



The
BRC Guide to

SHOWING
RABBITS

Why show your rabbit?

Both you and your rabbit can have a lot of fun showing. You will get a great social life, friends with the same enthusiasm for rabbits and contact with experts who know the rabbit facts (like behaviour, feeding, moult, breeding) that vets never come across.

And as long as your rabbit is introduced gently to showing it will soon become accustomed. Shows for rabbits are like school for us – a very few dislike shows, most are comfortable and many rabbits love all the attention and excitement.



Entering a Show

Rabbit shows are advertised in *Fur & Feather* magazine. They come in three flavours: pet shows (often alongside a BRC supported show), non-BRC shows and BRC supported shows (catering for breeds recognised by the BRC, run under BRC rules, and where the BRC offers awards).

Non-BRC shows are usually for a particular group of people (such as club members) or a particular group of rabbits (such as giant breeds). If you think you or your rabbit qualify, ask the show secretary for details.



Pet shows

Any rabbit, purebred or not, can be shown as a pet, even if it has an identification ring on its leg or a tattoo. However if you show it in the pet classes, your rabbit cannot also go in the BRC classes.

Pets are divided up into classes such as “boy’s” and “girl’s” (the owner) or “buck” and “doe” (the rabbit). Some shows also have classes for “adult’s pet” – this means the pet owner is an adult.

Pet rabbits are judged on health, condition, grooming and temperament. A pet should be friendly, clean and fit, but doesn’t have to be a recognised breed or colour.



British Rabbit Council (BRC) supported shows

These are the ones where awards can contribute towards a championship. To find a BRC supported show, look at the show adverts in *Fur & Feather* and check the BRC website. Any rabbit may enter in any BRC supported show (the ones with the advert headed BRC ** SHOW), provided that both:

- You, the exhibitor, are a member of the BRC
- The rabbit's ring or tattoo number has already been registered with the BRC in your name.

The (one to five) stars in the heading indicate the show rating. You can enter in any show, even a (top) five star show, without being an expert exhibitor and without your rabbit ever having won before.

However there is stiffer competition in the higher starred shows, so you may find it more comfortable to start with a one or two star show, where you and your rabbit can learn the ropes.

Breed and Open shows

The next line of the advert is the name of the club putting on the show.

If the club is a breed club (such as the National German Lop Club) then you can only enter rabbits of the appropriate breed(s) - these are called breed shows.

Otherwise the show is an open show, put on by a local club (catering for a location such as Medway Towns) or an organisation such as an agricultural society, and has classes for every BRC recognised breed.

Once you are used to the breed and club names you will recognise a breed show, but at first you can check the club name in your BRC yearbook, where the different types of club are listed.

The name of the show may be a clue to the show location, but not always.

Some shows have moved over the years, but kept their name (the most famous are the five star shows – the London Championship held at Reading and the Bradford Championship at Harrogate).

The advert says where the show will be held.

BRC ** SHOW WALLSEND RABBIT CLUB

The Geordie Pride Show

TWO STAR SHOW (under BRC rules) on Saturday December 1 2007 at Wallsend Community Hall, Vine Street, Wallsend, North Tyneside NE28 6JE. Judging at 11am by **Mr Steve Germany** (Lops & CoM), **Mr Robert Murphy** (N/Dwf), **Mr Duane Germany** (RoF), **Mr Dennis Sutton** (Fur & Rex). EF £1.75 + BRC levy 25p. Geordie Pride £1/exhib. CoM free if in main show (if not £1.50 per exhibit). L/P 25p - 20% prize money. PM £1, 60p, 40p all classes in main show (CoM and all members classes, NPM). **BRC offers 100 CC's, BoBs, Dips + Rosettes. Entries close Tuesday 27**

How and when to enter

Once you have chosen a show, check the closing date for entries. And watch out for “postal entries only”.

These are shows where the secretary must send you a pass, badge or booking in slip, by post, in time for you to use them to get into the show.

No amount of pleading will get you a late entry – make sure that you enter on time, so that the secretary can send you passes.

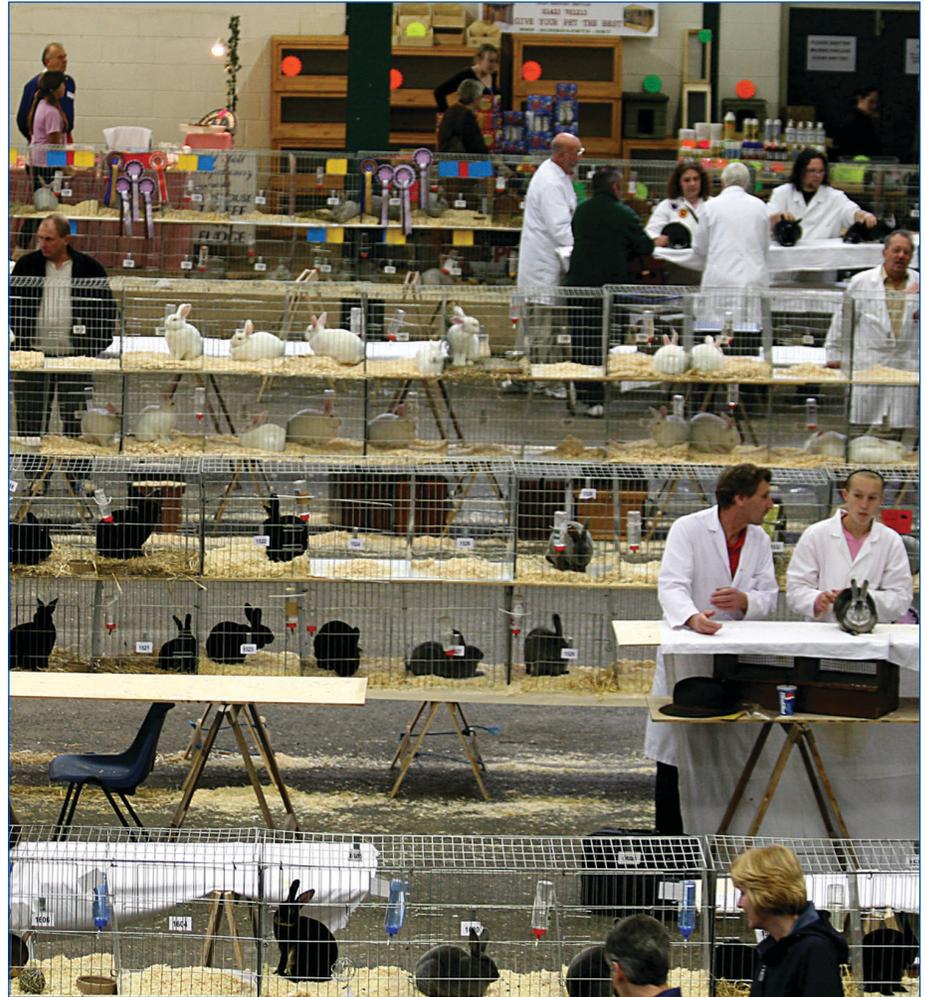
Most adverts include a number to phone in your entry. When you get through, if you say that you are new to showing, the secretary will be happy to check that you are entering your rabbit in the right classes and will tell you how to find the show.

For those of you with computers, some shows take entries by e-mail. The first time, you may not give quite the right information, so allow plenty of time for the secretary to check with you if necessary.

Now you have decided which show and when to enter, it is time to discover which classes your rabbit will go in. There are two ways to do this, depending on the show.

Find in the advert “EF” (entry fees). If it mentions “Block” or “Block entry”, you pay one block entry fee which covers all classes for which the rabbit is eligible.

Otherwise it is non-block entry – you choose the classes you want and pay accordingly.



Block entry

For a block entry, the secretary will ask about the rabbit:

- Breed
- Adult or Young. Young is usually u/5 (under five months), but there are a few breeds that do things differently. If in doubt, ask the secretary.
- Sex (Buck or Doe)
- Colour.
- Breeder or non-breeder (Did you breed this rabbit?)

And about you the exhibitor:

- Are you a junior or an adult (Same as your BRC membership)
- Are you a member of the club (a small annual fee may get you extra classes and the chance to win awards if you support the club's shows throughout the year).

There may be a few optional classes in addition to the block, such as Lucky Pen (a sweepstake with a lump sum for the winner).

These are listed with separate entry fees, after the block entry fee. Enter them if you feel lucky or want to contribute to the show costs.



Non-block entries – breed classes

For a non-block entry, you work out the classes one step at a time.

First, choose the right breed class for your rabbit, based on breed, age and possibly colour and/or sex.

To be eligible for other classes, every rabbit must enter in a breed class.

If there are colour classes for your breed, but your rabbit is not one of the colours listed, choose the AOC (Any Other Colour) class.

If there is no breed class for your breed, there will be an “everything else” class that will take your rabbit, listed as the AOV (Any Other Variety) class.

To find the right one you need to know how breeds are organised in a show.

They are grouped into 4 sections – Lop, Fancy, Fur and Rex. You need to know which section your rabbit belongs in (ask the secretary if you aren't sure).

The other classes

These optional classes are called duplicates.

The challenge duplicates, where winners from breed classes compete against each other, are a pathway towards a Best in Show award, via a possible breed Challenge, section Challenge and Grand Challenge. It is a mistake to leave these out.

A judge will be very disappointed because the rabbit he most liked was not entered through the show – and the rabbit's owner will be pretty upset too!

Other duplicate classes are usually for categories of rabbit, or categories of exhibitor, such as those listed above under Block Entry. You choose where to spend your money.

Junior classes

If you are a junior exhibitor, there is a separate set of classes just for you, headed JUNIOR COM SHOW.

You can enter in either the main show, the Junior COM show or both.

The junior show will usually have less competition, but wins in these classes do not count towards championships (COM stands for Certificate of Merit – a special award for junior classes).



What else

The show advert costs money, so everything is as compressed as possible.

The part headed CLASSIFICATION starts with anything that applies to all classes, such as Ad & Yng unless stated.

(Each list item refers to two classes, one for Adult rabbits and one for Young rabbits, unless it specifically says otherwise), or Adult rabbits only meaning that this entire show is specifically for adult rabbits only.

Usually you pay the entry fees at the show. If the fees have to go with the entry, watch out for extras such as the BRC Levy (pay once per exhibitor, not per rabbit), or admission pass (if the show is in a public venue).

There may be several shows listed for the same venue and date.

If your rabbit is eligible, and you and the rabbit can both stand the excitement, you can enter any or all of the shows.

That's the whole idea – for the rabbits to be judged by several judges in one day, with lots of competition and many opportunities to win.



Preparing for the show

Rabbits should arrive at a show groomed, clean and (if an adult, or an English Lop of any age) with claws neatly trimmed.

The method of grooming depends on the breed (different coat types require different techniques) but involves removing any dead hair and untangling knots.

Start grooming well before a show – this is not a last minute job.

Two places that get overlooked are a doe's dewlap, which slides about as you groom it so that it is easy to miss a large chunk of old coat, and the inside of a buck's back legs where they usually lick themselves to a knotty mess.

If you find a knot, don't try to comb it out, as rabbit skin tears easily. Instead, open the knot with your fingers from the top, the end furthest away from the rabbit.

Keep easing it open and removing a tiny piece at a time until you get to the bottom of the knot.

If you need to clean a stained rabbit, don't use bleach or any washing product with bleach in it.

It will dry out the coat, leaving it dead and unpleasant to touch, and if carelessly used it can inflame the rabbit's skin. Bald rabbits with sores do not win!

Clean with a mild unscented shampoo or washing up liquid (perfume on a rabbit at a show might be construed as cheating, by drawing the rabbit to the judge's attention).

Rinse well; detergent can make skin sore if left on long enough.

The night before the show

Unless your rabbit is unstandardised or a pet, write down the ring or tattoo number of each rabbit you plan to show.

You must give this to the secretary when you arrive at the show, so save yourself a lot of embarrassing wrestling with your rabbit in public by checking beforehand.

Prepare your carrying box with fresh bedding. Do NOT line the box with newspaper. Newsprint can mark a rabbit, with the assistance of liberally applied rabbit urine.

For the same reason, save the treats of carrot, beetroot leaves and fresh green grass until after the judging.

Rule One of presenting a rabbit at a show is – keep the rabbit clean.

Your rabbit is about to spend a day in a show pen on public view. Some show halls can get quite hot. You must provide your rabbit with a water bottle or bowl (a BRC Rule).

And something to nibble (such as hay or straw) will help it to settle in strange surroundings.

The show will provide some bedding but it may not be what your rabbit is used to – many

people take their own.

If you are showing a long-haired rabbit you could eventually want to take a wire floor for the show pen, to keep that long coat clear of the bedding.

People make their own and they are not essential to start with – consult the breeder of your rabbit or look around the shows for ideas and sizes.

Take a grooming kit with you for emergencies. Include comb and nail clippers (for the bits you overlooked) and kitchen paper (for drying any hastily washed bits).

At the show you may hear about various liquids being used to give a rabbit a last minute polish – be wary of these.

There is a fine line between stuff that cleans (permitted) and stuff that bleaches, colours, perfumes or otherwise changes the rabbit (forbidden).

You will notice at the show that most people are wearing a white coat, like a lab coat.

They are not a badge of office, just a sensible way to protect your clothes from a lot of excited rabbits who will chew, or mess on, whatever they can reach.

And remember, if you were sent them, those passes, badges and booking-in cards!



At the show

Arrive in plenty of time – plan to get there at least half an hour before judging starts.

In the show hall are numbered wire pens, one of which is your rabbit's temporary home.

If you have been sent a booking-in card, you will usually see on the card the pen number of your rabbit's pen.

If so, you can pen your rabbit before you book in. If not, find the secretary to get your pen number (and book in) before you pen the rabbit.

Booking in

Before judging starts you must book in, with the secretary. Ask "Where do I book in?", or look for the queue at a table.

If you were sent booking-in cards, all you need do is hand in one half of the completed card, with the ring/tattoo number, a dash (for a pet), or the word "absent" if you didn't bring the rabbit.

Keep the other half of the card – you will need it later.

Otherwise, give the secretary the number of your rabbit, or confirm that it has arrived if it is a pet.

If you entered, then decided not to show the rabbit, tell the secretary that it is absent.

Unless you already have it, the secretary will give your rabbit's pen number. And unless you have already paid, you will be asked to pay your entry fee, possibly to a different person, the treasurer.

You must pay the entry fee even if your rabbit is absent (a BRC rule).



Penning your rabbit

Before penning your rabbit check that it is still clean and hasn't had 'an accident' during the journey.

When you find your pen, check that it has enough bedding, attach the filled water bottle or bowl, add any hay or straw, then insert your rabbit and shut the door.

From now until the end of judging, your rabbit will travel under its pen number, to preserve its anonymity while being judged.

The judging table

Near the pens you will see the judging tables, long tables where the business of the day takes place.

The judge and the book steward (who records the results) stand on one side of the table, with the stewards, who fetch the rabbits from their pens to be judged, on the other.

If you want to watch judging, stand at one of the ends where you can watch without hindering the stewards as they rush to and fro with rabbits.

If you mention to the judge and book steward, before judging starts, that this is your first show, they will try to find time in a busy day to explain what is going on.

When a rabbit is fetched to the table, the steward carrying the rabbit gets a label from the book steward to attach to the rabbit.

This ear label has written on it the pen number of the rabbit, so that the rabbit can be recognised during judging and returned safely to its pen afterwards.

Exhibitors (that's you) must not let the judge know who owns which rabbit, so keep a stiff upper lip as your darling arrives on the table.



During judging

A show is run entirely by volunteers, who are kept busy throughout the day.

If you offer to help, you will be welcomed with open arms and there are plenty of jobs for a beginner.

The greatest need is for stewards. Beginners don't have to fetch rabbits from the pens – you can help by standing at the table holding rabbits while they wait for the judge (the book steward will show you how).

Don't move up and down the table, just stay in place and hold whatever the others pass to you.

When judging is over

Once the judging is complete and the last cards written and put on the pens, the secretary or treasurer can start paying out prize money.

To claim this, show your rabbit's prize card(s) to the person paying out.

If you had a booking in card you will also need this as proof that you really are the exhibitor whose rabbit won.

Then all you need to do is box your rabbit and head for home.

If you are at one of the top shows and have a booking in card, you may be asked to book out, a security check at the door to make sure that the number and breed of the rabbit you are carrying matches the details on the card.

After the pens are empty of rabbits, the hard work really begins. If you aren't too tired and can spare the time, the best way to make friends for life is to help with clearing up the show hall.

And if you do win, start your prize card record keeping and filing system now. . .

This is just the beginning of many exciting years of showing and winning with rabbits.

Glossary of BRC Showing Terms

A.A. - Any Age.

Adult - A Rabbit of Breeding Age or above the age stated for young classes.

A.C. - Any Colour.

A.D. - Adult.

All Rounder - Applied to persons who are recognised as experts on all varieties as opposed to Specialists, who are experts in a number of breeds.

Amalgamation - The joining together of two or more clubs or (in the case of Shows) of two or more classes.

A.O.C. - Any Other Colour.

A.O.V. - Any Other variety.

A.S.S. - Adult Stock Show.

A.V. - Any Variety.

Awards - Any card awarded to a Rabbit at a Show. **FIRST** only are wins, all cards being awards.

B. or B. - Black or Blue.

Breeder - The owner of the dam of a rabbit at the time of its birth.

Breeder Class - A class confined to exhibits bred by the exhibitor.

Breeding Doe - A Doe breeding age.

Cards - Award Cards issued to successful exhibits at shows. These are generally for Special Prizes, First, Second, Third, Fourth, Reserve (R), Very Highly Commended (VHC), Highly Commended (HC), Commended (C).

Challenge Certificates - Certificates awarded at Star Shows by the BRC to animals of outstanding merit owned and registered in the name of individual members of the BRC.

Challenge Class - A class open to all, or confined to a special type of variety or rabbit such as FANCY, LOP, NORMAL FUR or REX breeds.

Champion - An animal that has won a championship which has been awarded by the BRC.

Chest - The front of rabbit running from the chin down to the forelegs.

Chopped Off Rump - Instead of being nicely rounded, the rump is more or less at right angles to the back.

Club Judges - Judges elected by Specialist Clubs as qualified to judge special breeds, whose awards will be recognised for club championship and special prizes.

Cobby - A type desired in certain breeds such as DUTCH. The opposite to Racy.

Dewlap - A pouch of skin under the neck of certain breeds, usually only found in Does.

Diplomas - Offered by the British Rabbit Council for the best exhibit at Open Shows which may either be penned or table events.

Double Champion (BRC) - A Rabbit which has qualified for a second championship certificate is known as a DOUBLE CHAMPION.

Duplicate Classes - Classes in which a rabbit may be entered additionally to its ordinary breed class (Challenge, Novice, Breeders, etc.)

Duplication - The entry of rabbit into several classes at one show.

Ear Label - A small gummed label which is stuck in the ear of a rabbit at shows bearing its pen number.

Fancy Breeds - An arbitrary division of the breeds which is by no means really accurate. These include Angoras, Belgian Hares, Dutch, English, Flemish Giants, Harlequin, Himalayans, Lops, Netherland Dwarfs, Polish, Silver and Tan, etc.

Full Coat - The Adult coat with no signs of moult.

Fur Breed - The opposite to Fancy Breeds; includes Rexes, Satins and then the Normal Fur Breeds such as Argente, Beveren, Californian, Chinchilla, Chinchilla Giganta, Fox, Lilac, Havana, New Zealand Red, New Zealand Black, New Zealand White, Sable, Siberian, Smoke Pearl, etc. Gentlemen's Class - A class confined to exhibits owned by Gentlemen (over 16).

Gift Classes - Confined to exhibits presented to the show committee, by whom will be sold.

Guaranteed Classes - A class in which full prize money is guaranteed regardless of the number of entries secured.

Heavy Breeds - One of the larger breeds such as Flemish Giants, Chinchilla Gigantas or Beverens, etc.

Hock - The joint on the hind legs of a rabbit above the foot and below the shoulder.

Intermediate Stock Show - Both young and adult stock to be catered for.

Judges List - A list of Specialist Clubs and BRC approved judges published yearly by the BRC.

Junior Class - Confined to exhibitors over FIVE YEARS of age and UNDER 16 YEARS of age.

Ladies Class - A class confined to exhibits owned by ladies (over 16).

Limit Class - Confined to exhibits which have not won more than three first prizes in open competition.

Local Club - A Club, the activities of which are confined to a limited area.

Local Show - Show unable to claim star grading.

Moult - The casting of one coat and growth of new fur.

Moult Mark - A mark frequently shown between the old and new fur when a rabbit is moulting. Sometimes this lasts until the next complete moult, indicating the animal has only partially moulted.

Novice Exhibit Class - Exhibit not to have won a first prize at any show except in members classes or at Table Show.

Novice Exhibit and Exhibitor Class - Neither the owners nor the exhibit to have won a first prize at any show except in Members Classes or at a Table Show.

Open Class - Class open to all except where confined to a breed or breeds or to a specified age group.

Pair Class - A class for two rabbits of the same variety, matched as closely as possible in size, colour, etc. The SEX, unless especially stated in the schedule is optional.

Pen - Wire Cage used at shows for displaying the exhibits. Sometimes a term used for the runs under the colony system.

Pen Number - The number given to a rabbit at a show, which will appear on the address label sent to the exhibitor, on the show pen, and also in the catalogue and judging book.

Pen Show - Shows which provide pens for all exhibits.

Points - (a) The ears, tail, nose and below the hocks and joints of the forelegs in Himalayans, etc.; (b) a scale of points and drafted standard showing in the ideal to be aimed for in different breeds.

Putty Nose - A white spot on the nose extremity.

Raciness - The type in Belgians - approaching the wild hare.

Rex Fur - The type of coat found in the Rex varieties where all the guard hairs are shortened in length and thinner in diameter so that they should not be distinguished from the undercoat.

Ring - The method of marking and recording rabbits recognised by the BRC.

Show (Open) - A show open to any exhibitor.

Show (Penning) - A show in which pens are provided for all exhibits.

Show (Specialist) - A show confined to limited and specified breeds.

Show (Table) - A show where pens are not provided for the exhibits, each after being judged on the table being replaced in its travelling box.

Specialist Breeder - A breeder who concentrates strictly on a number of varieties.

Specialist Judge - A judge recognised as an expert in the variety concerned.

Standard - Description of the ideal to be aimed for in each variety as drawn up by the Specialist Club and BRC.

Star Scheme - A prize scheme based on the number of stars won by an individual animal.

Star Show - A pen show run under BRC rules for which Challenge Certificates and Diplomas have been granted by the BRC. These may be ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR or FIVE STAR SHOWS.

Stewards - Officials appointed at shows to take charge of the exhibits and assist the judge.

Sweepstake Show - A show at which prize money is not fixed but varies from class to class according to the entries received.

Type - The appearance and conformation of a rabbit - nearness or otherwise to the accepted standard.

Young Fancier - Persons between the ages of 16 and 21 inclusive who register as such with the Association.

Youngster - A rabbit under Adult Age.

Y.S.S. - Young Stock Show.

Mini Rex - The Rex Section does not have the equivalent of the Fancy, Fur and AOV classes. Unless the schedule includes Mini Rex classes they must be entered in the AOC Rex class.

Recommended Reading -

Showing Rabbits, a Guide to Successful Showing by Geoff Russell (published by Coney Publications). ISBN 978-1-898015-07-9. Available from the *Fur & Feather* bookshop www.furandfeather.co.uk or by calling 01473 652789

With thanks to Judy le Marchant