Information to be put on the website.

About the Rabbit & Cavy Project

Are you interested in joining the 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Program? The program invites all youth, ages 5 to 19, to participate in and raise rabbits and cavy!

Rabbits and cavy are a great animal for youth of any age to raise! They are economical, fun to work with, take up little space, and an easy starter project for anyone new to 4-H.

Starting in the Rabbit & Cavy Project -

It's important to know what your options are so you can make the best decision, your project needs to be interesting to you. There are 53 breeds recognized by the ARBA to choose from, ranging from 2-20 pounds, from low maintenance short coats, to high maintenance wool coats.

Finding your Rabbit Project -

You will need to locate your project animal based on the required dates for different project types. You can travel to find your project animal or look locally to get what you need. Transport options are also available from many shows.

The Rabbit Market Project -

For a market project, youth have the opportunity to choose a rabbit. This is a short-term market project that is raised through spring/summer months and then shown at the Northwestern Michigan County Fair in August. You can purchase Roasters for your project, or buy a doe to breed to raise a single Fryer or Pen of 3.

Rabbit meat is considered an excellent source of lean, high-quality protein that is low in fat and cholesterol. It provides essential nutrients such as vitamin B12, iron, and selenium, making it a healthy choice for maintaining muscle strength, energy, and immune function. Because it's lower in calories and higher in easily digestible protein compared to many other meats, rabbit meat suits a variety of diets. Additionally, rabbits tend to have a smaller environmental footprint, making it a more sustainable option for meat consumption.

Start contacting breeders as soon as possible to get on their lists. Do not wait until March/April.

Here is a List of Recommended Breeders -
Be sure to share your dates with them!

Recommended Breeders

Showmanship Guides

Michigan 4-H Rabbit Fitting & Showing - Member Guide
https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/rabbit_fitting_showing_members_guide_4h1268

Cavy Fitting & Showmanship - Member's Guide
https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/cavy-fitting-showmanship-member-s-guide-4h1345

Summer Care

Summer can be a challenging time for rabbits, as they are very sensitive to heat and can easily suffer from heatstroke. It's important to keep them cool, comfortable, and hydrated when temperatures rise. Provide plenty of shade, fresh water, and good ventilation, and avoid handling them too much during the hottest parts of the day.

Summer care tips for rabbits:

- Keep their living area out of direct sunlight and well-ventilated.
- Provide frozen water bottles or ceramic tiles for them to lie against.
- Refresh their drinking water frequently and add ice cubes on very hot days.
- Groom regularly to remove excess fur, especially during shedding season.
- Avoid car travel or outdoor playtime during peak heat hours.
- Watch for signs of heatstroke (panting, lethargy, drooling) and act quickly if they appear.

Additional Tips to Prepare for Fair:

- If your rabbits are housed indoors, I recommend putting them outside (24/7) once the weather starts to get warmer. They can be housed in a hutch, barn or a garage, keeping them out of the elements.
- Start Electrolytes 1–2 weeks before the fair. You can use Pedialyte or Gatorade.
    - 1/2 Cup (liquid zero sugar) to 1 Gallon of water is best. Roughly a 1/31 Ratio.
- Ensure housing is shaded and well-ventilated.
    - Refresh water often and add ice cubes on hot days.
- Play a radio so they get used to noise.
- Control flies with fly strips or small animal safe sprays (check labels first).
- Handle rabbits and cavies daily so they're comfortable being positioned and turned for showmanship.

Winter Care

Rabbits do better in the cold than they do in the heat, but winter can still be a tough season for rabbits. It's important to keep them warm, dry, and comfortable when temperatures drop. Provide plenty of insulated bedding, shelter from wind and rain, and ensure their water supply

doesn't freeze. Regular checks and small adjustments can make a big difference in keeping your rabbit healthy and happy throughout the colder months.

Winter care tips for rabbits:

- Keep their hutch or living area dry, draft-free, and raised off the ground.
- Provide extra straw or hay for insulation and nesting.
- Cover the hutch at night with a waterproof blanket or tarp, leaving ventilation space.
- Check water bottles or bowls several times a day to prevent freezing.
- Feed a balanced diet with plenty of hay to help them generate body heat.
- Watch for signs of illness or cold stress, such as shivering or lethargy, and move them indoors if necessary.

Breeding Time

Focus on the health and condition of all breeding bucks and does—they are the foundation of your entire herd. Ensure they're clean, healthy, nails trimmed, and housed in clean cages. For market projects, have all breeding does in possession by May 1st with a breeding buck available, and provide proper daylight. Market Fryers must be no older than 70 Days at the fair. Show Only Kits must be at least 10 weeks old for Fair.

Prepare clean nest boxes in good condition and have plenty of straw or hay ready before kindling. Check bred does regularly, especially first-time mothers. Ensure they pull enough fur to cover their litter. Avoid extra treats or feed before or directly after kindling; increase feed gradually as milk production rises. Always provide clean water.

Check nest boxes daily, remove any dead kits, and avoid handling healthy ones. Keep nest boxes clean and let the doe care for her litter.

Start counting days. Are you ready?

Fair Week Expectations

Thursday & Friday

- Decorate and Prepare your Pens
- Verify that your rabbit or cavy are clean with nails clipped. Rabbits should have an eligible tattoo. (They can not enter without it.)

Saturday

- Bring your animal(s) to the fairgrounds for check in. Once cleared, put them in their cage with fresh water and food.
- No Rabbits or Cavy will be allowed into the barn before they are checked in.
- Rabbit Posters should be hung up by 2pm.

- Attend Mandatory Barn Meeting & Grandstand Meeting
- Sign Up for Barn Duty. All participants in the barn must sign up for a 2-hour time slot.

Sunday

- Green/White Market Card must be up in your Pen by 8am.
- Be in the barn and ready for showmanship by 8:30am.
- Tag Numbers will be available at the desk in the rabbit barn.
- Know your class and watch the board in the arena
- Showmanship is all about you and your knowledge of your project. Stay calm while flipping your rabbit or cavy.
- Be sure your Rabbit and Cavy stay clean for breed judging on Monday

Monday

- Breed Classes! This show is judged purely on your rabbits & cavy.
- Rabbits (except the pet class) and cavy will be judged to the **ARBA Standard Of Perfection.** The Pet Class is judged based on health, condition, and temperament.
- **Show Attire is not required.**

Tuesday

- This is a break in the schedule for the Rabbit & Cavy Program. Come hang out in the barn & practice for Skillaton!

Wednesday - Skillaton & Agility!

- Open to all Rabbit and Cavy 4-Hers (Cloverbuds Included)
- Questions will revolve around the Rabbit Project.

Thursday - AUCTION DAY

- Remember to **Thank Your Buyer** after you put your rabbits away.
    - Small Gift and Thank You Card can be given to your buyer.
- Green/White Market Card - Add your buyer and price per lb.
- Sit in the arena and cheer to support your fellow 4-hers & friends.

Saturday

- Club Leaders - You may pick up your Market Papers at the desk in the barn.

Sunday

- Before you leave please remove all decorations, clean the cages.
    - Remove all hair, hay, and poop.
- Clean and sweep under the cages.

ARBA Shows & How to Enter

Various clubs host rabbit shows all around our state, all year long.

These shows are a great opportunity to get to know breeders, learn more about your breed, show with other breeders and get comments from judges. You can shop for supplies from vendors or even look around for new 4-H rabbits, or a cavy at select shows.

ARBA and 4-H Shows are also a great opportunity to add information, pictures, and educational experience into your record books!

All of the ARBA shows in Michigan are pre-entry only online through easy2show.com but, you do not have to have an ARBA or MSRBA membership to participate.

To enter a show, you'll want to create a (free) basic account profile on easy2show.com. When you do it will ask for an ARBA #, this is not required. Once you create your account you can then scroll down until you see the show you want to enter. When you see the show, click the green arrow to view more information. You'll want to press manual entry. From there, it will take you to a new page, select the exhibitor. If the exhibitor is under the age of 19 as of the show's date, select the Youth class and input the information for the rabbits(s).

2026 ARBA Shows to Attend:

1/3/26 - The **Town 'N Country 4-H Club** is hosting a Rabbit & Cavy Show at the Ingham Co Fairgrounds in Mason, MI. Pre-Registation closes on 1/2/2026 at 6:00 PM. You can register for Showmanship & Breed ID at the show. The doors open at 7am, payment for the entries is due at 8am and the show starts at 9am. There is also a Silent Auction, Animal Auction, Coloring Contests, Vendors, and a Food Truck!

1/24/26 - The **2026 Michigan 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Expo and Show** will take place at the MSU Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock at Michigan State University in Lansing, MI. Participants must be enrolled in a Michigan 4-H Program (4hOnline.com). Rabbit and Cavy Showmanship is Pre-Entry, but you can also enter breed classes, participate in Breed ID, Skillathon, or even enter an educational display or photography.

2/28/2026 & 3/1/26 - Michigan State RBA (MSRBA State Convention)
4301 Farm Lane, East Lansing, MI 48910

4/11/2026 - Osceola Rabbit & Cavy Breeders Association
101 RECREATION Ave , Evart, MI 49631

5/3/2026 - Just for Fun Rabbit & Cavy Breeders Association
262 S Sprague St, Coldwater, MI 49036

5/16/2026 - Blood Sweat and Tears Rabbit Club
13801 Cascade Rd SE, Lowell, MI 49331

5/23/2026 - Heart Of Michigan RC
8800 W Grand River Ave, Fowlerville, MI 48836

6/13/2026 - Saginaw Valley R&CBA
2900 Hibbard Rd, Corunna, MI 48817

07/11/2026 - Just for Fun Rabbit & Cavy Breeders Association
262 S Sprague St, Coldwater, MI 49036

08/15/2026 - Blood Sweat and Tears Rabbit Club
6621 Heights Ravenna Rd, Fruitport, MI 49415

08/22/2026 - Lapeer Area Rabbit Raisers
195 Midway St, Imlay City, MI 48444

09/12/2026 - Western Michigan RBA
13801 Cascade Rd SE, Lowell, MI 49331

9/19/2026 - Great Lakes Rabbit & Cavy Shows
13801 Cascade Rd SE, Lowell, MI 49331

9/26/2026 - Blood Sweat and Tears Rabbit Club
13801 Cascade Rd SE, Lowell, MI 49331

10/03/2026 - Just for Fun Rabbit & Cavy Breeders Association
262 S Sprague St, Coldwater, MI 49036

10/09/2026 & 10/10/2026 - MI OH State Line RBA
74280 Fair St, Armada, MI 48005

12/4/2026 & 12/5/2026 - MI OH State Line RBA (Christmas Show)
601 Weiss St, Frankenmuth, MI 48734

Find a Show

MSU Extension 4-H Rabbits & Cavy - https://www.canr.msu.edu/rabbits_cavies/index
Go to the "Events" tab to see any upcoming events for the Rabbit and Cavy Project.
ARBA - Find A Show - https://arba.net/show-search/
MSRBA - Show Schedule - https://msrba.net/show-schedule/
Easy2Show - https://time2enter.net/login
If you do not have an account already - https://time2enter.net/register

Resources

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
MSU Extension 4-H Rabbits & Cavy - https://www.canr.msu.edu/rabbits_cavies/index