

**Raising Rabbits as an SAE
Handbook**

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PREFACE

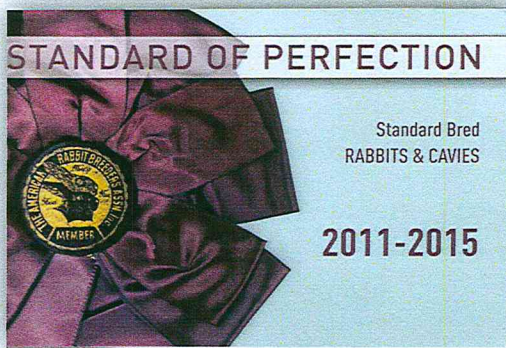
Generally speaking, rabbit projects at the local chapter level tend to be overlooked quite often due to the “simplicity” and size of these projects. When I first started teaching my first goal was to turn the rabbit barn which housed 2 projects in to a tool shed. I didn’t care for rabbit projects and did not see many benefits compared to the larger livestock projects. To make a long story short, the outgoing parent asked to help when his daughter left to ensure I knew what I was doing. I had no choice but to continue the rabbit program. Shortly thereafter, I began learning about rabbits, added structure to the rabbit projects, and grew our rabbit program to more than thirty strong members. We began winning Best in Shows and champion rabbits were not uncommon. Our school became known as the rabbit school, pride developed, and the program continued to snowball because of the success being made. The rabbit program is treated exactly the same as the larger animal projects and this packet will serve as a tool you may use to establish your own program at your local high school. You will be informed on the “do’s and don’ts” and learn the basics of raising rabbits, at the same time adding structure to your program. Raising rabbits is a lower financial obligation to the students and may be less work. However; if I student is to do this project well, there are many aspects to this project that should be addressed. This packet is designed to give to any rabbit student. Feel free to use this in your program.

Rabbit Project

Raising a rabbit may seem like an easy project, but even easy can be tough to handle. There is a lot of responsibility that is needed to be put into this project. You don't just throw a carrot into your rabbit's cage and think you're done for the day. Your rabbit will be depending on you for its well-being.

Selecting a Breed

There are many things one should take into consideration when selecting a breed of rabbit, such as the size of rabbit and how competitive you are willing to be. You don't necessarily have to pick a small breed of rabbit, but whatever size of rabbit you get, you have to feel comfortable handling it. Some of the popular small breeds include the Netherland Dwarf, Holland Lop, Mini Rex, and Dutch. But, whichever breed you choose, there will be competition. If you decide to choose one of the more popular breeds, then you must understand the specific standards of that breed in order to do well at a show. If you choose a Holland Lop, for example, they have many features to be judged. Because the breed is so competitive, there's a less likely chance to win first place at every table when there are many rabbits with better qualities. What you have to decide is if you want to compete against only 3 rabbits or 30. If you choose a less popular breed, you might have a higher chance of winning that breed, but perhaps not the Best in Show. However, you could choose a popular breed and hope to gain quality rabbits from learning what judges look for. Your interest in the breed of rabbit is most important. If you are not interested in the breed in the beginning, then you may not be interested later.



Buying a Rabbit

Just because you might think the rabbit you want is cute, that doesn't mean it is show quality. Getting to know your breed of rabbit is very helpful when you are buying, especially if you don't know "show quality" from pet quality. Begin by knowing the breed's standards, which can be located in the Standard of Perfection book. This book can be purchased online or at a rabbit show. If you still don't feel confident in picking out a rabbit by yourself, ask an experienced breeder if they wouldn't mind helping you. If you

see a rabbit being sold for below \$20, the rabbit could be pet quality – or in other words, have too many faults to be a show rabbit. But be cautious, even though a rabbit has a high price of \$75, it doesn't mean it is the best rabbit out there. For your first rabbit, the best price range would be from \$30 to \$60. As you become more familiar with the breed of rabbit, you will be able to figure out if the quality of the rabbit is really worth the price before you buy it. See the more detailed page to help you with purchasing your rabbit.

Cost

When you have bought your rabbit, you'll need some rabbit supplies. The supplies include: a cage, water or feed bowl, water bottle, nail clippers, grooming brush, feed, the Standard of Perfection book, bedding, and anything else you might find for your rabbit. With a rabbit project, you won't make much money. With multiple rabbits; You may be constantly buying new supplies. There will be more loss than profit with a rabbit project.

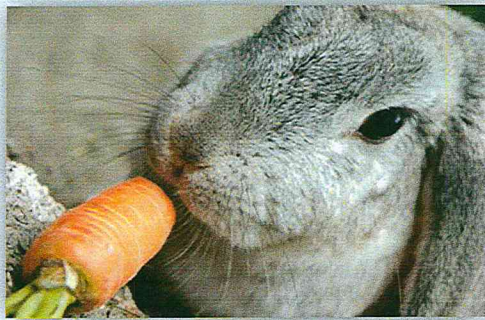
Record Keeping

When you get your rabbit project, always make sure to keep track of all expenses and hours you put into the project. Keep receipts in a safe place and write the amount of time you spent with you rabbit project each day. You can keep your project information in the FFA Record Book Journal. Don't avoid recording your hours and expenses in your record book for too long because what may seem like not much work to do, really is a lot of work if you choose to do it at the last minute.

Rabbit	\$30+
Water Bottle	\$3+
Feed or Water Bowl	\$2+
Cage	\$30+
Feed	\$10+ per bag
Grooming Brush	\$6+
Nail Clippers	\$5+
Cage Bedding	\$5+ per bag
Standard of Perfection	\$15-20
Rabbit Shows	\$3-6 per rabbit depending on show

Climate

Taking care of rabbits is a big responsibility. Rabbits need to be in an environment they are comfortable with. They won't be comfortable in an extremely warm or freezing climate. Though rabbits thrive in cool weather, they should not be near drafts. Some people keep their rabbits in an air conditioned room around 60 to 70 degrees. Temperatures above 80 degrees might cause rabbits to overheat. In addition to the air conditioner, during warmer weather, you should give them frozen water bottles to help keep the rabbits cooler.



Feed

Some rabbit's digestive systems are more sensitive than others, so what you give your rabbit to eat is very important. Not every rabbit is going to eat vegetables. I consider vegetables a treat, but I rarely give my rabbits treats, with the exception of dried papayas made for rabbits. When rabbits eat food they aren't used to, it may upset their stomachs and cause a mess in their cage and perhaps on themselves as well. So, avoid giving your rabbits treats every day, such as vegetables, fruit, and snacks found at a pet store. Try to limit giving your rabbit those treats to once a week. If you want to give your rabbit an everyday treat, give them some Western Timothy Hay, which has a lot of nutrients. When picking out a feed for your rabbit, make sure it's healthy and that it does not have any extra food substances such as seeds, nuts, dried fruit, rolled corn, or any bright colored objects. The feed should be just pellets. Remember, you are feeding a show rabbit, not a pet rabbit. Therefore; the best feeds to choose from would be Templeton Show Rabbit feed and Purina Show Rabbit. Templeton feed is generally only sold at the mill so you may need to drive to pick up the bags. Purina Show Rabbit

is easier to find and is still a very good feed. You should always make sure the feed you give your rabbit is fresh. Make sure any bags of feed, hay, or snacks are sealed tightly to lock out air. The feed can become stale faster and will no longer be ok for your rabbit to eat. If your rabbit isn't eating or drinking its water, check to see if their feed is fresh and their water is clean. Once you clean their feed bowls and water bottles/bowls, replace their feed with fresh hay for a few days.



Cleaning

A rabbit's cage should be cleaned every day. If the rabbit is living in a messy cage, it could get sick. The tray under the cage should be cleaned every one to two days depending on how often the tray is filled up. If the cage isn't being cleaned, the strong smell of the ammonia will build up and interfere with their respiratory system, and could cause Pasteurella and other diseases. A rabbit is only as healthy as its living environment.



Everyday Tasks

There is a lot of time that goes into taking care of a rabbit. To help make things easier, make a schedule of tasks to complete each day. You need to feed and give water to your rabbit daily. A rabbit must be checked over every day, which includes: brushing, clipping nails, and looking for any abscesses, cuts, colds, or any other abnormality. You must also make sure the cage and anything else in the cage, such as a water bottle, a feed bowl, or even a chew toy, is clean. Additionally, your rabbit needs to be worked with every day. You must train your rabbit to pose properly. The rabbit must learn to be comfortable with being handled, as well as you being comfortable with handling your rabbit.

Showmanship

Along with working with your rabbit, you must learn the process of showmanship. Rabbit showmanship consists of how well you are able to handle your rabbit and your knowledge on rabbits. You need to know all about the breed of rabbit you have. General knowledge of rabbits, such as diseases and disqualifications, is also helpful when being asked questions. As a rabbit

owner, you should not have any excuse for not knowing about your rabbit. Rabbit showmanship practices will be held to benefit your rabbit showing capabilities. Although you will receive help, the showmanship routine is your responsibility to master (A self-help rabbit showmanship DVD from Highland High School is available for \$12). However, if you do not participate in the showmanship practices, you might not be as well prepared as the other competitors. Being able to handle your rabbit well will benefit your score for showmanship. See the attached score card that is used at many of the showmanship contests.



Rabbit Shows

Rabbit shows are where you will go to have your rabbit judged on its quality. As a Highland High School FFA member, students are required to attend at least four shows per year. The Fair will not count as one of those four. For your rabbit to attend the show, you must email or mail in your show entry. You can find a list of upcoming shows on www.arba.net. There are many different show types. You can enter in a single, double, triple, or even a specialty show. When preparing for a show, make a checklist of what you need to bring. This checklist can



include: getting rabbit travel cages ready, packing extra feed, water bottles and bowls, chairs, a table to put your rabbit cages on, ice bottles, nail clippers, brushes, any other grooming supplies, and your rabbit show entry form for verification. When you get to the show, you must first check in. Next you can set up your equipment. Then you should find out which tables your rabbit will be judged on. Make sure to be aware of when your rabbit will be judged, for some tables will quickly announce which rabbits are judged next. Not all show orders will be correct; the judges can choose which rabbit breeds to judge. During the judging of your rabbit, always listen to what the judge is saying, for not every comment will be documented on the show card – some shows will not even have show cards. You can write down the comments on a separate paper. If you don't understand what some of the terms on the show card mean, ask someone at the show if they wouldn't mind explaining the terms or you can refer back to Standards of Perfection. In the shows, you will be competing against other breeders and their rabbits, so don't expect to win Best in Show during your first rabbit show. Rabbit shows are very competitive. If your rabbit does not consistently place well on the show table, it may be that the rabbit needs time to grow into its features, or the rabbit simply isn't the best quality rabbit. Keep in mind some rabbit breeders have had many years of experience to establish good quality rabbits. Also, different judges might not have the same opinion. Your rabbit could be first place at one table, and last at another.

Breeding

Breeding rabbits isn't as easy as it sounds. If you want to breed your rabbits just for the fun of having the new born babies, then you shouldn't breed them. There can be serious problems that occur during the breeding process, and if you're not ready to handle it, then you should wait until you are ready. You have to be prepared for the worst to happen. Usually a female rabbit will lose her first litter. The babies, or kits, could be born dead or underdeveloped. Underdeveloped rabbits might only live for a few days. A fetal giant could also appear. If a rabbit is only carrying a couple of kits, then one of the kits could be stealing all of the nutrition, causing it to be much bigger than the others. One student's rabbits had a fetal giant that was coming out feet first. To make things worse, there



was another baby wrapped around the fetal giant's head. There was no way to save either of the babies or the mother. The other rabbit with a fetal giant was lucky enough to be saved, but the procedure was very expensive and her babies didn't survive. When a rabbit's litter happens to survive, you must make sure the mother is feeding them. If she isn't feeding her kits daily, then you may have to foster them to another mother. Some rabbits don't have great motherly instincts. As the kits grow, you will need to observe the quality of them. Some breeders may cull, or remove, the rabbits that aren't going to be show quality or they sell them as pets. If the rabbits you are breeding are continually having bad quality rabbits, then you should stop breeding them or find rabbits that will complement each other's faults.

Cage Systems



There are a couple different types of cages you may want to consider, depending on your budget and environment. If you would like a permanent system set up, the Rabbit Tech system is a great idea. The urine and fecal material slides down the drain where the solids and urine are separated. This reduces the need for purchasing shavings and pulling out trays to clean up the mess, as in the stackable cage system. However; the stackable



system is less expensive, can be moved and reconfigured easier, yet still sturdy to house the animals. Additionally, there are several sizes of cages which should be considered depending on the breed of rabbit you purchase. There are several companies which specialize in rabbit equipment but the best company to purchase these cages and other rabbit supplies is KW Cages. They accept purchase orders and you can order online. If you do not want to pay for shipping costs, they may be able to bring your order to a rabbit show for you to pick up there.

School Farm Expectations

Every student will sign in using their pink record sheet and they will do their daily health checks. Every student will be given a thermometer in the case they need to take temperature readings. The student will also stamp the time clock when they arrive and when they leave. Barn duty will be assigned where one student keeps the barn clean for one week at a time. The responsibilities for the barn duty are posted in the barn. Due to the fact rabbit feed is so expensive and takes several months for one rabbit to finish a bag of feed, the student will pay \$5 per month to house the rabbit at the school. In return, they are provided the feed and medications.

Other items needed

- Cages,
- Ivomectrin
- Stethoscope
- Penicillin
- Opticlear eyewash
- Blood-stop powder
- Nail clippers
- Terramycin
- 1cc syringes
- 25x5/8" needles
- Teeth trimmers
- Thermometer
- Pet Skope
- Blue Kote
- Powder probiotics
- Tabletop Scale

All of these items can be purchased at KW cages, as mentioned previously.

Steps To Buying Your Rabbit

1. Will you be committed to your rabbit project? _____
2. Pick a rabbit breed that interests you.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - Breed of choice: _____
3. When buying a rabbit, look for:
 - Broken nails
 - Crooked or chipped teeth; malocclusion
 - Sore hocks
 - Abscesses, scabs, etc.
 - Discharge from eyes or nose
 - Over/underweight
4. Ask the rabbit breeder questions:
 - Do you have any rabbits for sale?
 - How much is the rabbit? _____
 - Does the rabbit have a pedigree? (pet quality rabbits may be under \$25 depending on the breed and quality, and they may not have a pedigree)
 - How old is the rabbit? _____
 - Buck (male): _____ Doe (female): _____
 - How is the rabbit handled? (posing and flipping over)
 - What is the rabbit fed? _____
 - How much is it fed? _____
 - When is it fed? _____
 - If you have any questions, ask the breeder if it is ok to contact them. If so, get their information.
 - Breeder's name: _____
 - Breeder's number: _____
 - Breeder's email: _____
5. Before purchasing your rabbit, ask the breeder if you can take the rabbit to a judge to be looked at.
6. Congratulations, you have bought a rabbit!

Things To Buy For Your Rabbit

- Standard of Perfection
- ARBA membership
- Travel cage
- If you are keeping your rabbit at home, we will help you find a cage suitable for your breed of rabbit
- Grooming brush
- Nail clippers
- Water bottle or crock (bowl)
- Feed bowl
- Rabbit feed
- A piece of carpet to work with your rabbit on

Highland High School FFA Record Sheet

Name: _____

Date	Time In/Out		Clean Pen/Alley		Walk	Feed	Weight	Notes

Date	Eyes	Nose	Ears	Skin	Respiratory	Temp	Medicine

Ag.
Instructor: _____

2011 KCRBA - Rabbit Showmanship

ID #: _____

Division: _____

		Poss. Pts.	Minus Pts.	Total Pts.
1	Carrying rabbit to judge's table	3		
2	Setting up in a posed position and grooming coat	3		
3	Show & tell ear number to judge with left ear facing judge	3		
4	Check ears	3		
5	Check for blemishes on back, check belly for ruptures	3		
6	Check tail for carriage and straightness	1.5		
7	Turn over rabbit	8		
8	Check eyes	3		
9	Check nose	3		
10	Check teeth	3		
11	Check dewlap and belly	3		
12	Check front legs for straightness	3		
13	Check front toenails and footpads	3		
14	Check hind legs for straightness	3		
15	Check back toenails and footpads	3		
16	Check sex; Show and tell judge (check testicles, if buck)	3		
17	Check tail for any broken bones	3		
18	Return rabbit to natural position	3		
19	Check tail for carriage and straightness	1.5		
20	Check fur for texture and density	3		
21	Pose and groom rabbit - Left ear facing judge	3		
22	Cleanliness and condition of rabbit	3		
23	Ability to handle rabbit	8		
24	Smoothness of routine	8		
25	Questions from judge	8		
26	Showman: Neatly dressed, clean and well-groomed	8		
Total		100		

HHS FARM TICKET

The student has completed all of the requirements to gain access to the housing of the animals on the school farm. A business agreement has been signed by the student and the instructor, a budget has been completed in the record book, and a signed Fair Packet form is on file with the advisor.

Teacher Signature _____

Date _____

Student Print _____

Date _____

Student Signature _____

Date _____

Breach of Contract Referral

Name of Student _____

Date of Breach of Contract: _____

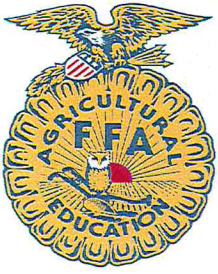
Strike Warning 1 2 3 _____

Description of Breach of Contract

Recommended Action and/or Action Taken

Student Signature _____

Ag Instructor Signature _____



HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL AGRICULTURE DEPT.

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BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA
93306-2899

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FAX (661) 871-6052
www.khsd.k12.ca.us/highland



Donald E. Carter, Ed.D.

HOME VISIT REPORT

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Project Location: _____ Phone: _____

Project: _____ Project Type: _____

Purpose of Visit: _____

Current Feeding Program: _____

Project Weight: _____ Goal Weight: _____

Record Book Check _____ Up-to-date: _____

General Comments / Recommendations:

Date	Animal Treated	Medication	Amount Given	Withdrawal	Withdrawal end Date	Responsible Person

Student Signature: _____

Instructor Signature: _____

Est. Date of Next Visit _____

Parent Signature: _____