

# **Rabbit Education and Fun Day**



**An Emerald Star Project**

**By Ava Curletto**

**Lamorinda 4-H**

**2018**



**University of California**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

*The University of California prohibits discrimination or harassment of any person in any of its programs or activities. (Complete nondiscrimination policy statement can found at <http://ucanr.org/sites/anrstaff/files/107734.doc>). Inquiries regarding the University's equal employment opportunity policies may be directed to John Sims, Affirmative Action Contact, University of California, Davis, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2802 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Davis, CA 95618, (530) 750-1397.*

My name is Ava Curletto and I am from Lafayette, California. I am part of Contra Costa County and in the Lamorinda 4-H group.

Originally, I had arranged a project to update the incorrect and out of date educational posters that were displayed in the Fur and Feathers building at the California State Fair in 2017. I had organized a plan and everything, but last minute, there seemed to be some miscommunication. The person I was working with at the Cal Expo had someone else make new posters without telling me, which rather ruined my planned project.

I still wanted to do an Emerald Star Project so I had to shift gears to think of a new plan I could use for my Emerald Star project. I was inspired by my 4-H leader's daughter who had a "Dog Educational Day" for her Emerald Star project and I wanted to replicate the idea but for learning about rabbits. I began planning my project in early November of 2017, which meant I had little time to plan and organize because I was hoping to get my Emerald Star project in before Contra Costa County Fair 2018.

The event I decided to organize a called the "Rabbit Educational/Fun Day." We had a guest ARBA judge to help with educational activities such as showmanship, breed ID, and judging as well as fun activities like the costume contest and a hopping/rabbit race. Kids from all over Contra Costa County and even a few from other counties were welcome. The event was on March 18, 2018 at the Danville Grange.

The event intended to educate kids about all the youth rabbit contests and expand the kids' knowledge. It also served to help kids get ready for the Contra Costa County Fair 2018, where they had the opportunity to practice showmanship. This even included judging to improve the knowledge of kids about how their rabbits get judged and what the judge really means when he/she is talking about their rabbit. The event also helped kids learn to pick out and judge rabbits better so they could learn what all the terms that judges use when judging a rabbit really means. Breed ID intended to boost kids' knowledge about other breeds of rabbits and they could practice learning all the different breeds of rabbits and colors too! The costume contest and the community service activity were for fun. This event was to overall improve knowledge and practice youth events that happen at most rabbit shows and gave the kids more hands on experiences when boosting their knowledge.

I have outlined in the following pages the different stations I had organized so that others could use them as a guide.

Overall, the event was a great success. I was able to source and convert many trophies to hand out to contestants. We had great participation and much learning and practice to improve on experience and knowledge. Most of all, we had a lot of fun and creativity that I hope inspires my peers to continue their interest of rabbits.

## Coloring Contest Station:

I used 5 different designs that each contestant could choose. I put their name and age on the back of the paper so that whoever was judging the contest wouldn't know who the person was while judging it.

Each design was double sided. The back side of the coloring sheet had some fun educational facts about rabbits or a word search to further knowledge about rabbits and keep it interesting for the kids. See addendum for the coloring sheets and fun facts I used.

I had markers, colored pencils and crayons out so that kids could choose which they wanted to work with.



## **Showmanship Station:**

You need to have one judge for each age category. The same judge should judge all kids in the category. Use the ARBA standard for showmanship (see addendum). Judges assign points as directed by the form and adds up the points to determine a winner. You should decide in advance what the showmanship questions (and answers) are so everyone is judged the same in the group and the judge can tally the points for you. If there is a tie, plan to have a tie-breaker question or challenge the contestant to repeat the routine with a rabbit they are not familiar with. The questions I created for each category can be found in the addendum.



## **Judging Station:**

This station is the hardest one to set up because you need to wait for the judge to actually have the score sheet. Your judge needs to know how to do “splits” in their judging meaning they need to be able to judge the placements with a number of points in between each of the rabbit placements. There are only a few ARBA judges trained to do this. Ray Stacy, Allen Mesick and Melissa Mcgee (all in California) know how. Ask your judge in advance if they know how to do this, otherwise, it’s hard to figure out how to tell which contestant has the closest score to perfect when they place two rabbits in a mixed up order. Print the score sheets (copy is in the addendum). Review how to use the scoresheet with contestants so they know how to show their order – it can be tricky. I made an educational display (that I used for Project Skills Day) and put it behind the show coops so contestants could refer to it easily.

Once the rabbits are judged with the splits by the judge, you input the scores into an excel spreadsheet that will automatically add up all the possible points for every given combination (0 being the worst and 50 points a perfect score). Jennifer Ambriosino with CRCS (California Rabbit and Cavy club) and I both have an electronic version of this spreadsheet to share.

You need to find at least 3 classes of rabbits (4 animals to a class), hopefully all senior age, the same sex and the same group/variety. Check all rabbits for DQs and decide whether or not the DQs count during the judging. List on the rabbit sheet the DQs that should not count so the contestants know whether to ignore them (if they find them) or not as it will affect how they rank the class. If you can, borrow or rent judging coops from a nearby rabbit club. Motherlode in Placerville has them and CRCS has them, too. They usually charge about \$20 for a set to rent. If you tell them you are doing this for a 4-H event, they may charge less. Organize all of this a couple months in advance of your event.



## Dress Up Contest:

This is the easiest station to set up. You literally only need to sign to point out where it is and a judge. We used our guest speaker as our judge. You can use whatever theme or themes you want (seasonal, most creative, funniest, twinsies where both the rabbit and contestant are dressed alike, or whatever you want). I chose “home made” as my theme as I wanted people to put the time and effort in making something which could also be used as a stills entry for the Fashion Review County 4-H event later on in the month.



**Community Service Station:**

I had people save toilet paper and paper towel centers for months and we used them to make toys for the adoptable rabbits at the Contra Costa County Animal Shelter. When we adopted our cat, I saw they had rabbits there, too. I thought they would be a great recipient for the toys.

I brought the supplies, taught the leader how to make them and give them a box to put them in. Later on, I went to the shelter to turn them in.



-

### **Educational Displays:**

This wasn't a station, but I had some educational displays from our club that had been previous Presentation Day or Project Skills Day boards from this year or years prior. They were just around the room so that people could look at them during their downtime and perhaps learn something new. It also gave the board makers another event where they could display their presentation and get credit for something in their record book.

I also had the ARBA membership applications and educational leaflets that Ray Stacy brought laid out. If people were not already members of ARBA, then they could learn about the organization and even sign up to become a member. Members get copies of their magazine, "The Domesticated Rabbit," which teaches many interesting things about rabbits, management, diseases and recipes, sent to their house. There are also other perks as well. Copies of these are in the addendum.

### **Advice for the Future:**

There were a lot of things I learned during the planning and execution of this event. Here's the advice I would give you so you don't have to learn them the hard way, too!

1. Stay organized – keep everything in a binder and make spreadsheets on the computer. Have your whole schedule on a paper with you the day of to help you stay on time without forgetting a portion.
2. Start Early – time tends to sneak up on you. You don't think it take as long as it does and it's better to be ready early than stressed out making decisions quickly and at the last minute.
3. Spread the Word – It pays to visit each club community meeting and project meeting. Attendance was looking bleak until I started peppering the community and project leaders with reminders. Don't be afraid to ask multiple times or follow up with people who don't get back to you. Attending the 4-H meetings in person and bringing the awards really captures people's attention. Find ways to advertise in 4-H publications like the CCC 4-H website, The Cloverleaf, any club Facebook pages, pass out flyers at County events, programs and meetings.

## **My Partners During the Project:**

If you want to work on an event like this in the future, here is a list of the people I worked with who helped me accomplish everything I needed to do:

Location – Danville Grange

County office help – Brenda Vales helped me to send out emails to county leaders and make copies.

Awards – Diablo Trophies in Pleasant Hill

Committee Members – visit all nearby 4-H clubs and rabbit projects and ask for help

Guest Speaker – check the ARBA website ([www.arba.net](http://www.arba.net)) to get a list of judges in the area and ask if one is available

Judging calculation excel spreadsheet – Jennifer Ambriosino who runs the Youth Contests for California Rabbit and Cavy Shows club (CRCS).

Judging Coops – Motherlode Rabbit Club or California Rabbit and Cavy Shows club (CRCS)

ARBA literature – ARBA District 2 Representative, currently Ray Stacy

Educational Displays – Ask kids from different rabbit projects to contribute and reuse some of your own if you have them.

Community Service – Contra Costa County Animal Shelter