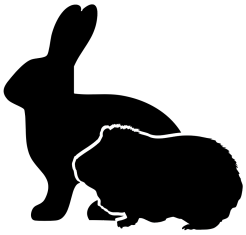
2026 Rabbit & Cavy Project

Policies & Procedures



Species Chair: Tristyn Klockziem - tristynmklockziem@gmail.com - 231-640-0620

Participating 4-H youth must abide by all general rules and regulations listed in the Northwest Michigan 4-H Livestock Council's Policies & Procedures books and the Premium Book of the Northwestern Michigan Fair. This includes, but is not limited to, Code of Conducts, registration deadlines, showmanship and market requirements, record book and thank you letter requirements, etc.

Important Dates & Information

Registration Due - **May 4th, 2026**
Record Book Due (Market & Show Only) - **September 14th, 2026**
Thank you Letters Due - **October 5th, 2026**

Types of Market Projects				
Market Class	**Possession Date**	**Age at Fair**	**Minimum Weight**	**Maximum Weight**
Fryer - Pen of 3	(Dam) May 1st	Max 70 Days	3.5 lbs	5.5 lbs
Fryer - Single	(Dam) May 1st	Max 70 Days	3.5 lbs	5.5 lbs
Roaster	May 1st	Max 6 Months	5.5lbs	9lbs

Breed for Fryers: May 2nd, 2026 - (*Due Date: between May 30th & June 3rd 2026)*
Breed for Roasters: January 10th, 2026 - (*Due Date: after February 8th)*

Registration Requirements

- To participate in a 4-H rabbit or cavy project, youth must attain the age of eight (8) or older by January 1st of that calendar year and be registered through *4-H Online*
    - Members that are 5-7 years of age will participate in the 4-H Cloverbud program and will have their own Cloverbud classes.
- All rabbit and cavy program participants (Market, Show Only, and Cloverbuds) MUST complete the online registration via the Northwest Michigan 4-H Livestock Council's website NO LATER THAN 11:59p.m. on the first Monday of May.
- To participate in the 4-H Livestock shows and auction at the Fair, youth must follow all registration requirements listed in the Northwest Michigan Fair's Premium Book.
- To participate in the 4-H Livestock auction at Fair, youth must register and compete in the appropriate **4-H Showmanship and Market Classes.**
- Market rabbits that do not make weight may participate in a **4-H Breed Class**.

Show Animal Requirements

Show only animals must be selected and tattooed (rabbits) or tagged (cavy) before July 1st
    If you cannot attend a tattoo clinic:
        Please Contact the Species Chair to schedule a time and location for tattooing.

Must be at least 10 weeks of age at Fair
    Younger rabbits & pups do not do well in the busy fair setting.

All Rabbits (except the pet class) and Cavy will be judged to the **ARBA Standard Of Perfection**

"Show Only Rabbits" may be of mixed breeding.
If they are mixed breed, they can only participate in a Pet Class and be used for showmanship.

Market Rabbit Requirements

All Market Rabbits must be a Purebred Meat Breed.
    Examples include: New Zealand, Californian, Silver Fox, American Sable, Satin

Market Rabbits must be selected and tattooed before July 31st.
    If you cannot attend a tattoo clinic:
        Please Contact the Species Chair to schedule a time and location for tattooing.

Fryer Classes:

Bred doe(s) must be in possession by the dates listed above. It is recommended to have a couple of back-up does.

Meat Pens shall consist of 3 rabbits, all of the same breed & variety. Broken group meat pens must also be the same variety. A meat pen does not necessarily have to come from the same litter. Single Fryers will be judged as a single rabbit on its own merit.

Age Limit 10 Weeks.
Minimum weight 3 ½ lbs each.
Maximum weight 5 ½ lbs each.

Roaster:

This Project may be purchased, or a doe may be bred to produce this animal. Please review the dates listed above.

One (1) Rabbit
Age Limit 6 Months.
Minimum weight 5 ½ lbs
Maximum weight 9 lbs

Rabbit Showmanship Requirements

Classes will be called 3 times - any participant(s) not present will be dropped from the class.
If you are showing another 4-H animal -
Scheduling Arrangements can be made with the Species Chair.

Participant Appearance:

Your hair should be neatly combed. If you have long hair, tie it back to keep it from falling into your face when you're standing over the table handling your rabbit. Your face and hands should be clean. Your fingernails should be clean, neatly trimmed and unpolished.

It is recommended that exhibitors not wear jewelry (with the exception of medical identification bracelets and tags). Your show clothing should be free of names, patches, pins and other distractions.

Clothing Requirements:
Black Pants - no rhinestones or designs
White Shirt - Collared, Long Sleeve, Button Down
Black Boots or Closed Toed Shoes

Optional:
White Lab Coat
Bola or Tie
Belt (Black Only) - no rhinestones or designs

Breed & Pet Class Requirements

Classes will be called 3 times - any participant(s) not present will be dropped from the class.
If you are showing another 4-H animal -
Scheduling Arrangements can be made with the Species Chair.

Show Attire is not required.

All rabbits (except the pet class) and cavy will be judged to the **ARBA Standard Of Perfection.**

Animals must be properly groomed before arriving at the fair.

- NO bathing of rabbits or cavies is allowed at the Fair.
- Nails must be trimmed before arriving at the fair.

Skillathon/Quizbowl Requirements

Open to all Rabbit and Cavy 4-Hers (cloverbuds included)

Teams of 3-4 from all age brackets will be randomly selected at the Fair.

Questions will revolve around the Rabbit Project.

- Rabbit & Cavy Record Books
- Michigan 4-H Rabbit Fitting and Showing - Membership Guide
- Michigan 4-H Cavy Fitting and Showmanship - Membership Guide
- ARBA Standard Of Perfection (Rabbit & Cavy Breed ID)
- Rabbit Tutor (website)

Show Attire is not required.

Barn Decoration Requirements

Cages may not be altered in any way.

Decorations must be in place by 6:00pm on the first Saturday of Fair.
Nothing may be permanently attached to the cages.

All decorations should allow for air flow through and around the entire cage.
Any decorations hindering air flow will be removed.
This includes solid material or large, wooden signs placed on top of cages.

If your rabbit is a biter (or chewer), be sure to bring cage dividers.

Before Fair Requirements

Show Only animals must be selected and tattooed (rabbits) or tagged (cavy) before July 1st
Market Rabbits must be selected and tattooed before July 31st.
No animal will be tagged or tattooed while at Fair.
If you cannot attend a tattoo clinic:
Please Contact the Species Chair to schedule a time and location for tattooing.

Animals must be properly groomed before arriving at the fair.

- NO bathing of rabbits or cavies is allowed at the Fair.
- Nails must be trimmed before arriving at the fair.

Fair Week Requirements

General Requirements:

Check-in/Weigh-in takes place the first Saturday of Fair.
Youth must be present or must have made prior arrangements with the species chair for someone else to check in their animal.

Once an animal enters the check-in area it may only leave when it has been cleared to enter the barn or if it is going home.

Refer to the Animal Health Check-In policies for the Northwestern Michigan Fair.

Rabbits and Cavies can only be removed from their cages for:

- Showmanship practice
- Grooming
- Cleaning of cages
- Judging

Any other time requires permission from the species chair.

No feed, feed bags, or supplies are to be left in the barn
- Everything must be stored at their campsite

Youth are responsible for keeping their cages and under their cage area clean all week.

Barn Duty:

All participants in the barn must sign up for a 2-hour time slot. Come prepared to help and interact with the public.

Sign up is posted on the first Saturday of Fair. If youth fail to sign up, a time slot will be assigned to them.

- Be courteous and polite.
- Keep yourself and the barn neat and clean
- Remember to smile!

Animal Care Requirements:

Animals shall be treated humanely at all times. Any reports of unethical, inhumane, and/or abusive treatment or actions that cause distress and/or suffering to an animal will be evaluated by the Species Chair, Fair Superintendent, Fair Veterinarian, and/or other appropriate individuals and may lead to disqualification and removal from all 4-H and Open Livestock Shows held at the fair.

- Youth are responsible for providing their own feeder, waterer, and enough feed for the week.
- Be sure to label the feeder and waterer to identify who they belong to.
- Youth are responsible for feeding, watering, and caring for their animal the entire week.
- Water shall remain fresh and full at all times.

Weather Conditions:

Extreme Heat:
Frozen water bottles and cold tiles will be provided.

- Bottles & Tiles can be placed in pens anytime after 11 am but must be removed before 7pm each day
- Youth are responsible for swapping their bottles & tiles as needed to keep their animals cool.

Cavies:
If the weather is extremely cold or hot, all cavies MUST be taken home or to a camper during the night and returned to the barn the next morning.

The need for this will be determined by the Species Chair and Superintendent.

Fair End Responsibilities:

All rabbits and cavy must be removed from the barn between 7:00 am and 9:00 am on the last Sunday of Fair.

You must completely clean the cage and under the cage. You do not need to disinfect.

After Fair Requirements

Failure to submit a completed, hard copy record book by the September Livestock Council meeting, and a Thank You Note by the October 4-H Livestock Council meeting WILL result in suspension from the 4-H Livestock classes held during the NWMI Fair the following year.

Suspended youth who complete their record book and submit it to the 4-H Livestock Council by the November Meeting that same year will again be eligible to register for 4-H Livestock classes held during the NWMI Fair the following year.

Record Book:

Youth are required to turn in one completed record book (showmanship or market).

If you are exhibiting in multiple species, you are required to complete the record book for your market project. If you do not have a market project, you may complete the record book for any of your "show only" species.

Examples:

1. *Jane shows beef cattle in showmanship and market;*
   Jane completes a record book in beef cattle.
2. *John shows swine, horses, and goats, and markets his hog*
   John completes a record book for hogs.
3. *Sally shows chickens, rabbits, and dogs all showmanship only.*
   She decides to complete the record book for rabbits..

Thank You Note:

For market rabbit participants, a Thank You and 5 x 7 Auction photo must be given to your buyer and a copy of the thank you note is due at the October Livestock Council meeting.

Tips for a Successful Rabbit or Cavy Project

Preparing yourself & your Rabbit/Cavy for Fair:

Highly Recommended - Attend an ARBA Show
Pick up a copy of the ARBA Standard Of Perfection
Check out the National Club for your breed.
These can be found on www.arba.net/recognzed-breeds/
Play a Radio to get your rabbit used to noises.
Use Fly Strips to keep the Flies and Bugs under control
Start handling your rabbits and cavy now!

Fair Week Barn Essentials:

- ☐ Wheelbarrow
- ☐ Shovel
- ☐ Rake
- ☐ Feeder
- ☐ Waterer
- ☐ Water Cans
- ☐ Grooming Items - Brushes, Baby Wipes
- ☐ Items for decorating – hammer, screws, nails, stapler, etc

Helpful Terms:

Sex:

Rabbits: Buck (male) or Doe (female)
Cavy: Boar (male) or Sow (female)

Variety/Color:
It is important to know the proper color term – ask for help if needed!

Solid – 1 "solid" color. *Examples include - White, Black, Chocolate, etc*
Broken – 2 different distinct colors
Standard - When a Breed only comes in one color

Age:

Junior: younger than 6 months

Intermediate (6-Class Breeds Only): between 6 and 8 months of Age

Senior:

4-Class Breeds - Over 6 months of age
6-Class Breeds - Over 8 months of age

Cloverbuds

4-H members who are 5-7 years of age. (as of January 1st of the current year)

Cloverbuds must still register by the May deadline.

The rabbit or cavy must be in the possession of the Cloverbud 4-H member by July 30th.

Cloverbuds can participate only in 4-H Cloverbud Showmanship which is held on Friday of Fair Week. Cloverbuds are required to have direct one-on-one adult assistance while showing their Animal.

- The Adult may be a parent, guardian, or current Gold 4-H volunteer.
- The Adult is to stand behind or very near the Cloverbud during the show.
- The Adult is not to talk to the Cloverbud
    - If help is needed, the evaluator will ask for it.

All Cloverbud shows are non-competitive; each member will receive recognition.

Cloverbuds must follow all rules laid out for the older 4-H members in the barn.

They will complete their own chores.
Parents, guardians, older siblings, or another 4-H member may assist.

Cloverbuds may not participate in breed or market classes.

Resources

Northwest Michigan 4-H Livestock Council's website: www.northwestmichiganlivestock.org

Rabbit Resource Handbook for Breeding, Market, and Pet Rabbit Projects, Ohio State University Extension; 4-H Circular 228R

Rabbit Learning Lab Kit, Ohio State University Extension
– borrowed from the Grand Traverse MSU Extension Office

Resources and educational workshops offered by MSU Extension and Michigan 4-H.

Rabbit Tutor's Website: www.rabbittutor.com

American Rabbit Breeder Association Website: www.arba.net