

Alabama Cooperative Extension System

# Rabbit & Cavy

Showmanship  
Guide





**4HYD-2326**

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## Overview

Showmanship is your opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and ability to present rabbits and cavy to their best advantage. Your confidence and ability and the rabbit's or cavy's response are indicators of the knowledge and skills gained in handling. Not only does showmanship build the life skill of self-confidence, but it also can be a method to determine your ability to properly select and identify quality animals. Even if working with only a single animal, you should be capable of discussing and identifying defects and disqualifications as well as breed and variety characteristics.

The Alabama 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Showmanship procedure is explained step-by-step along with what you will do and what the judge will be evaluating. Follow these steps as though you are examining the rabbit or cavy by yourself.

**The order is not as important as a smooth, organized flow of presentation.**

Rabbit and cavy showmanship should be performed individually or with two participants at a time.



### A Note about Judging

Before the contest, judges should read the material thoroughly to ensure that their judging will support the work of the leaders who have taught their youth based on recommended procedures available to everyone. If the participant is young or new to the rabbit/cavy project, the judge may have to offer prompts. Extra points may be given for thorough knowledge, or points may be deducted for missed areas or incorrect reasons.



## Selecting & Training a Rabbit or Cavy

When selecting a rabbit or cavy for showmanship, you should check over the animal thoroughly. It should be free of diseases, parasites, and disqualifications. Review the standard for your preferred breed before making a purchase.

Work with your rabbit or cavy daily. Showmanship teaches you to train and handle your animal with both skill and confidence. The fact that an animal is not comfortable working with you may indicate that the animal has not been worked with for a long period of time. This can also be an indication that you should have selected an animal with a personality better suited to handling for showmanship.

Rabbits and cavies should be handled in two specific areas—carrying and posing on a table. Equipment needed includes a table, a piece of carpet (or carpet sample), and a wire transport cage. Choose a carpet color that will accent the color of your rabbit or cavy rather than hide it. Grooming is a good way to train your animal to stay in the proper show position for its breed. While this teaches your animal to stay in position, avoid using treats as you can create an expectation of a food reward at the wrong time. If you are right handed, face the animal to your left. If you are left handed, face the animal to your right. This helps in picking up the animal. The most important thing in training is for the animal to stay still during showmanship.

Grooming before a show starts 6 weeks beforehand. If you are working outside, groom in the cooler parts of the day to keep the animal comfortable. Using wet hands, rub through the fur until it is evenly damp from head to tail. Stroke the rabbit from head to tail several times to remove dead fur. You can use a brush with soft bristles to help remove dead fur. Perform this grooming for about a week. Next, perform the same procedure but without dampening the fur. Continue grooming until the show to ensure that the coat remains in good condition. A couple of days before the show, trim the animal's toenails.



Choose a carpet color that will accent the color of your rabbit or cavy rather than hide it.

## Participant Knowledge

Regardless of the species exhibited, you may choose to give an oral description of the examination and what you are looking for in each step, or you may give a silent examination with an extended question-and-answer period. You should give quick, confident, and correct responses to questions asked by the judge about your animal. Questions might cover such topics as the breed handled, rabbit care and health, breeding, equipment, variety characteristics, and disqualifications. This information can be found in the current *ARBA Standard of Perfection*, the *ARBA Domestic Rabbit Guide*, and the *ARBA Official Guidebook to Raising Better Rabbits and Cavies*, all of which should be used to prepare for the showmanship competition. You may want to contact your local breeder for more information.

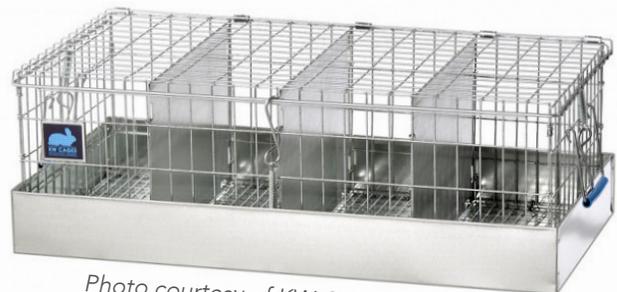


Photo courtesy of KW Cages.

## Rabbit Showmanship

Step		Procedure
1.	<b>Carry rabbit to judging table and pose it.</b>	<p>Rabbit carry: To properly carry a rabbit, tuck the head under one arm and support the rabbit's weight by placing the other hand under the rump. One hand supports the weight of the rabbit, while the other hand controls the rabbit. You may keep a firm grip since a rabbit dropped from this position can easily break its back. You may want to remove your hand when you feel confident about being in control. Carry your carpet sample in the other hand. Show the judge all four sides of yourself (four-point turn) before setting down the carpet and rabbit. Wait for the judge to tell you to set your rabbit down.</p> <p>Rabbit pose: For proper pose, front feet should be even with the eyes. Rear feet should be firmly on table with toes even with haunch (thigh joint) and with tail up.</p>
2.	<b>Check ears.</b>	Check the ears for ear mites, proper tattoo (tattoo should be in rabbit's left ear), torn or missing portions of ears that distract from general appearance, proper ear carriage, and tattoo obliterated by ink making it unreadable.
3.	<b>Turn rabbit over.</b>	Properly turn the rabbit over, supporting the rabbit on the table or against your body. The rabbit will remain in this position from steps 4 through 11.
4.	<b>Check teeth.</b>	With your hand over the area of the eyes, place a thumb and index finger on each side of the split lip and push back lips to expose teeth. You are checking for tooth defects such as malocclusion or simple malocclusion, broken or missing teeth.
5.	<b>Check eyes.</b>	Check each eye for signs of blindness or abnormalities. You are checking for walleye, moon eye, unmatched eyes, spots or specks in iris or on cornea, off-colored eyes, abnormal eye discharge, or marbling.
6.	<b>Check nose.</b>	Check nose for white nasal discharge as evidence of a cold.
7.	<b>Check toenails on all feet.</b>	Check toenails by pushing your thumb into the center of the paw. Push back fur with index finger if necessary to see toenails. Don't forget the dew claws. You are checking for missing toenails, unmatched toenails, and proper toenail color.
8.	<b>Check hocks and front feet.</b>	Check the bottom of the hind feet for sore hocks and the bottom of front feet for sores. You are checking for sore, infected, or bleeding areas.

9.	<b>Check legs.</b>	Extend front legs to check for straightness. Run index finger and thumb the length of each front leg. Extend rear legs out straight by placing your cupped hand ahead of the rear legs and pushing toward the feet. Legs should not be bent, bowed, deformed, or cow-hocked.
10.	<b>Check body for ruptures and abscess.</b>	Run your hand over the chest and abdominal area to check for any abscess, tumors, or abnormalities. Ruptures may appear as lumps or large bumps under the skin, normally in the belly area.
11.	<b>Check sex.</b>	Check for the sex of the animal. Place thumb below vent area and push toward front of rabbit with index finger. You are also checking for signs of vent disease (as indicated by a scabby, reddened sex organ), split penis, and descended testicles. All male animals in the regular showroom classes must show two normally descended testicles at the time of judging.
12.	<b>Check tail.</b>	Restore the rabbit to its posed position. Check to determine if tail is straight. Disqualifications are a tail permanently set to either side or permanently out of line, a screw tail, or a bobtail.
13.	<b>Check fur.</b>	Check the fur for foreign-colored spots. Check surface color and under-color and/or ring color by stroking fur forward or blowing into fur over the entire body. Wrong under-color, color other than called for in the breed standard, and white hairs in a colored section are disqualifications.
14.	<b>Fur quality and cleanliness.</b>	Stroke fur toward rabbit's head to show fur going back into natural position, either flyback or rollback. Check density of both standing and upright fur, such as Rex and Mini Rex, by patting and blowing into several areas. Some woolled breeds should be felt and blown into to check density. Stroke rabbit from head to rear for a molt condition. Check for stains on fur.
15.	<b>Pose rabbit for evaluation of overall balance.</b>	Pose the rabbit for evaluation of overall balance. Check front, rear, and side views for overall balance. Locate each of the following with your hand: shoulders, rib spread, and fullness of loin. Check hindquarters for fullness by stretching your hand across width and depth of the rump. Check hips for smoothness and fullness by running your hand over the top of the hip to the tail.

## Cavy Procedure

Step		Procedure
1.	<b>Carry cavy to judging table and pose it.</b>	<p>Cavy carry: Slip one hand under the cavy and allow the cavy to rest on the forearm pointed toward the elbow. The other hand should go on top of the cavy for control. Carry the carpet sample in the lower hand.</p> <p>Show the judge all four sides of yourself (four-point turn) before setting down the carpet and cavy. Wait for the judge to tell you to set your cavy down. If the judge asks you to move to a different spot on the table, always pick up the animal for carrying before moving to a new location.</p> <p>Cavy pose: Pose the cavy with the front legs directly beneath the shoulders and the hind legs under the hips, with the feet tucked under.</p>
2.	<b>Examine crown.</b>	Check the hairs in the crown for any foreign hair colors
3.	<b>Check ears.</b>	Check the ears for ear mites, ear tag, torn or missing portions of ears that distract from general appearance, and proper ear carriage. Also examine the hairs behind the ears for incorrect hair color or evidence of external parasites.
4.	<b>Check eyes.</b>	Check each eye for signs of blindness or abnormalities, unmatched eyes, spots or specks in iris or on cornea, off-colored eyes, or abnormal eye discharge.
5.	<b>Check body for ruptures and abscesses.</b>	Check under the throat and the abdominal area for lumps or abscesses.
6.	<b>Turn cavy over.</b>	Properly turn the cavy over, supporting the weight of the cavy's front end using your hand. The cavy will remain in this position from steps 7 through 14.
7.	<b>Check nose.</b>	Check nose for signs of a cold. Check inside of front legs for nasal discharge.
8.	<b>Check teeth.</b>	Place your thumb and index finger on each side of the lip and push back lips to expose teeth. You are checking for tooth defects and broken or missing teeth.
9.	<b>Check neck.</b>	Check the neck for foreign hair colors.
10.	<b>Check front legs</b>	Extend front legs to check for straightness. Run index finger and thumb the length of each front leg.
11.	<b>Check front toenails.</b>	Check each foot for extra toes, missing toenails, and correct toenail color.

12.	<b>Check belly.</b>	Check the belly for foreign hair colors.
13.	<b>Check back legs and toenails.</b>	Extend rear legs out straight by placing your cupped hand ahead of the rear legs and pushing toward the feet. Check for extra toes, missing toenails, and correct toenail color.
14.	<b>Check sex.</b>	Check for the sex of the cavy. Place thumb below vent area and push toward front of cavy with index finger. You are also checking for signs of disease.
15.	<b>Turn cavy over and pose.</b>	Restore the cavy to its posed position.
16.	<b>Check hair color.</b>	Examine the hair color and length of hair on the back and sides of the cavy. Flip the hair up to see length. Examine shafts near the rear for signs of external parasites.
17.	<b>Check overall width.</b>	Pose cavy facing the judge. Place hands to either side of the cavy to indicate the actual width of the animal.



## Participant Appearance

Participants should demonstrate good posture, good eye contact with judge throughout presentation, and a smile/pleasant expression. Attire should be clean and neat. Your shirt should be collared and long-sleeved to protect you from being scratched. Closed-toed shoes are preferred. No gum chewing, hats, or caps are permitted. Long hair should be pulled back, and jewelry or makeup should be at a minimum.

## Participant Actions

Perform all steps of carrying and the examination in a confident manner. Always be considerate of your animals, fellow participants, and the judge. Demonstrate a gentle and smooth-flowing presentation. Keep good eye contact with the judge to ensure that they see your presentation of the animal and skills in handling.

## Knowledge Expectations

Verbal knowledge conveyed to the showmanship judge by answering direct questions will not be weighted more than 20 percent of the total possible points allocated for the contest.

### What to know:

#### 1. Origin

- When and from where the breed you are showing was introduced to the United States
- Its original use
- Common uses today

#### 2 Anatomy

- Parts of the animal
- How to identify and name as many parts as possible

#### 3. Confirmation

- What the breed and variety you are showing should look like
- ARBA body types
- The Standard of Perfection for the breed
- Any specific characteristics for the breed

#### 4. Health and Diseases

- Common diseases, parasites, and health concerns for your animal
- The normal gestation period for your animal
- Something about basic first aid for your animal

#### 5. Terminology

- Basic terms concerning your animal
- Specific terms for the breed or variety for your animal
- Terms used in the exhibition of your animal

#### 6. Your Showmanship Animal

- The individual animal used in this showmanship contest, its breed, variety, age, gender, registration variety, etc.
- Any exhibition faults your animal may have
- Any exhibition disqualifications your animal may have

# Alabama 4-H Rabbit Showmanship Score Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Step	Actions	Pts	Terms	Pts	Total Pts
<b>Carry</b>	Proper support, maintain control	<b>5</b>			<b>5</b>
<b>Pose</b>	Correct pose for breed, introduction-greeting/name, step back	<b>3</b>	Breed, compact, cylindrical, full arch mandolin, semi-arch, commercial	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Ears</b>	Check both ears; read tattoo	<b>3</b>	Mites, canker, carriage, thickness, color, torn or missing portions, fur covering	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Turn Over</b>	Smooth motion, proper control, rest weight on table	<b>5</b>			<b>5</b>
<b>Eyes</b>	Properly open eyes; not forcing open	<b>3</b>	Proper color, blindness, walleye, moon eye, weepy eye or signs of conjunctivitis	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Nose</b>	Proper hand position, show both nostrils, check inside legs for nasal discharge	<b>3</b>	Snuffles, nasal discharge, foreign spots or colors	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Teeth</b>	Proper hand position; show upper and lower incisors	<b>3</b>	Malocclusion buck teeth, wolf teeth, peg teeth, broken teeth	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Front Feet/Legs</b>	Check straightness of legs; check toenails, pad, and dewclaw; proper thumb position	<b>3</b>	Broken, extra, and missing toes; mismatched, white, missing toenails; bone density; dewclaw; pads	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Belly</b>	Check under jaw and chest, check abdomen and sides, smooth and complete coverage	<b>3</b>	Abscess, tumor, pigeon breast, abnormalities, blemishes, mastitis	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Rear Feet/Legs</b>	Check straightness of legs; check toenails, pad, and dewclaw; proper thumb position	<b>3</b>	Broken, extra, and missing toes; mismatched, white, missing toenails; bone density; straightness; sore hocks	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Proper position of rabbit and hand; expose vent/penis and testicles	<b>3</b>	Buck, doe, vent disease, hutch burn, split penis, descended testicles in Int./Sr.	<b>2</b>	<b>/5</b>
<b>Tail</b>	Extend tail, move side to side, examine underside	<b>3</b>	Wry, dead, bobbed, broken, color, straightness	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Fur</b>	Return to pose, smooth motion, proper control, stroke coat from tail to head to show fur type	<b>3</b>	Density, texture, sheen, luster; rollback, flyback, rex, standing, wool; undercolor, ring color, surface color; molt	<b>2</b>	<b>/5</b>
<b>Judging Comments</b>	Final pose, head, ears, shoulder, chest, midsection, loin, hindquarters, rump; breed specific (markings/color)	<b>10</b>	Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor; Balance; Condition; Finish; Did not use the word "nice"	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Overall Presentation</b>	Show coat/apron/long sleeves, smile, hair neat, no rings, no dangling jewelry, no gum	<b>5</b>	Humane treatment/controls animal at all times; Good eye contact; Follows directions; Thanks judge	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>			Answers to questions	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
			Total Score		<b>100</b>

Comments:

# Alabama 4-H Cavy Showmanship Score Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Step	Actions	Pts	Terms	Pts	Total Pts
<b>Carry</b>	Proper support, maintain control, long-haired on a show board	<b>5</b>			<b>5</b>
<b>Pose</b>	Correct pose for breed, introduction-greeting/name, step back	<b>3</b>	Breed, variety, proper pose	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Ears</b>	Check both ears, read ear tag	<b>3</b>	Mites, carriage, proper color, torn or missing portions	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Eyes</b>	Properly open eyes, not forcing open	<b>3</b>	Proper color, blindness, spots, pea eye or signs of conjunctivitis	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Turning Over</b>	Smooth motion, proper control, rest weight on table	<b>5</b>			<b>5</b>
<b>Teeth</b>	Proper hand position, show upper and lower incisors	<b>3</b>	Malocclusion, buck teeth, wolf teeth, peg teeth, broken teeth	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Nose</b>	Proper hand position, show both nostrils, check inside legs for nasal discharge	<b>3</b>	Nasal discharge, foreign spots or colors	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Front Feet/ Legs</b>	Check straightness of legs, check 4 toenails	<b>3</b>	Broken, missing toes; polydactyl; mismatched, white, or missing toenails	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Belly</b>	Check under jaw and chest, check abdomen and sides, smooth and complete coverage	<b>3</b>	Abscess, tumor, pigeon breast, abnormalities, blemishes	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Rear Feet/ Legs</b>	Check straightness of legs, check 3 toenails	<b>3</b>	Broken, missing toes; polydactyl; mismatched, white, or missing toenails	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Proper position of cavy and hand; expose vent/penis and testicles	<b>3</b>	Boar, sow, impaction	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Hair</b>	Return to pose, smooth action, proper control, check hair	<b>5</b>	Density, texture, sheen, or luster; short or long; rosettes; resiliency; kink color; under color; molt; stray white hairs	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Judging Comments</b>	Final pose, head, shoulders, crown, top line, body type, rump; breed specific (markings/color)	<b>10</b>	Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor; Balance; Condition; Did not use the word "nice"	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Overall Presentation</b>	Show coat/apron/aong Sleeves; smile; hair neat; no rings; no dangling jewelry; no gum	<b>5</b>	Humane treatment/controls animal at all times; good eye contact; follows directions; thanks judge	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>			Answers to questions	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
			Total Score		<b>100</b>

Comments:



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