Rabbit
4-H Project Newsletter

This Rabbit Project Newsletter contains information specific to the Rabbit Project. Please use it in conjunction with the General 4-H Information Bulletin, so that you are aware of Achievement Day completion requirements as well as general opportunities and information pertaining to all 4-H members. This Project Newsletter, as well as the General 4-H Information Bulletin, will be updated each year, if necessary, based on changes made at the 4-H Nova Scotia Leadership Forum.

Welcome to the 4-H Rabbit Project! This newsletter will give you an overview of the Rabbit project, answer some of your questions concerning expectations of the project and provide you with project ideas and some resources. Project newsletters are an excellent reference to keep on hand to refer to throughout the year. Enjoy your year in the Rabbit project and when working on your project, remember to "Learn to do by Doing." If you have any questions, please contact your Regional Program Coordinator (RPC).

Project Work Requirements

Showmanship is the project work requirement for the Rabbit Project. On Achievement Day, Rabbit members must complete showmanship with their own 4-H registered animal to complete the project work requirement. Please note the dress code for all rabbit showmanship and conformation classes is a white lab coat or white pants and a white long-sleeved shirt. Hard soled boots are encouraged for member's safety. Members can wear sun-safety hats when showing livestock in an outdoor area. The dress code will be enforced at 4-H Nova Scotia shows.

Livestock Registration

4-H members must select their 4-H animals by May 1st of the current 4-H year and must submit livestock registration information to 4-H Nova Scotia by May 15th of the current 4-H year. Livestock Registration will only be accepted through the online Livestock Registration Form; if you need assistance with this form, please contact your RPC directly. Information in this form is necessary to assist with county show/exhibition planning, including judges, class schedules, awards, etc. The following information must be submitted for Livestock Registration requirements: name of member, junior member/senior member, conformation class entered, sex of animal, breed of animal, and date of birth of animal.

4-H animals may be substituted between the registration deadline of May 15th and Achievement Day in the case of injury, sickness, disease or death of the animal. If an animal is to be substituted prior to Achievement Day, pre-approval from the RPC is necessary. A vet certificate may be required. After Achievement Day, no substitutions are permitted. 4-H members who complete their livestock project with their own registered/approved animal on Achievement Day may use another 4-H member's 4-H animal in a showmanship class at county show/exhibition and the 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show.

Conformation Classes

Although conformation is not an Achievement Day requirement, livestock conformation classes are held at county level competitions and 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show. Rabbit Conformation classes are

divided per sex and age of rabbit. Members may exhibit a maximum of three (3) animals per 4-H year. This includes divisions in the 4 Showroom Class category, 6 Showroom Class category, and Pet Class category. See Categories below:

Class #35: 6 Showroom Rabbit:
Junior: (Doe & Buck) – Born December 1st of the previous year to April 10th of the current year.
Senior: (Doe & Buck) – Born before December 1st of the previous year.

Section #1:	Junior Doe
Section #2:	Senior Doe (without Litter)
Section #3:	Junior Buck
Section #4:	Senior Buck

6 Showroom Class Breeds:
The following breeds are rabbits that shall be shown in the 6 Showroom Class Category: American, Giant Angora, Beveren, Blanc de Hotot, Californian, Champagne D'Argent, Checkered Giant, American Chinchilla, Giant Chinchilla, Cinnamon, Creme D'Argent, Flemish Giant, English Lop, French Lop, New Zealand, Palomino, Satin, Silver Fox.

Class #36: 4 Showroom Rabbit:
Junior: (Doe & Buck) – Born February 1st of the current year to April 10th of the current year.
Senior: (Doe & Buck) – Born before Feb 1st of the current year.

Section #1:	Junior Doe
Section #2:	Senior Doe (without Litter)
Section #3:	Junior Buck
Section #4:	Senior Buck

4 Showroom Class Breeds:
The following breeds are rabbits that shall be shown in the 4 Showroom Class Category: American Fuzzy Lop, American Sable, English Angora, French Angora, Satin Angora, Belgian Hare, Britannia Petite, Standard Chinchilla, Dutch, Dwarf Hotot, English Spot, Florida White, Harlequin, Havana, Himalayan, Holland Lop, Jersey Wooly, Lilac, Lionhead, Mini Lop, Mini Rex, Mini Satin, Netherland Dwarf, Polish, Rex, Rhinelander, Silver, Silver Marten, Tan, Thrianta.

Class #37: Pet Rabbit (Doe or Buck)
Pet Rabbit – Born prior to April 10th the current year.

Pet Rabbit Category (Crossbred Rabbits or Neutered/Spayed Purebred Rabbits):
The Pet Rabbit Category is for rabbit members who have a rabbit that is not eligible for competition in the 6 or 4 Showroom Class. Rabbits that may be disqualified in 6 and 4 Showroom Class Categories because of the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) guidelines may be exhibited in the Pet Category. This includes rabbits that are not purebred or have been spayed or neutered. Rabbits exhibited in the Pet Category must be born prior to April 10 of the current year. Members may only enter one (1) rabbit in the Pet Category per year. There will be only one (1) Pet Category Class; bucks and does will be judged together.

Rabbits in the Pet Category will be judged on:
- Condition – Overall body and fur condition including cleanliness.
- Health – Good overall health, alertness, showing no signs of ailments.
- Behaviour/Temperament – Calm, showing no signs of aggression.
- Rabbits in this category will not be judged per ARBA disqualifications.

ARBA Standards of Perfection Book

The American Rabbit Breeders Association Standards of Perfection is a great resource containing the detailed standards for each breed of rabbit. There is a copy available from each 4-H office for reference, and if you'd like to purchase a copy for yourself or your club, visit www.arba.net.

Disqualifications

Members should be aware that rabbits may be disqualified in conformation classes for some of these various problems:

- Ear canker, slobbers, pot belly, vent disease, or abscesses.
- Mangy condition – Flakes resembling dandruff or scale on the skin or at the base of fur. Infestation by mites, fleas, or lice.
- Colds, tumours or abnormal swelling, rupture or hernia, abnormal eye discharge.
- Infected hocks, boils, bad cuts, overweight or underweight, and other signs of ill health.
- Obvious signs of trimming or attempts to mark defects.
- Wrong Classification – Animals entered in the wrong age category or breed category.
- Rabbits in the 6 Showroom Class and 4 Showroom Class may be disqualified for exhibiting a spayed or neutered rabbit (spayed and neutered rabbits should be exhibited in the Pet Category).

These are only some examples. More examples are available in the Standard of Perfection. It would be a good idea to be aware of these to avoid encountering potential problems with your rabbit project.

Feeding Note - Members are reminded that the main food for your rabbits should be pellets and hay. Green feeds (such as green grass or leafy vegetables) can be very dangerous for your rabbit's health and can cause scours or death. If you want to give your rabbit a treat, a small piece of a carrot or apple would be a better choice.

Note: Members are advised to leave junior rabbits with their owner until they reach 8 weeks of age. This is a guideline from the Maritime Rabbit Breeders Association (MRBA).

Cage Guidelines

Please read the list of cage guidelines from the SPCA carefully. The perfect cage should:

- Be structurally sound and in good repair (i.e. no sharp edges or abrasive surfaces in contact with the animal);
- Allow freedom of movement for normal postural changes (i.e. standing up on hind feet, laying down stretched out - both normal rabbit behaviours);
- Be escape proof;
- Allow food and water to be provided so that spillage is not a problem;
- Be easy to clean;
- Allow adequate view of the animal both for exhibit purposes and for general observation to prevent problems (i.e. Rabbits becoming ill, no food or water, heat stressed).

Cage Sizes

The two basic cage sizes for 4-H rabbits at exhibitions are:

Weight Of Rabbit	Size Of Cage
Up to (2 kg) 4.4 lbs.	Minimum: 45 x 45 x 45.5 cm (18" x 18" x 18") high
Over (2 kg) 4.4 lbs.	Minimum: 60 x 60 x 45.5 cm (24" x 24" x 18") high

(45.5 cm (18" height) allows for 5 cm (2") raised floor)

This gives a reasonable standard cage for most of the rabbits exhibited using standard size wire.

- Wire mesh is most practical with the 2.5 x 5 cm (1" x 2") being the largest recommended. The cage bottoms should be set 5 cm (2") off the floor so that a watertight pan can fit under it.
- Most references agreed that 45.5 cm (18") high cage was best to allow standing and stretching, and proper ear carriage for erect eared breeds.
- Woven wire mesh flooring of 16-gauge strength and 1.3 x 2.5 cm (1/2" x 1") dimension may be the most practical and beneficial flooring. It should not be overlooked that there are other possibilities especially as new technology becomes available.

General guidelines for flooring would ensure that a floor surface is:

- Moisture resistant (i.e. not soak up and hold wetness);
- Raise the rabbit above urine and excrement;
- Proven not to cause sore hocks (i.e. some slatted floors may cause sore hocks).

Note: Cages should not be stacked without watertight pans between them. 4-H Nova Scotia requires that all cages have waterproof pans at 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show.

Please note that the National Farm Animal Code of Practice should be followed when housing animals for 4-H events.

These standards can be found at: http://www.nfacc.ca/

Contagious/Infectious Disease & Quarantine:

4-H members, leaders, parents and livestock owners are reminded that 4-H Achievement Days and shows are showcases for the 4-H program, and the agricultural industry in this province. They are reminded that infectious diseases can be transmitted during transport, as well as at the show. As such, it is strongly recommended for the protection of the public, participants, and the animals at the show, that animals having or showing signs of infectious diseases not be brought to shows. As well, livestock exhibitors and owners must understand that in attending 4-H Shows, there is a risk of their animal contracting disease regardless of the best efforts of all involved.

If you suspect that your animal has a contagious/infectious disease, please contact your local veterinarian immediately and learn more about the consequences, treatment, and transmission of the disease.

The brochure, "Fact Sheet: Animal Health and Safety Best Practices" are available. If you wish to receive a copy by mail or email, please contact your Regional Program Coordinator. It contains important information for all livestock members on this topic and will be critical to review with 4-H Clubs, livestock owners, and your local veterinarian when making decisions about attending 4-H Achievement Days and shows.

Livestock Insurance

4-H Insurance does not cover project animals. Insurance coverage for animal liability, injury or death is the animal owner's responsibility.

Activity Involving Animals	
Involving Animals refers to activities in which members are working directly with animals or in a location with animals.	**High-risk Activity** The nature of the activity or the presence of hazards pose a foreseeable risk of harm, illness, or injury to participants.

(Examples: Livestock members training, fitting and showing, clubs hosting livestock shows or petting farms, groups visiting fairs, farm tours.)	

Risk Management Strategies

Safety information and recommendations contained in this safety checklist are believed to reflect best practice to reduce risk. The suggested risk management strategies are considered minimum standards for livestock handling.

Training and Preparation

- ☐ All youth members and their parents/guardians are informed of potential risks involved in the activity, as well as the safety rules and procedures.
- ☐ Instruction on safety precautions is received from a trained leader or an experienced instructor who is capable of demonstrating the skills and safety precautions.
- ☐ Animal behavior and handling techniques are reviewed by a trained leader or an experienced instructor who is capable of explaining animal behavior and handling techniques.
- ☐ All sessions are conducted in a safe environment.
- ☐ Safety rules and procedures are learned prior to participation.
- ☐ Skills/movements are learned in proper progression.
- ☐ All youth members and their parents/guardians are informed of the equipment/clothing required for the activity.
- ☐ Emergency contact and medical information for all participants will be on hand throughout the event, as well as dedicated phones for emergencies.
- ☐ A first aid kit will be available.

Supervision

- ☐ Adheres to Youth Safety Supervision Policy, Rule of Two and Supervision Ratios.
- ☐ Safety rules and procedures are enforced throughout the activity.
- ☐ Emergency action plan is in place to deal with accidents/injuries.

Facility

- ☐ Respect biosecurity protocols of the facility.
- ☐ Ensure activity area is free of hazards/debris.
- ☐ Proper lighting and ventilation, when applicable.
- ☐ Safety rules/regulations are posted/reviewed prior to the activity.
- ☐ Indoor facility has a clearly marked emergency exit.
- ☐ Animals should be worked with in an enclosed space, with proper safety exits, such as an arena or pen to prevent animals from getting loose.
- ☐ When in a public venue, use gates and signage to separate the public traffic flow from animal movement.
- ☐ When in a public venue have signage regarding handwashing and touching animals.
- ☐ Animals should be safely and securely tied or caged when not being handled according to animal welfare standards to keep animals and people safe.
- ☐ Animals should have access to food and water according to animal welfare standards.
- ☐ Handwashing stations to be available for members and the public after handling animals.

Animals

- ❑ Ensure animals are healthy and suitable for use in the activity.
- ❑ Where applicable, follow all animal transportation regulations.
- ❑ Where applicable, ensure animals are tagged properly.
- ❑ Where applicable follow quarantine recommendations after an event.
- ❑ Ensure animal owners are aware of their responsibility to have insurance coverage for their animals, 4-H Canada holds no insurance coverage for animals.

Equipment

- ☐ Equipment to be used is suitable and in good condition.
- ☐ Equipment should be cleaned and sanitized following best practices.
- ☐ Equipment is checked by a qualified person before every session.
- ☐ Halters and collars to be properly fitted to ensure good control and animal comfort.

☐ Instructions are given regarding the proper use and maintenance of equipment. ☐ Leaders check to ensure that each youth has the required materials prior to participation. ☐ Leaders ensure that there is a First aid kit and a designated emergency phone are available
Clothing/Footwear ☐ Appropriate and properly fitted footwear is worn. For example, steel toed boots are recommended for large livestock. ☐ Appropriate clothing is worn. For example: Helmets are recommended for horseback riding.
Inclusion ☐ The activity is suitable to all participating youth member's age, ability, mental condition, and physical condition.