

When You Want a Show Quality Rabbit:

This is the Standard of Perfection of the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA). As with most show animals, there is a Standard that rabbits are shown by. Every ARBA recognized breed (there are 49 recognized rabbit breeds and 13 recognized cavy breeds) is judged against a set Standard for each breed, and EACH breed has a different Standard they are judged by. Rabbits and cavies (guinea pigs) are judged on Type, Color, Markings, Condition, Fur Quality, and more.

When you buy a rabbit, you need to decide if it will be a pet or if you might, now or eventually, ever want to show it. If you think you might want to show a rabbit, make sure you buy from someone who is knowledgeable about the Standard for their breed. For instance, some breeds have maximum or minimum weight to be judged on, length of ears is a consideration in some breeds, type of fur and fur quality, what constitutes a good color in which breeds, which colors are accepted to be shown, what are disqualifications in the breed you're interested in buying, and much more. The best way to make sure you are buying a show quality rabbit is to buy from an exhibitor at a show; there are many rabbit sellers who can sell you good pet rabbits but if they don't show their rabbits, they don't know what the judges are looking for in a show rabbit.

Ask questions of the breeder. For instance, how long have you been showing? What was the last show you attended? How do your rabbits do on the show table? Can you show me how this rabbit in question stands up against the show Standard for its breed? Can you tell me it's flaws? Any reputable breeder will be happy to answer these questions and answer them confidently.

At the same time, it is important that you understand that a reputable breeder has invested time, blood, sweat, tears, and money into their herd to get it to where it is. Be prepared that a quality show rabbit will come at a higher price. Cheap Craigslist bunnies should be shied away from.

Unfortunately, "pedigreed" doesn't mean that the rabbit you're buying is show quality or, even, purebred. It just means that the seller is giving you a list of the rabbit's ancestors, and that can also easily be falsified. If it's a genuine pedigree, it helps to see what colors, sizes, etc are in the background of your rabbit and will probably show purity but a pedigree cannot tell you if your rabbit is show quality. You do not need a pedigreed rabbit to be able to show them. Buying a "pedigreed" rabbit from an inexperienced breeder or one that doesn't show competitively does not guarantee you will have a show rabbit to work with. Most likely, it will mean quite the opposite.

In October, 2016, I was helping to work the youth Holland Lop table at a large show in Georgia. This show has more youth, 4H, and FFA kids out of any other show in Georgia. I watched a little boy who was 10 years old place his only rabbit on the table for judging. Behind him stood his parents, little sister, and grandparents who had flown in from Ohio just to watch their grandson compete for his first time ever. With much anticipation, they watched as the judge pulled out his rabbit and immediately disqualified it for being an unshowable color. He took his rabbit off the table and then they stood there in shock over what had just happened. I took them aside and their first words were, "We don't understand. We bought it from a breeder who said it was show quality. It even has a pedigree!" Sadly, they bought from someone who doesn't show at all and was just looking to sell baby rabbits with a pedigree attached to make the rabbit appear more valuable than it was. There is a happy ending to the story, though, because a more experienced breeder

gave the boy a quality rabbit of their own to show in the next show that day. He is still using that rabbit to show and win with.

This article was written because we have seen many, many, many other new exhibitors who have come to their first show with high hopes and a cute bunny that was almost immediately disqualified because the person they bought it from told them it was show quality, and the seller had no clue what show quality was. Our goal is to help mentor new breeders become passionate about this amazing hobby of showing and raising rabbits, and to help them be successful on the show table.

If you have any questions, before you buy, visit the Georgia State RCA website, www.gsrca.com. Any officers, directors, members of the GSRCA that are listed on the website will be able to help answer your questions about show rabbits.

Karin Humfleet and Jodi Adams, August, 2017

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