

Chapter 10:

Show Preparation

Introduction

Raise or purchase purebred rabbits for show that are of a breed recognized by the American Rabbit Breeders Association. Crossbred rabbits, or rabbits of unknown or mixed breeding cannot be shown in ARBA sanctioned shows. An ARBA sanctioned show insures exhibitors that rabbits will be judged by comparison to the same ARBA *Standard of Perfection* for their breed. ARBA licensed judges are required to use the *Standard of Perfection* as a basis for evaluating rabbits, which helps insure uniformity of judging.

Youth may begin their showing experiences at the county fair. ARBA judges judge many county fair rabbit shows following the *Standard of Perfection*. Counties offering these types of 4-H rabbit shows promote interest in breeding and exhibiting purebred rabbits, and help youth learn about their rabbits' good qualities, as well as their faults. County and state fairs may also offer showmanship classes, judging contests, rabbit skillathons, knowledge bowls, educational poster contests, and other learning opportunities. Enter these classes to increase your knowledge about rabbits and develop new life skills. Fun contests, such as a rabbit costume class, allow you to further enjoy your 4-H project.

Rabbit shows offer many other opportunities for 4-H members. In addition to learning about your own rabbits' qualities, showing rabbits also helps you learn about rabbits in general. Rabbit shows are a great place to meet knowledgeable rabbit people, rabbit breeders, and make life-long friendships. Shows are a good outlet to advertise, sell, buy, or trade rabbits. At many shows, rabbitry supply businesses

sell rabbit cages, equipment, books, and other rabbit supplies not readily available locally.

Selecting and Grooming

Show preparation begins as soon as you acquire your rabbits. Rabbits must be in good overall physical condition when they are exhibited at shows. "Condition" as defined in the ARBA Standard is in relation to the rabbit's health, cleanliness, fur, and grooming. Therefore, begin by always keeping hutches and cages clean. Give the rabbits quality daily care and protect them from direct sunlight to prevent their fur from becoming faded.

Carefully inspect your rabbits and select those for show with the fewest faults, and without disqualifications. These rabbits will be the most competitive at shows. Breed, group or variety (color), sex, and class (age and weight) determine in which class a rabbit will be shown. You must know this information prior to entering your rabbit. Review the ARBA's *Standard of Perfection* for your particular breed to become familiar with the point scale your rabbit will be judged against.

Begin grooming the rabbits you have selected at least six weeks before show time. Grooming should be done in the cool part of the day to prevent the rabbits from getting too hot. Handling rabbits when it is hot can cause unnecessary stress and heat stroke. Practice the proper method of picking up and carrying your rabbit. (Refer to the Handling section in Chapter 7.)

A small table covered with a carpet remnant can serve as a grooming stand. For the first few days of grooming, moisten your hands and rub them through the rabbit's fur until it is damp.

Once the fur is damp, gently and repeatedly stroke the rabbit from head to tail to remove loose fur. This may bring about molt, but it is better for the rabbit to molt then instead of at show time. There will be plenty of time for the fur to grow back by beginning the grooming process far in advance of the show.

After the first few days of grooming, stroke your rabbits from head to tail without dampening the fur. Stroking the rabbits on a daily basis will make their fur glossy and tight. Do not stroke the rabbits' fur going backwards (from tail to head). Rubbing against the grain of the fur can break the guard hairs.

Daily grooming does more than improving the appearance of your rabbits. It tames them, making them easier to handle at shows. As you are grooming, place your rabbits in the preferred pose for their breed and encourage them to stay in that position. Different breeds have different posing positions. Talk to someone familiar with your breed to find out how to best position your rabbit for show.

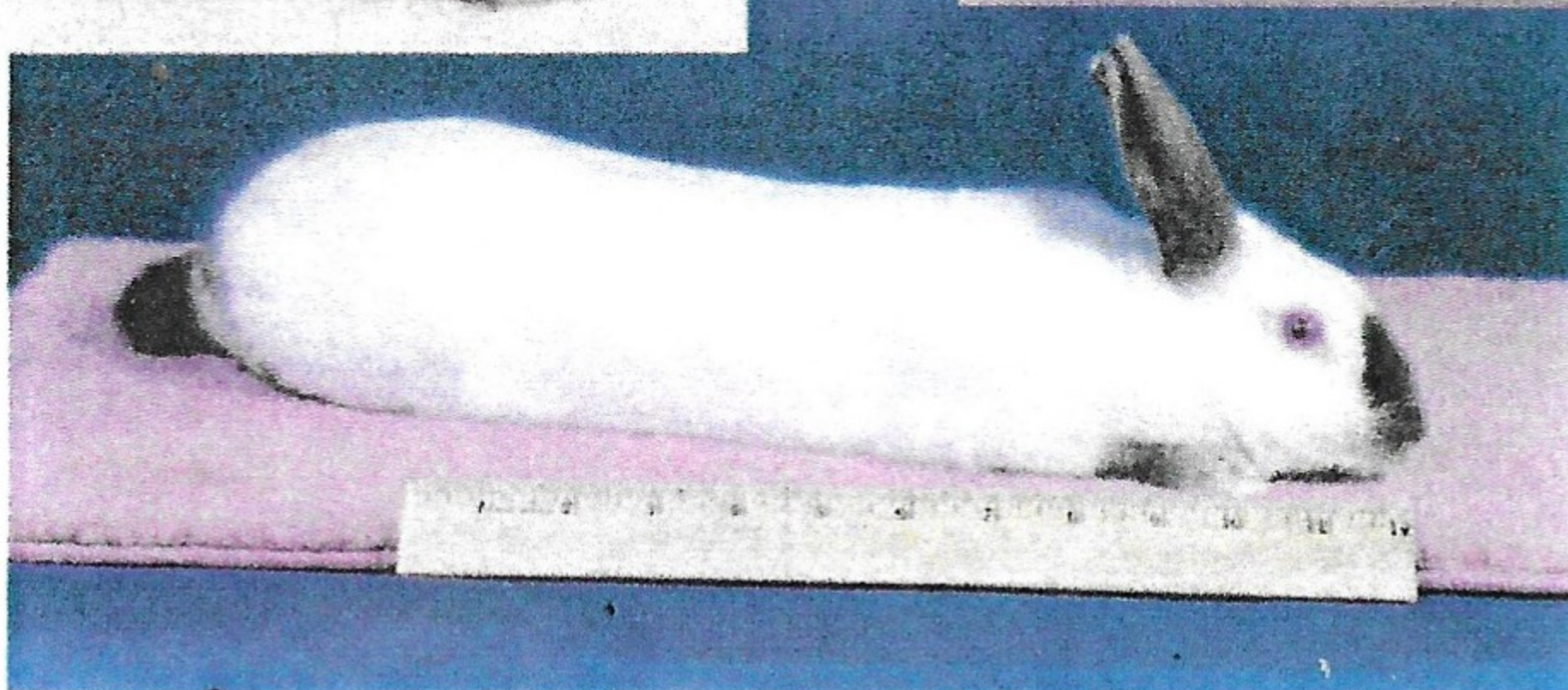
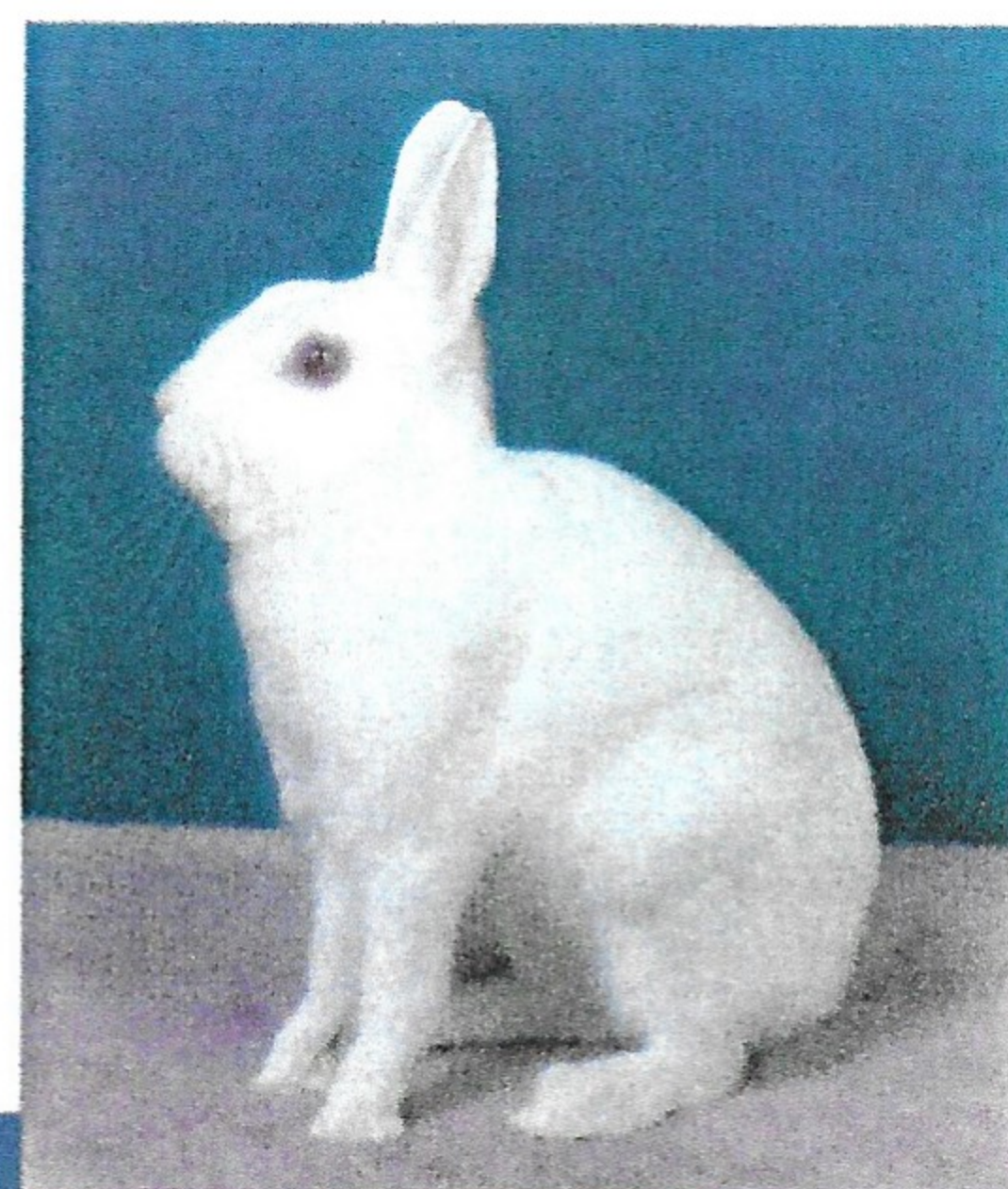
The purpose of posing a rabbit is to determine the rabbit's conformation and bone structure. To put a rabbit in the most common pose, position it on the table facing either right, if you are left-handed, or left, if you are right-handed. This makes it easier to pick the

rabbit back up when you are done. Position the tip of the front feet so they are even with the rabbit's eyes. Position the tip of the hind feet even with its hipbone. Make sure the rabbit's tail is showing and not tucked under its body.

Showmanship

Showmanship is a combination of the 4-H member's appearance, sportsmanship and show ring ethics, knowledge of good rabbit husbandry and presentation of that information, and the ability to handle and show the rabbit according to its ARBA breed standard. Showmanship also includes the cleanliness and condition of the rabbit. A rabbit with faults and disqualifications will not be discounted or eliminated during showmanship. However, the exhibitor is expected to know his or her rabbit's good qualities, as well as any faults or disqualifications.

Practice showmanship and show ring procedures with your 4-H rabbits long before taking them to their first show. Work with your rabbit on a regular basis, sometimes with other people present. A rabbit that is used to being around different people, as well as being posed and handled on a table prior to being taken to a show, will behave much better than one that



is not. Practice can protect your rabbit from potentially dangerous situations, and can save you a lot of frustration.

A 4-H member showing his or her rabbit should wear a long sleeve shirt or coat, long pants or skirt, and shoes with closed toes and heels (no sandals or clogs). Remove any loose or dangling jewelry. Following these recommendations will help prevent injury while handling rabbits. Youth should also be well groomed, maintain eye contact with the judge, and communicate in a clear and confident voice.

Exhibitors will be expected to answer questions related to proper care, production, breed, variety, and class and fur descriptions. They should know other information contained in their project books or ARBA *Standard of Perfection*, according to the project they are enrolled in, and their age and experience in the project.

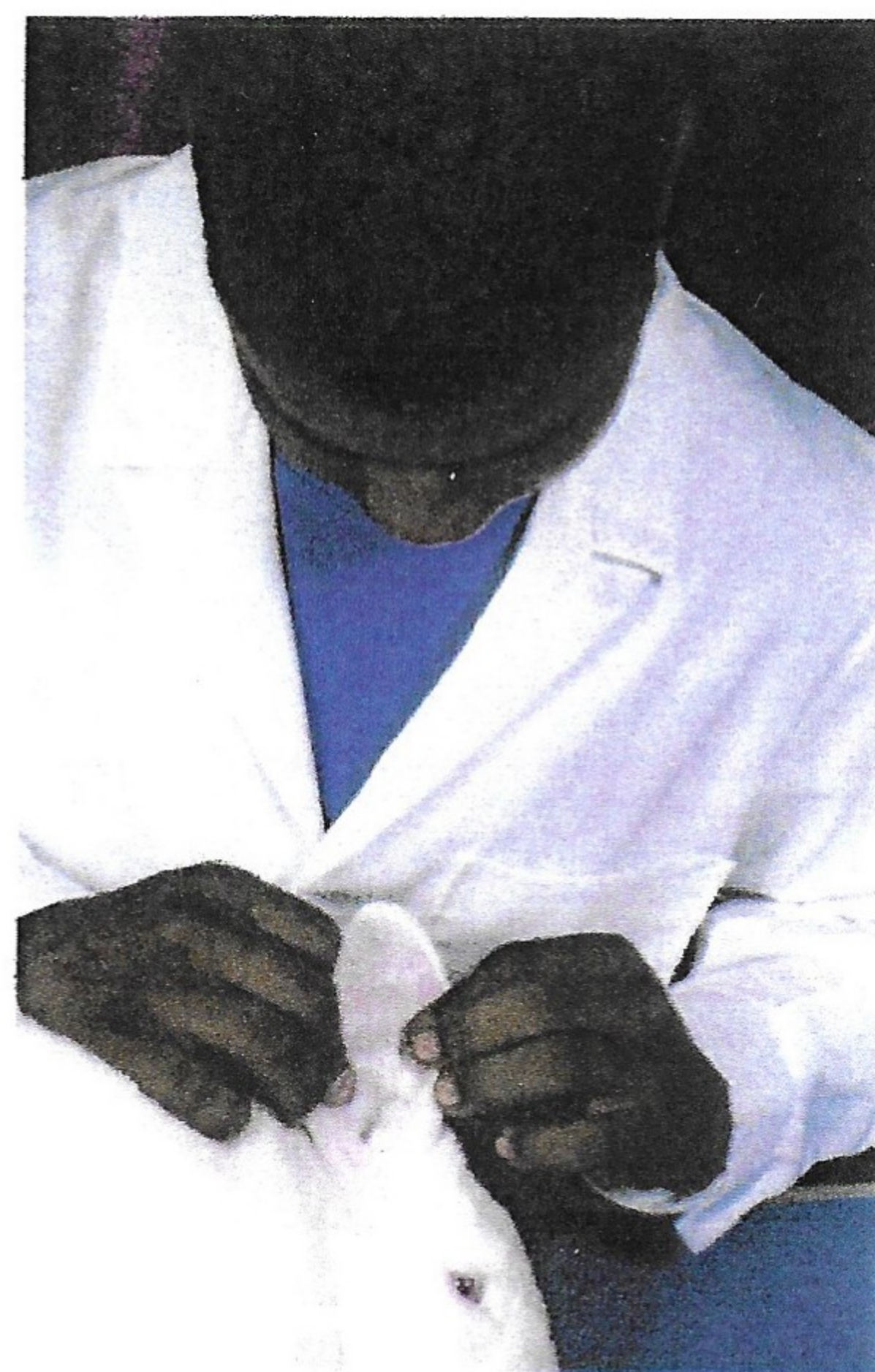
New members should not be overwhelmed by the vast amount of information available. Expectations should be based on age and experience. Most shows divide youth by age and experience levels for this contest.

Ohio 4-H has the goal of members being able to evaluate their rabbits used in the showmanship class for faults and disqualifications according to the ARBA *Standard of Perfection*. This should be done in the following manner with members verbalizing their inspection, showing the inspection, and exhibiting confidence, poise, and proper handling techniques.

When asked to examine a rabbit for disqualifications and general conformation, begin by checking the following:

Ears

- Ear canker
- Illegible or missing tattoo in left ear
- Size and carriage (according to breed standard)
- Torn or missing portion



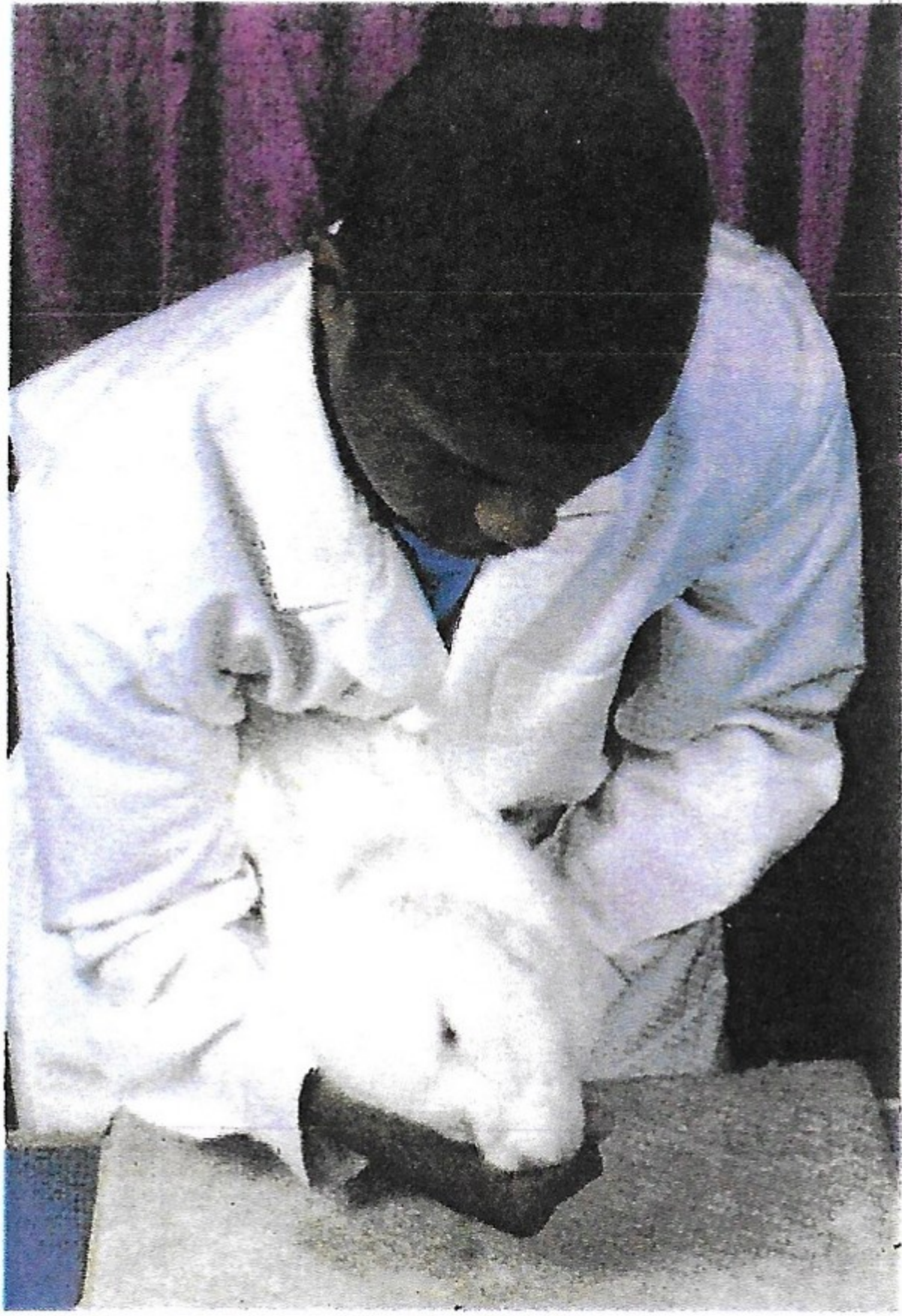
Eyes

- Wall eye (white cornea)
- Spots on eyes
- Mismatched eye color
- Wrong color for breed standard
- Runny or weepy eyes



Nose

- Colds (white nasal discharge)



Front Legs

- Bent, bowed, or deformed



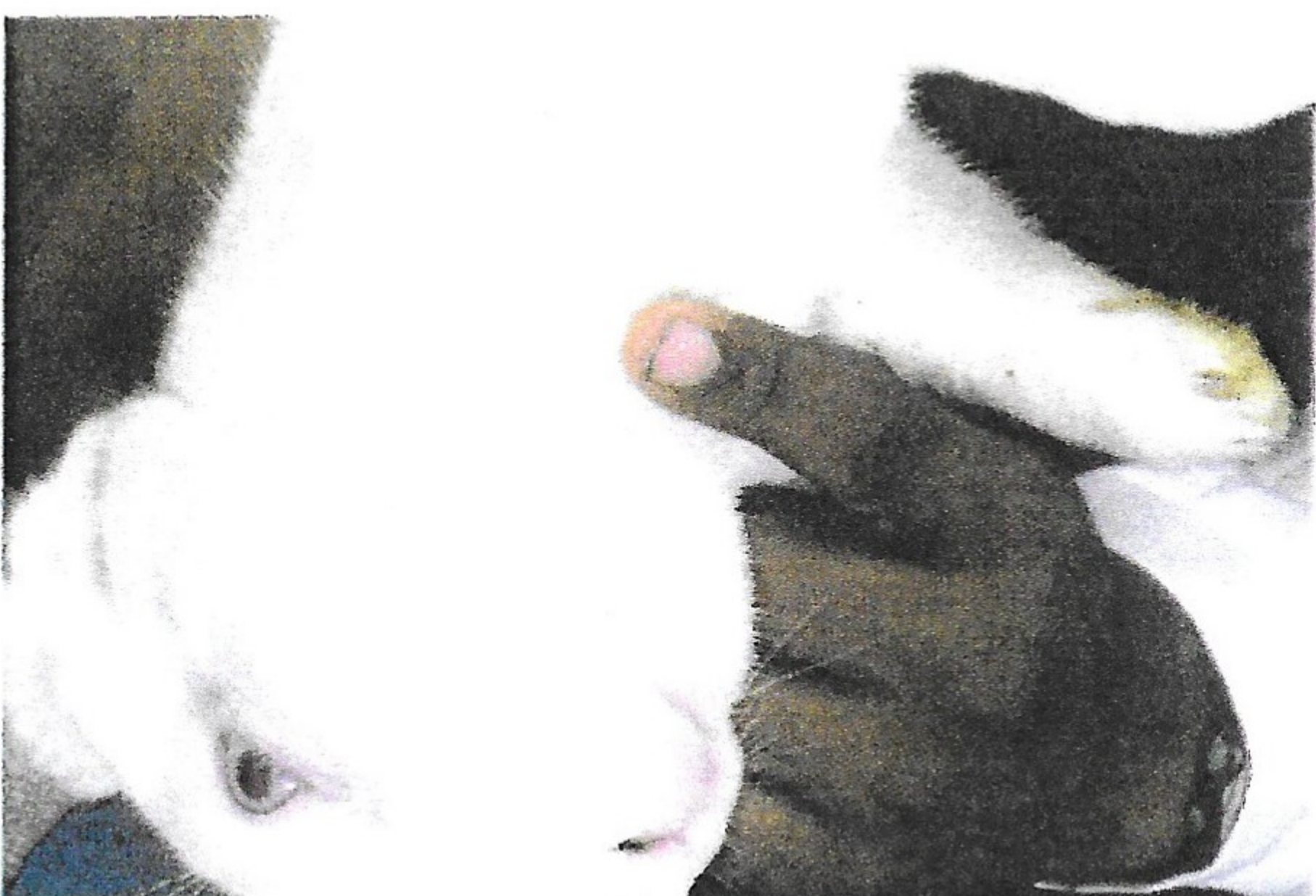
Teeth

- Malocclusion (buck or wolf teeth)
- Simple malocclusion (butting teeth)
- Broken or missing tooth



Chin/Neck Area

- Dewlap
- Abscesses



Front Feet and Toenails

- Missing toenails, including dewclaw (5 each front foot)
- Broken toenail(s) (too short to determine color)
- Unmatched toenails on same foot or corresponding foot, including dewclaw
- Nail color not meeting breed standard



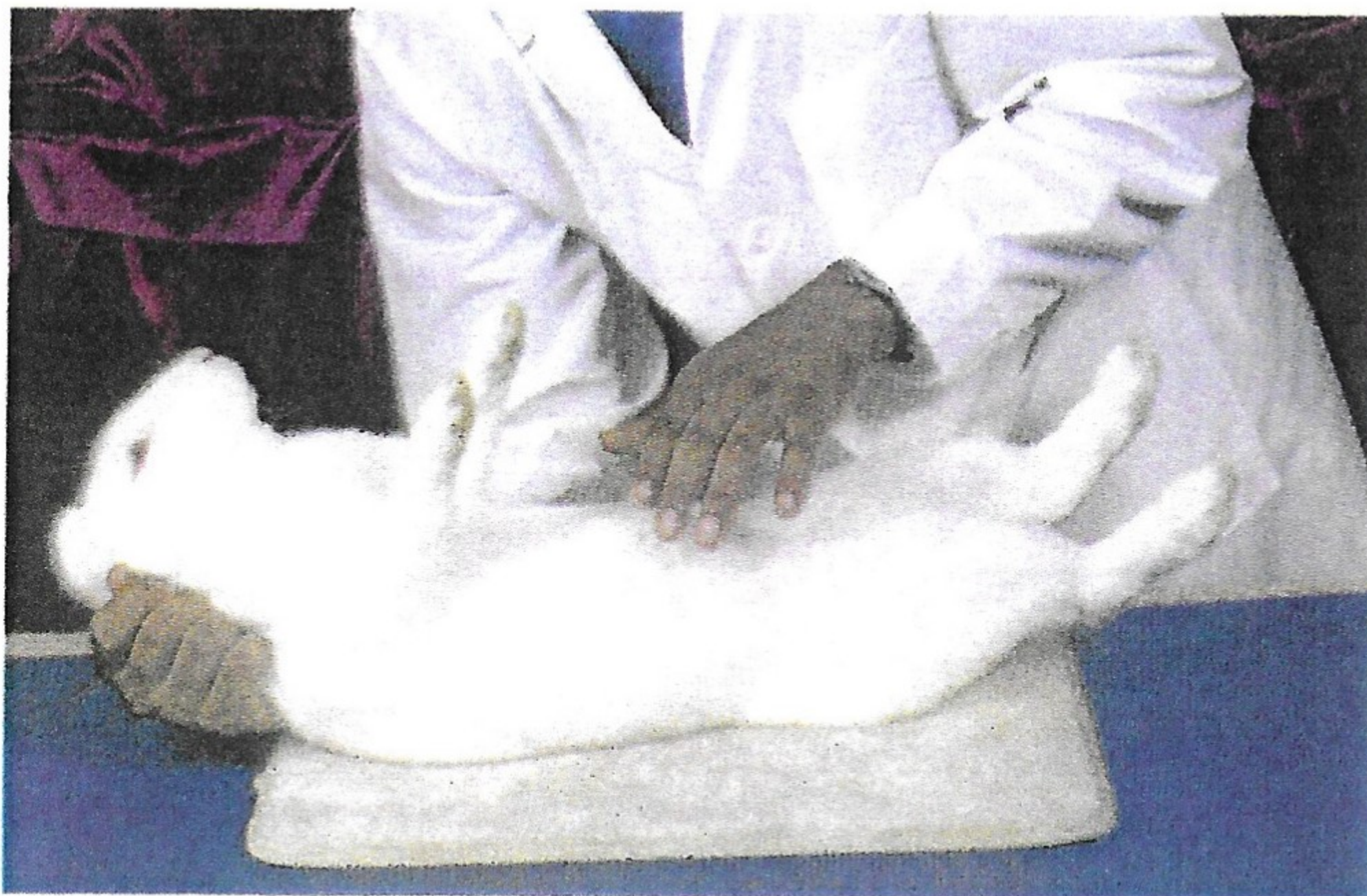
Abdomen

- Mastitis or swollen teats
- Tumor, rupture, or hernia
- Abscesses



Hind Legs

- Bent, bowed, deformed, or severely cow hocked



Hocks

- Sore hocks (Bloody)



Hind Feet and Toenails

- Missing toenail(s) (4 each hind foot)
- Broken toenail(s) (too short to determine color)
- Unmatched toenails on same foot or corresponding foot
- Nail color not meeting breed standard



Sex

- Vent Disease
- Missing testicle(s) on Senior Buck
- Junior Buck with only one testicle showing
- Split penis



Tail

- Stub, broken or wry tail



Show Classes and Procedures

4/6 Class

All recognized breeds of rabbits are categorized into two classes of rabbits. Breeds that have an ideal senior maturity weight of 9 pounds and over are classified as *6 class* breeds. This means that there are six showroom classes for rabbits of this breed to be exhibited.

The breeds of rabbits that have less than a 9-pound ideal senior maturity weight are classified as *4 class* breeds. This means that there are four showroom classes for rabbits of this breed to be exhibited. Refer to the table below for the showroom classes.

The rabbits should be entered in the correct class according to their gender and age. Some breeds allow individual rabbits to increase an age class if they exceed the maximum weight requirement for their Junior or Intermediate class.

Besides the 4/6 breeding classes, there are other classes that you will find at shows.

Market classes are divided as follows:

Meat Pen—Three rabbits of the same breed and same variety weighing a minimum of three pounds each and a maximum of five pounds each and not over 10 weeks of age on the day of the show.

Single Fryer—A rabbit weighing a minimum of three pounds and a maximum weight of five pounds and not over 10 weeks of age on the day of the show.

Roaster—A rabbit weighing more than five pounds with a maximum weight of eight pounds and under six months of age on the day of the show.

Stewer—A rabbit weighing over eight pounds and more than six months of age on the day of the show.

Many shows offer showroom classes for fur and wool competitions.

Breed Fur and Wool—Rabbits normally eligible to compete in the individual fur and wool classes within their breed, plus the normal furred rabbits from the commercial fur class. Refer to the ARBA *Standard of Perfection* for details.

Rabbits are judged in classes from oldest to youngest within their variety and breed. Senior bucks are judged first, followed by senior does. If the intermediate class applies to the breed, intermediate bucks and does are judged third and fourth respectively. Next are the junior bucks, junior does, and where applicable, pre-junior bucks and pre-junior does.

All of the rabbits in the same class are exhibited together on the show table for the judge's inspection. This would include those rabbits of the same breed, variety, sex, age, and weight range (New Zealand, white, senior bucks, for example). Most judges place classes from the bottom up. The lowest rated rabbits are sent to their pens first, followed by the average rabbits, and then the better ones. The last rabbit on the table is the class winner.

The terms for rabbit show awards can be difficult for new exhibitors to understand. Terms like "Best of Breed" and "Best of Opposite Sex" may seem confusing to beginners who are familiar with the more common awards of grand champion and reserve grand champion. The terminology of rabbit show awards is explained on the next page.

| 6 Class | 4 Class |
|--|--|
| Senior Buck (8 months of age and over) | Senior Buck (6 months of age and over) |
| Senior Doe (8 months of age and over) | Senior Doe (6 months of age and over) |
| Intermediate Buck (6 to 8 months of age) | Junior Buck (under 6 months of age) |
| Intermediate Doe (6 to 8 months of age) | Junior Doe (under 6 months of age) |
| Junior Buck (under 6 months of age) | |
| Junior Doe (under 6 months of age) | |

Best of Breed (BOB) is awarded to the best rabbit in a particular breed. The Best of Breed can be either a buck or a doe, and can be from any age group that is exhibited (senior, intermediate, or junior).

Best of Opposite Sex of Breed (BOSB) is the best rabbit in a particular breed of the opposite sex from the Best of Breed winner. For example, if a buck was chosen Best of Breed, the best doe will then be named Best of Opposite Sex.

In breeds with more than one variety, each variety is judged separately. For example, the New Zealand breed has three varieties: black, red, and white. Each variety is judged separately. *Best of Variety (BOV)* is selected from the best buck and doe in each age classification of that particular variety. A *Best of Opposite Sex of Variety (BOSV)* is then selected from the class winning rabbits of the opposite sex from the Best of Variety winner. For example, if a doe is chosen Best of Variety, then a buck will be named Best of Opposite Sex of Variety.

To select the Best of Breed in breeds that have varieties, all Best of Variety rabbits are compared to each other. Once the Best of Breed is selected, all animals of the opposite sex, whether they were awarded BOV or BOSV, are compared to select the Best of Opposite Sex of that breed.

Best of Group (BOG) and *Best of Opposite Sex of Group (BOSG)* are award designations made in breeds that also show group classes, such as Netherland Dwarfs and Jersey Woollys. The best of each variety within a group are shown against each other to determine the BOG. The Best of Group rabbits are then compared to one another to achieve the BOB and BOSB just as the varieties are in breeds that do not have group winners.

Best in Show (BIS) is selected from all of the Best of Breed winners. Best in Show is determined by comparing each of the BOB rabbits to the *Standard of Perfection* established by the ARBA. The rabbit that comes the closest to its breed standard is awarded the Best in Show distinction.

Some shows also pick a Best Four Class rabbit and a Best Six Class rabbit. These are selected by comparing each of the Best of Breed winners from within either the Four Class or Six Class category. The Best of Four Class rabbit and the Best of Six Class rabbit are then compared to the *Standard of Perfection* for its particular breed. Whichever of the two rabbits is closer to the breed standards will be the Best in Show.

Entries

Most 4-H shows and all Open Class shows require entries to be made prior to the show. Read the entry forms carefully noting the entry deadline date.

Fill out the entry forms accurately and completely. The blanks for the rabbit's tattoo number, class, sex, variety, and breed must be completed for each rabbit entered. Check the age of each rabbit carefully and enter the rabbit in the class according to the age at the time of the show (not at the time of entry).

Accurate spelling of your name, address, and other personal information requested on all entry forms is important. The show secretary uses this information to report premiums, points earned, awards, etc., to the proper officials. This information is also sent to you once all results are compiled, usually within 30 days.