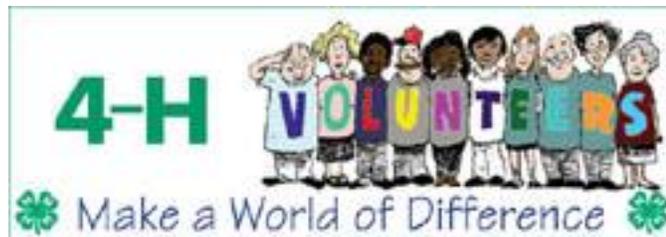


# Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Program

## OBJECTIVES

The Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Program will help youth to:

1. Experience the pride and responsibility of leasing/owning and caring for rabbits.
2. Learn how to feed, fit, show, breed and raise rabbits.
3. Learn proper handling procedures to prevent injuries to 4-H members and their Rabbit projects.
4. Become good citizens by working together in groups and supporting 4-H Rabbit Project activities and events.
5. Develop leadership initiative, self-confidence, sportsmanship and other desirable character traits.
6. Promote a greater love of animals and a humane attitude towards them.
7. Develop and define career choices.



# Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Program

## Getting Started

**The Leaders Role:** As a leader in the 4-H rabbit project, you should be knowledgeable in the care and management of rabbits. The leader's goal should be to help the 4-H members fulfill as many of the objectives outlined by the member and leader.

**Market or Breed?** Determine if the project is going to be breeding or market. After the project type is decided, then choose the type of rabbit suitable for the project. Example, a fur breed generally is not suitable for market, due to weight requirements. However, a market breed can be used for both breed and market projects. Resource books like ARBA standards can help determine the breed just right for the member. Pay close attention to the size of the member and the adult size of the rabbit. A Flemish Giant would not be a good choice for an Cloverbud member.

**Housing** Proper housing is necessary to raise healthy and productive rabbits. They can be purchased wire cages or structures that are made from lumber and wire mesh. Minimum requirements are 1 square foot for each pound of body weight. For large rabbits, a 4' x 6' is generally sufficient, medium breeds, 4' x 4' and small breeds 2' x 3'. Make certain there is proper shelter from the elements, a covering or tarp for outside, or located inside a building with proper ventilation.

**Nutrition** Proper nutrition is a must to be successful. A rabbit needs a good commercial feed, available from any mill or feed store. Even some department stores that carry pets carry rabbit feed, but check the label. The pellets should contain protein, minerals, alfalfa, and vitamins. Don't overfeed or underfeed. Both will affect the weight and condition of the rabbit, causing it to be unfit for the show ring for breed or market. Since rabbits have a tendency to gnaw, provide them with alfalfa periodically to help keep them occupied. Regular feeding, either in the morning or at night is best, and check them one other time during the day. During the summer, a rabbit will eat best at night. Always provide fresh, clean water. Make certain it is always available during hot weather. During freezing weather, be certain the rabbit is allowed to drink at least twice a day.

**Management** Housing and nutrition are basic parts of proper management of the rabbit. Also included is the general care of the rabbit. Taking time each week to ensure the health and safety of the rabbit will go far in the success of the project. Be certain to check the condition of the cage, and clean often to avoid build-up. Sanitizing the cage and dishes periodically will help promote healthy rabbits.

**Fitting and Showing** Before learning to fit and show a rabbit, the proper technique in handling a rabbit is required. The proper way to grab a rabbit is firmly at the rib section, supporting the weight from underneath for a heavy or large rabbit. Never grab and carry a rabbit by his ears or legs. The proper technique in fitting and showing a rabbit can be found in the ARBA standards or they may be obtained from the Extension Office.

# Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Program

## PROJECT LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

The adult 4-H Rabbit project leader is expected to assist members, through a project learning experience, to grow and develop into responsible, emotionally mature young adults. This goal can be achieved in the following specific areas:

### **Project administration**

- Secure project literature and other relevant materials from the Extension Office and other sources.
- Provide Administrative leader of the club with information on new 4-H members.
- Work with 4-H members and other leaders to decide on meeting dates, locations, times and duration.
- Encourage 4-H members to keep records and assist them in understanding and following all guidelines in projects.
- Keep 4-H members informed about local, county and state events and activities.
- Complete required 4-H Market Rabbit Tattoo forms and submit to office by August 15.

### **Communication**

- Communicate with the club administrative leader as well as other club leaders.
- Make an effort to get acquainted with parents of members. Inform parents of meeting dates, times & places set by the group.

### **Project Education**

- Plan the project experience based upon the needs and interests of the 4-H members, using a variety of teaching techniques, demonstrations, illustrated talks, tours, trips, audio-visual material, resource people, etc.
- Meet periodically with the project group to provide instruction in subject matter and to help members achieve the goals which, together and individually, they have set.
- Assist 4-H members in setting goals, and developing a realistic self-evaluation program checking their progress periodically and helping kids develop a positive self-image through regular encouragement and sincere praise.
- Involve 4-H Teen leaders with specific tasks and/or other responsibilities, which have been developed in consultation with teens.

### **Leadership**

- Attend and participate in countywide 4-H Small Livestock and 4-H Livestock Leaders meetings and leader training.
- Participate in regional, statewide and national leader training when possible.

# Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Program

## RESOURCES

**Allegan County MSU Extension is located in Suite 101 on the Lower lever of the Human Services Building at 3255 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Allegan. The Phone number is 269-673-0370. The fax number is 269-673-7005.**

***Publications*** - The Allegan County MSU Extension Office has 4-H and Extension Rabbit publications available for purchase by clubs.

***Website*** - Use the Allegan County MSU Extension office website [www.msue.msu.edu/Allegan](http://www.msue.msu.edu/Allegan) to find out what's happening in the county and throughout the state in Rabbit programming. You can also connect to Michigan State University through our site.

***Other Resources*** - Breed Associations and State/National Rabbit Organizations.

## Suggested Activities

### ***Club & County Activities***

- Guest speakers, such as a Veterinarian, Extension Staff, judging team.
- Try a Quiz Bowl to make learning fun.
- Visit a rabbitry, vet clinic, research farm, neighboring County Fair Show, Open Shows, etc...
- County wide clinic
- Allegan County Fair in September

### ***Participate in State and National Activities:***

- State 4-H Rabbit Show at MSU in January for youth 9 - 19 years old.
- 4-H Communications Contest in February at MSU for 9 - 19 year olds.
- ANR week at MSU in March for youth and adults
- 4-H Exploration Days at MSU in June for youth 12-19 years old.
- Michigan State Fair held in August.

Contact the Allegan County 4-H Staff for more information on state and National 4-H Rabbits Activities.

# Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Program

## SUGGESTED LEARNING PLAN

### Members should learn:

1. To recognize kind and breed of their rabbit project.
2. Proper show attire.
3. How to select a good project animal
  - A. Breed & characteristics of Breed
  - B. Age
  - C. Confirmation
  - D. Registered or grade
4. Principles of proper feeding, housing and health requirements.
5. Proper handling skills.
6. Basic anatomy of their Rabbit project.
7. Basic fitting and showmanship.
8. How to keep accurate records:
  - A. Expenses of project animal (animal, feed, housing equipment, etc.)
  - B. Length of project.
  - C. Income of project -animal sold, non-food product sold
9. In-depth knowledge of their project rabbit(s).
10. Principles of judging.
11. Principles of public speaking.
12. Career possibilities in the Rabbit Industry.

# Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Program

## GENERAL 4-H RABBIT PROJECT RULES

### Membership

1. Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Projects are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status.
2. Youth must be enrolled in a 4-H club to participate in 4-H Rabbit project activities.
3. A youth may enroll in a 4-H club at any time during a project, however, activity/event deadline dates must be adhered to, in order to maintain eligibility in those areas.

### Projects

1. 4-H members must work with their Rabbit projects becoming familiar with them by caring, fitting, and learning how to show their animals.
2. 4-H Members are responsible for 80% of their project animal's care.
3. Project animals must be kept clean.
4. Each project animal must meet State Health guidelines.
5. 4-H Members should keep a 4-H Rabbit Project Record Book.
6. 4-H members are encouraged to make a 4-H Rabbit Notebook.

# **Allegan County 4-H Rabbit Program**

## **4-H MARKET RABBIT PEN PROJECT**

### **GOALS**

1. Teach youth the business of raising market rabbits.
2. Youth will actively participate in the care and management of a market rabbit pen project.
3. Youth will learn about the financial issues regarding marketing rabbits.

### **PROJECT RULES**

1. All market rabbits must be legibly tattooed and in the youth's possession by August 15.
2. A 4-H Market Rabbit Pen Tattoo Form must be completed, signed by the 4-H Leaders and in our Extension Office by August 15<sup>th</sup> (on the Friday before if the 15<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend).
3. The 4-H Leader is responsible for knowing that the animal tattooed is the animal the youth brings to the fair to complete the project.
4. Youth may tattoo 6 rabbits - but only 3 will be able to be at the fair.
5. Market rabbits may be either grade or purebred.
6. At weigh-in each market rabbit must weigh between 3 and 5 lbs. and not be over 70 days old.
7. 4-H members must view the 4-H Quality Assurance Video and turn in a signed 4-H Market Animal Agreement form at weigh in.

## **4-H BREED RABBIT PROJECT**

### **GOALS**

1. Teach youth the business of raising rabbits.
2. Youth will actively participate in the care and management of a rabbitry.
3. Youth will learn how to select a sire for their breeding program.

### **PROJECT RULES**

1. Rabbits that are breeding projects must have tattoos and if showing at the Allegan County Fair must have their tattoo numbers recorded at the Fair office. Do not turn in tattoo numbers to the MSU Extension Office.
2. Rabbits should be owned by the 4-H member.
3. Rabbits may be grade or purebred.