

4-H Rabbit Agility Rules

Introduction

The 4-H Rabbit Project encourages youth to develop good character, discipline, and a feeling of self-worth while learning about rabbit care and responsibility. In this sport the youth learns to do an obstacle course against time and follow the cues of the rabbit through the course. These rules were designed to help volunteers, judges and the youth involved in this program.

General Rules

1. The rabbit and handler are considered a team. You may not hand your rabbit over to anyone else during competition to compete in other events.
2. Hopping rabbits must be entered to show in fair to be able to compete.
3. All rabbits must be at least 4 months of age to compete (older for larger breeds).
4. Your rabbit should be healthy, free of disease and parasites, and should not have diarrhea, or open sores or wounds.
5. Your rabbit needs to be properly socialized able to move freely, meaning the rabbit needs to be structurally sound: free of physical abnormalities and injury, as well as not overweight.
6. If your rabbit is pregnant or nursing babies, do not bring her she cannot compete.
7. Handlers may only enter 1 rabbit first year and may show up to 2 rabbits second year.
8. Handlers are responsible for the training of their rabbit.
9. Any mistreatment of a rabbit will not be tolerated.
10. If the rabbit is out of its carrier or cage, it must never be left unattended or tied up in the competition area.
11. The rabbit must hop through the course at their own free will. Handlers may encourage or guide their rabbits forward vocally (softly) or with gentle touches/tickles.

Handlers: Take pride in yourself and your rabbits. We want to make a good impression so this continues to be a venue available in the future so everyone please come prepared, be on your best behavior, and most of all, have fun.

1. During an event, your clothing should be clean and neat in appearance. Please wear a 4H rabbit club shirt. Jeans are acceptable and should have no tears or holes in them. Tennis shoes should be clean and neat. No flip flops or sandals are permitted. Fair appropriate attire for showing is required according to fair rules.
2. No dangling jewelry like necklaces and earrings. It is suggested that watches, bracelets and rings be removed in case the rabbit should hook a toenail in them and get caught.
3. You may not jump the jumps and/or walk over or through any equipment with your rabbit.
4. You are responsible for repairing or replacing any damaged or wrecked equipment because of your actions.
5. You should bring your own rabbit to the hopping course for competition.
6. Please do not lift your rabbit by the scruff of the neck as some people may perceive this as being cruel. Handle your rabbit properly by making sure it is in a secure position.

7. You may use voice commands or hand commands, to guide your rabbit through the course. Handlers will be allowed to touch their rabbits to encourage them to move, with your voice or gentle touches by your hands. No directing with your feet.
8. You are encouraged to talk to and cheer your rabbit on as he or she does the course, but do not scream at your rabbit.
9. Do not drag your rabbit through, onto or over a jump by its leash. This could hurt the rabbit and break toenails.
10. You are responsible for the way you act at a competition. Poor sportsmanship could get you and your rabbit eliminated from the competition. Using foul or abusive language to anyone or your rabbit is not acceptable.

Rabbit equipment needed

1. Harnesses must be plain, flat "H" style harness. The harness needs to be loose enough not to restrict the rabbit's movement, but not let the rabbit slip out of the harness.
2. Leashes must be between 4 and 6 feet long depending on the size of the competitor.
3. Leashes and harnesses not meeting safety standards for rabbits will not be allowed to be used on the rabbit.
4. No treats (for you or your rabbit) will be allowed on the hopping course.
5. There may be a supervised warm up course available for you to warm up your rabbit.
6. You will be told what the course will be before you compete.

General Competition

1. Leashes need to be held at all times.
2. You are responsible for cleaning up after your rabbit. Cleaning equipment will be available for disinfecting and cleaning equipment if your rabbits make messes on the course.
3. Classes may be split up into weight classes and age classes if there are large numbers of rabbits competing. Giant rabbits (as defined in the ARBA SOP) will be in a class of their own.
4. **Your rabbit will be allowed three tries at any jump before the judge will ask you to place the rabbit over the jump.**
5. If the rabbit leaves the course it is not a penalty as long as the rabbit re-enters the course at the point where it left within the time limit.
6. Your rabbit must finish the course or it will be disqualified.
7. Your rabbit has completed the course when on two different instances the rabbit has been able to complete all of the jumps on the course without elimination.
8. Course direction will be announced at the start of the class by the Judge.

Rabbit Classes

Classes are determined by the rabbit's ability, experience, and weight. Weighing in of rabbits and general health check will be 1-2 hours before competition in the rabbit barn.

Classes

(please enter your rabbit in the appropriate class)

Beginner: straight line course

6 to 10 jumps to include start and finish jump.

- Maximum Height – 10” Minimum Height - 4”
- The distance between each jump is 4 feet
- 6 faults allowed.
- 8 points must be earned in “Beginner Class” with 2 clear runs in order to advance to Intermediate Class

Intermediate: Medium class {maximum time limit 3 minutes}

10 to 12 jumps to include start and finish jump.

- Maximum Height – 14” Minimum Height - 6”
- 6 faults allowed.
- Distance between each jump is 4 to 6 feet
- 4 points must be earned in “Intermediate Medium Class” with 2 clear runs in order to advance to Advance Classes.

Advanced: Medium class – Multi Course Design. {Maximum time limit 3 minutes}

10 to 12 jumps to include start and finish jump.

- Maximum Height – 16” Minimum Height - 8”
- 6 faults allowed.
- Distance between each jump is 6 feet
- 4 points must be earned in “Advanced Medium Class” with 2 clear runs in order to advance to Difficult Class.

Agility: Multi Course Design. {Maximum time limit 3 minutes}

10 to 12 obstacles to include start and finish jump. The course can include a variety of equipment dependent on level of agility. Maximum Height – 16” Minimum Height - 4” 6 faults allowed.

The starting agility course will include an A-frame, tunnel, bridge and several jumps. The equipment for upper levels can include teeter totter, chute, tunnel, A-frame, bridge, weave poles, pause table and vertical jumps. The obstacles will be 4-6 feet apart. All rules for rabbit hopping including proper attire, leash, and harness will be followed. The rabbit must be 5 months old to participate and entered as 4H project on fairgrounds to compete.

Very important things to remember before you start training a rabbit for hopping.

Safety Comes First

- Use the correct equipment. You want it to be a fun time.
- A **sense of humor** is a must! We have agendas or goals and the rabbit or cavy does not.
- Some rabbit breeds seem to have a natural instinct for hopping and some cavy breeds seem to have a natural instinct for running the course.
- You and the rabbit or cavy will make mistakes. Learn from them and don't repeat them
- The rabbit or cavy must be at least four months old, social, healthy and structurally sound.
- Never take a pregnant, nursing, or lactating doe or cavy (Guinea Pig) to a hopping event, demo, or competition. She will be disqualified and sent home.
- If you have more than one rabbit or cavy making the same response (refusing to jump the same jump). Stop and look at your jump, can they see the rails or do the rails blend into the surroundings. Try moving the jump to a different location and try again.
- Always be positive and end the training session on a positive note.
- Rabbits and cavies are unique like us and behave a lot like kids. What works for one rabbit or cavy may not work with a different rabbit or cavy.
- Rabbits and cavies have very short attention spans and anything can distract them from our training agenda.
- Keep the training short like 10 - 15 minutes a day a couple times a day. Depending on your schedule.
- Wearing white shoes helps a rabbit see your feet.
- During warm weather keep the rabbits or cavies in a shaded and cool location. Keep plenty of water in front of the rabbit or cavy and use a misting bottle to help cool keep the rabbit, cavy, and you.
- Don't over work the rabbit or cavy.
- Remember treats for the rabbit, cavy, and yourself.
- A rabbit or cavy may or may not hop or run the course for someone other than the person who trained it.
- Learn from your rabbit or cavy, they can teach us a lot.

Respect: We do need to be respectful to the rabbit, cavy, and others. We realise that Rabbit Hopping, Rabbit Agility, Cavy Courses, or having a commercial rabbitry is not for everyone, but no matter what we choose to do with our rabbits or cavies, we need to respect the other persons choice. Just because someone has a difference of opinion doesn't mean they are your enemy. They just have a different opinion.