forget that your dedication will soon pay off

Before competition, I recommend you watch YouTube for examples on what the rabbit showmanship structure or process looks like, attend a competition and watch the older, more experienced members compete, attend Allen Mesick class given every year at the ARBA Turlock rabbit show, and practice as much as possible at home.

### **Uniform**

In 2016, Fresno County uniform guidelines changed. Talk with your project leader to determine how you should dress. Typically, for girls and boys uniform consists of a long sleeve white shirt, white jeans and 4H hat. Boys wear a green tie and girls wear a green scarf may be purchased at the Fresno County 4H office. Belt for either boys or girls should be simple leather or vinyl; color is optional. Do not wear jewelry, bracelets, earrings or rings. Your hair should be neat and pulled back away from your face. On the day of the show, bring a towel or grooming pad to place in your lap just in case your rabbit makes a mess.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **SHOWMANSHIP (cont.)**

#### **Attitude**

Be polite at all times. Remember to treat everyone with respect and celebrate with all competitors if they win. During the competition, you must appear knowledgeable, competent, professional, and polite.

#### **Select Your Rabbit**

Choose a rabbit you are used to handling, train them to pose, and know as much about the breed as possible. Practice, practice, practice!! Spend time posing your rabbit at home. Do not choose a rabbit that is hard to carry and does not like to sit still. The rabbit will not be judged – this competition is about you and your knowledge of the breed as well as how thoroughly you examine and handle your rabbit.

#### **Know Your Stuff**

There are many resources online in regards to practice questions. Study as much as possible in advance. Study the ARBA check list on page 28 for the presentation order and point breakdown. Know your breed, class, weight, variety. Ask your teen leader and project leader to go over practice questions before the competition. Does your rabbit have to be a show quality rabbit? No - Will the rabbit be judged? No - Will your vet check and presentation of the rabbit be judged? Yes - How many questions will I be asked? It depends on your age group, how many competitors in your class and the judge.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **SHOWMANSHIP (cont.)**

#### **Competition**

- Hold your rabbit firmly (like a football under your arm) with the rabbit's face behind you. Make sure your rabbit can breathe.
- Stand quietly in your place until the judge calls you forward to set your rabbit on the table.
- Pose your rabbit facing the judge. Once your rabbit is posed, step back away from the table. If your rabbit moves or jumps, stay calm, repose and step back again. NEVER let them see you sweat – remain calm.
- The judge may ask you questions before, during or after you do the vet check on your rabbit. All judges are different.
- Speak through your exam of the rabbit. Make sure to maintain eye contact with the judge and remember to smile.
- Follow the ARBA Showmanship points breakdown on the following page for exam order.
- Pay attention to the last three boxes on the score card. Know how to judge your own rabbit. Speak through this part at the end of your vet check.
- Finally, you will be judged 5 pts possible on your dress, grooming, attitude, eye contact.

# RABBIT STUDY GUIDE



**American Rabbit Breeders Assn.**  
 PO Box 5667, Bloomington, IL 61702  
 309-664-7500 info@ARBA.net

5/4/2011

## Rabbit Showmanship

**General Note to judge:** Judge the contestants actions and knowledge- Do not judge the behavior or condition of the rabbit

Step	Actions	pts	Terms	pts	pts
Carry	Proper support Maintain control	5			5
Pose	Correct pose for breed Introduction- greeting/name, Step back	3	Breed, Compact, Cylindrical, Full Arch Mandolin, Semi-Arch, Commercial	2	5
Ears	Check both ears Read tattoo	3	Mites, Canker, Carriage, Thickness, Color Torn or Missing Portions, Fur Covering	2	5
Turn over	Smooth motion, Proper control Rest weight on table	5			5
Eyes	Properly open eyes Not forcing open	3	Proper Color, Blindness, Wall eye, Moon Eye Weepy Eye or Signs of Conjunctivitis	2	5
Nose	Proper hand position Show both nostrils Check inside legs for nasal discharge	3	Snuffles, Nasal Discharge Foreign Spots or Colors	2	5
Teeth	Proper hand position Show upper and lower incisors	3	Malocclusion, Buck teeth, Wolf Teeth Peg Teeth, Broken Teeth	2	5
Front Feet/ Legs	Check straightness of legs Check toenails, pad & dewclaw Proper thumb position	3	Broken, Extra & Missing Toes Mismatched, White, Missing Toenails Bone Density, Dewclaw, Pads	2	5
Belly	Check under jaw & chest Check abdomen & sides Smooth and complete coverage	3	Abscess, Tumor, Abnormalities Pigeon Breast, Blemishes, Mastitis	2	5
Rear Feet/ Legs	Check straightness of legs Check toenails and hocks Proper thumb position	3	Broken & Missing Toes Mismatched, White, Missing Toenails Bone Density, Straightness, Sore Hocks	2	5
Sex	Proper position of rabbit and hand Expose vent/ penis & testicles	3	Buck/Doe, Vent Disease, Hutch Burn Split Penis, Descended Testicles in Int/ Sr	2	5
Tail	Extend tail, Move side to side Examine underside	3	Wry, Dead, Bobbed, Broken Color, Straightness	2	5
Fur	Return to pose, Smooth motion Proper control, Stroke coat from tail to head to show fur type	3	Density, Texture, Sheen, Luster Rollback, Flyback, Rex, Standing, Wool Undercolor, Ring Color, Surface Color, Molt	2	5
Judging Comments	Final pose, Head, Ears, Shoulder Chest, Midsection, Loin, Hindquarters Rump, Breed specific (markings/color)	10	Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Balance Condition, Finish Did not use word "Nice"!	5	15
Overall Presentation	Show coat/ Apron/ Long sleeves Smile, Hair neat No rings, No dangling jewelry, No gum	5	Humane treatment/ controls animal at all times Good eye contact, Follows directions Thanks judge	5	10
Knowledge			Answers to questions	10	10
Judge			Total Score		100

Comments:

# RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

## TYPE PROFILE OF RABBITS



**SEMI-ARCH TYPE:** This group all carry a very good arch starting back of the shoulders and carrying through to the base of the tail and is referred to as having mandolin type.

Included in this group are American, Beveren, English, Lop, Flemish Giant, and Giant Chinchilla.

This group should be posed with the forelegs and hocks flat on the table for the initial examination. A better evaluation of type may be obtained by allowing some of these animals to move naturally, on the table, after the initial examination.



**COMPACT TYPE:** Most all of these animals are lighter in weight and shorter in length than the commercial breeds.

Included in this group are American Fuzzy Lop, English Angora, Standard Chinchilla, Dutch, Dwarf Hotot, Florida White, Havana, Holland Lop, Jersey Wooly, Lilac, Mini Lop, Mini Rex, Netherland Dwarf, Polish, Silver, Lion Head and Mini Satin.



**FULL ARCH TYPE:** Animals of this type show an arch starting at the nape of the neck, running over the shoulder, mid-section, loin, and hips, to the juncture of the tail. Most all animals will show more depth than width.

Included in this group are Belgian Hare, Britannia Petite, Checkered Giant, English Spot, Rhinelander, and Tan.

Most of this group should be allowed to move naturally after the original examination and will pose up on the front feet and toes.



**COMMERCIAL TYPE:** This group is considered the ideal meat type. They are medium in length with depth equaling width, showing roundness of body and firmness of flesh with very little offal when dressed.

Included in this group are French Angora, Giant Angora, Satin Angora, Champagne d'Argent, Californian, Cinnamon, American Chinchilla, Crème d'Argent, French Lop, Harlequin, Hotot, New Zealand, Palomino, Rex, American Sable, Satin, Silver Fox, and Silver Marten.



**CYLINDRICAL TYPE:** This group has a type that is long, slim, and cylindrical with fine bone and a long slender head.

This group is composed primarily of the Himalayan.

It is posed stretched out as far as possible but with the forelegs and hocks flat on the table. This allows for its length, type, and markings to be shown to their best advantage.

## **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

### **FUR TYPES**

**Angora/Wool.** Wool is long hair (usually 1½ to 5 inches). It may be coarse or silky. The breeds in this category are the Giant Angora, Satin Angora, English Angora, French Angora, Jersey Wooly, and the American Fuzzy Lop.

**Rex.** Rex fur is short (ideally 5/8 inch), plush, dense, springy, and very smooth. It stands up perpendicular to the skin. The breeds in this category are the Rex and Mini Rex.

**Satin.** The hair shell is translucent, allowing light to shine through and giving satin fur a brilliant sheen. The hair shaft is also finer in diameter than on other breeds. The breeds in this category are the Satin, Mini Satin, and Satin Angora.

**Normal.** Normal rabbit fur is anything not described above. All breeds not mentioned fall under this category. Normal fur can be further divided into flyback, rollback, and standing coats. Flyback coats are short and slick. When rubbed against the grain (from tail to head) they snap back into their normal positions. Rollback coats are longer than flybacks and return more slowly to normal position when stroked against the grain. There is only one breed with a standing coat, the Silver Fox. Silver Fox fur is very long and should stand perpendicular to the body when stroked from tail to head.



# **RABBIT STUDY GUIDE**

## **FEED AND EQUIPMENT ID**

For the skills test at 4H Fair, please be familiar with the following items. Research these items online or ask your project leader to show you examples.

### **GROOMING SUPPLIES**

- Nail Clippers
- Hair Comb
- Brush

### **TATTOO SUPPLIES**

- Tattoo Gun
- Wrap
- Ink

### **HUTCH EQUIPMENT**

- Crock
- Water Bottle
- Outside Feeder
- Resting Mat
- Pine Shavings
- Pellet Bedding
- Hay Rack
- Nesting Box
- Natural Paper Bedding

### **FEED**

- Rolled Oats/Oatmeal
- Sunflower Seeds
- Shredded Wheat
- Commercial Pellets
- Salt Lick

### **HAY**

- Alfalfa
- Timothy/Orchard Grass
- Willow Stick



# RABBIT STUDY GUIDE

## RESOURCES

In preparing this guide, I used several sources of information including: **The American Rabbit Breeders Association Official Guide Book - Raising Better Rabbits and Cavies**, **Rabbits for Dummies**, **The Standard of Perfection**, **The Youth Rabbit Project Study Guide** (by Ellyn Eddy), and **Merck Manual**. An additional great resource not included in my guide but which has helped me personally over the past several years is the **Holland Lop Rabbit Specialty Club Official Guidebook** (by Chris Zemny).

I highly recommend working with a knowledgeable breeder, joining ARBA, and joining a specialty club for your rabbit breed (see a list on the ARBA website). An ARBA membership is extremely reasonable and the benefits include a copy of the guidebook, a membership card, and a subscription to Domestic Rabbit Magazine. I have based much of this guide on my personal knowledge and experience raising rabbits. Judge Allen Mesick has taken time before during and after shows to talk to me about my rabbit breed and what areas my rabbit needs improve to compete in my breed class. I have been fortunate to work with experienced breeders like Debra Sandoval from Brocks Fallen Ear's Rabbitry. Thank you for your ongoing love, patience, knowledge and support over the past few years.