

Rabbit Showmanship Guidebook

A Senior Project  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Bachelor of Science

By  
© Mitchell Liwanag

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**Introduction:** Every year 4-H, FFA, and Independent exhibitors compete in rabbit showmanship at hundreds of county and state fairs as well as rabbit shows. It is the author's opinion with the proper guidance, showmanship can be simple and easy to learn. However, without the help of someone knowledgeable, showmanship is complicated. By creating a showmanship guide new leaders and exhibitors will have a better understanding of rabbit showmanship and be more competitive at shows.

This guidebook was created in hopes of building a foundation and having all resources included for leaders and exhibitors to use when learning and teaching showmanship. This guidebook will help better the quality of participants and overall knowledge of the contest with both leaders and exhibitors. It will be made available online to 4-H and FFA programs.

### **Background:**

Showmanship is an important skill that can be used to teach youth about their animals and the judging process (ARBA, 2107). The American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) is an organization dedicated to the promotion, development, and improvement of the domestic rabbit and cavy. With over 23,000 members throughout the United States, Canada, and abroad, the association continues to grow (ARBA 2017).

The only resource ARBA offers directly for showmanship is the official score sheet (ARBA 2017). The scoresheet shows the steps and are the basics of what the rabbit the exhibitor needs to cover as well as key words to share as prompted. The scorecard also shows the breakdown of points per step (ARBA, 2011). Judges are all expected to use the Standard of Perfection while judging showmanship. Exhibitors are also expected to be familiar with it. The Standard of Perfection has the breed standards for all recognized breeds of rabbits as well as other information including: a glossary of terms and diseases, fur types, body types and eye color (Standard, 2016).

Texas 4-H has guidelines available online regarding showmanship and how to perform it (Guidelines, 2016). However, the author feels information is missing and is basically a summary of the ARBA scorecard. Ohio 4-H has information about showmanship, handling, and care of the rabbit. However, the author feels the information is inaccurate and does not explain how to complete each step. No pictures are involved in Ohio's materials (Ohio 4-H, 2017).

Randy Shumaker is currently the ARBA Vice President and travels across the country judging rabbits and rabbit showmanship. Randy's knowledge of showmanship variations throughout the country will be vital in ensuring the guidebook is as accurate as possible. Keelyn Hanlon is currently an ARBA judge and mentor of many youth. Hanlon herself showed rabbits across the country, competing and winning showmanship at both the state and national level. Tom Berger is the head of the ARBA Youth Committee. His knowledge of the youth of ARBA and programs offered can be utilized. He also will be able to direct the author to anyone else he feels will be of help in the making of the showmanship guidebook. These three judges are known throughout the country for their participation with youth and youth events.

**Methods:**

The first step in creating the guidebook is to gather the American Rabbit Breeders Association showmanship scorecard.

Next interview multiple showmanship judges on what they think is the greatest challenge participants face while participating in showmanship. Each U.S. region bases its showmanship scorecard on the ARBA standard, however each region has a different way of executing each step. When interviewing judges, select judges that are in the same region for consistency.

Use this information to form the focus of the guidebook. After judge input, setup and photograph each step of showmanship as outlined by ARBA. Use a plain background and lock the focus of each picture (Kodak, 2017). Next using a program such as InDesign or Microsoft Word, create the guidebook, including pictures of each step, the reasons behind each step, sample questions, and tips from the judges that were interviewed.

**Results:**

A guidebook was created that outlined and explains the steps of showmanship. The guidebook was created in a Google Document for easier viewing while editing and sharing. The guidebook should be downloaded into a PDF document and printed out so that it can be bound or shared online however the owner of the guidebook wishes. The guidebook includes sample showmanship questions as well as pictures of each step so that anyone reading will be able to teach themselves how to perform each step. The ARBA showmanship scorecard was used heavily to ensure each step was completed and explained correctly. Information on proper handling of rabbits was also included in the guidebook since it is crucial for the safety of the handlers and rabbits. After reading the guidebook, readers should have an understanding of showmanship and the reason for doing each step.

**Conclusion:**

Rabbit showmanship is constantly evolving. Therefore, the ARBA Youth Committee should keep this guidebook up to date and look to revise any of it every three years so future participants can have access to the most up to date and correct information.

If this project were to be repeated, interviews and research should be done with judges throughout all regions of the country so the guidebook can better represent a nationwide view of rabbit showmanship, as well as identify the regional differences in the routine.

The author of the guidebook included personal advice on what helped him be competitive in showmanship and included pictures of himself performing showmanship. The author included pictures of steps being performed in different ways so that the readers of the guidebook can pick which method of performing certain steps they prefer and can use to refine their rabbit showmanship routine. In doing so, the author met all objectives of developing a rabbit showmanship guide.

## Citations

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