Now that you have decided to take a rabbit project we would like to give you a month by month idea of what you need to do with your rabbit project. This is for first time members as well as previous rabbit project members.

**January**

\* Sign up for 4-H rabbit project and purchase rabbit resource and breeding project book. (Order through your 4-H club advisor). Market book if taking meat pens or single fryers.

\* If you do not already have your rabbit, research all the breeds (49) to see which one is right for you. Consider how much space you have for a pen, the temperament of the breeds, if you want it to be cuddly or mainly just observe it, how much time you will have for grooming, if you want a rabbit with wool or fur, or if you will use it as a pet, for show or for laboratory testing. You can go to the ARBA website(www.arba.net) to get information on the breeds. Contact local breeders to see if they have the breed you have chosen. If they do not they can usually help you find someone that does. **No pet store rabbits.**

\* If you have your rabbit already, continue to work with them. The more you handle them, the better they will behave. Trim toenails monthly.

\*Make sure your rabbit is getting plenty of fresh water which is clean, cool and fresh. Make sure the water bottle is working correctly and not plugged up with slime. If using bowls make sure they are clean. Change water daily.

\*Make sure your rabbit is getting the proper amount of food. Check on the rabbit feed bag to see how much to feed per the size of rabbit you have.

\*Clean pens weekly and maintain a good sanitation program. Do not forget to wash food bowls and water bottles.

\*Do monthly health checks as you are practicing showmanship with your rabbit.

\*Plan your breeding program for the year. Maintain good breeding records.

\*Breed 6 class animals to have old juniors or young intermediates for the fair.

\*Breed 4 class animals and you will have seniors for the fair.

**February**

\*Purchase your animal anytime between now and **May 25** if you need one.

\*Visit potential meat pen purchasers just to let them know that you will have a meat pen or fryer for sale at the fair.

\*Continue to work with rabbits and practice showmanship. Continue doing the monthly health checks. Trim toenails monthly.

\*Maintain good feeding and watering program. It’s still cold outside. Make sure the animals are getting plenty of water and food.

\*Clean pens weekly and maintain good sanitation program. Don’t forget those bowls and bottles.

\*Plan breeding program (advanced members). Keep good breeding records.

\*Attend Stark County Rabbit and Cavy Breeders ARBA sanctioned show (third Saturday in February).

**March**

\*Make sure you are signed up to take a 4-H rabbit project by **March 15.**

\***Attend Quality Assurance clinic before June 1** if you are taking a meat pen or fryer to the fair.

\*Check Junior Fair website (www.starkcountyjrfair4h.com) for rabbit rules.

\*Start working in 4-H project books. It’s not too early to start studying for skillathon and showmanship.

**\***Continue working with rabbits and practicing showmanship. Do monthly health checks and trim toenails.

\*Maintain a good feeding and watering program. Don’t forget the most important nutrient for your rabbit is water.

\*Maintain good sanitation program for the health of your animals. Clean pens weekly. Clean bowls and water bottles.

\*Breed 4 or 6 class breeds to have junior aged animals for the fair. Keep good breeding records. Palpate your rabbit 12 days after they are bred to see if you can feel babies (This is a task that requires time to acquire the skill to accomplish it).

Do not palpate after 14 days. The embryos could get damaged.

\*Research possible ARBA sanctioned rabbit show dates to see if you can attend and show your animals for experience. Going to ARBA rabbit shows are good ways

to practice breed identification.

\*Evaluate breeding stock to see if you need to make a change. You must have your animals by May 25.

**April**

\*Attend Junior Fair rabbit and cavy clinic. **Extremely important for all first year** **members to attend**. All taking a rabbit or cavy project should attend. Very important handouts and information will be passed out at this clinic. There may

be a rabbit-based quality assurance clinic at the educational clinic.

\*Continue working in 4-H project books. Make sure you read the member project guidelines to see what is required. Start working on poster for poster contest. Don’t forget there is a cash prize.

\*Sanitize nestbox and put it in your rabbit’s cage on day 27 or 28 (that is if your rabbit is pregnant).

**\***Continue working with rabbits and practicing showmanship. Do monthly health checks and trim toenails. Continue to groom your rabbit.

\*Maintain good feeding and watering program. Don’t forget the most important

nutrient for your rabbit is water.

\*Maintain good sanitation program for the health of your animals. Clean pens weekly. Clean bowls and water bottles.

\*If taking a meat pen or fryer to the fair make sure you calculate when you need

to breed your rabbit. The babies have to be under 70 days of age for the meat pen or fryer show.

\*Breed for junior aged animals if breeding wasn’t successful earlier. Make sure you keep good breeding records. Kits will be junior aged animals at fair time.

**May**

\*Must have project animal by **May 25.**

\*Attend OSRBA Mini Convention the first weekend in May (Ohio State Fairgrounds Columbus, OH). See many breeds that you generally don’t see in this area. You have the opportunity to show, practice breed id, judging, and participate in educational contests. Contact a committee member if interested.

\*Decide when you will wean your litters.

\*Breed for meat pens and fryers at the appropriate time.

\*Breed for junior aged animals if breeding wasn’t successful earlier. Although

we are getting to the point when they will be to small to take to the fair. Consider if you really want to breed at this time. Also, the mom would probably not be in the best condition to go to the fair.

\*Make sure you keep good breeding records.

\*Continue working in project books. Study for skillathon. View website (starkcountyjrfair4h.com) to practice for skillathon and showmanship.

\*Continue working with animals. Practice showmanship, trim toenails,

groom rabbits, removing loose fur or wool, check for matting, and do monthly health checks. Make sure pens are clean to avoid stains on the coats.

\*Maintain good feeding and watering program. Watch how your rabbits are adjusting to weather changes. Do they need more, less, or the same amount of feed. Are they requiring more water. A rabbit need to have plenty of clean, cool water in front of them at all times.

\*Continue good sanitation practices. Clean pens weekly. Don’t forget to clean

feed and water bowls or bottles. Take all wire cages outside and scrub them. Burn fur or wool off the wire (take rabbits out first). Leave out in sun for an hour to dry. Remember the sun is the best natural sanitizer. Repair pen if necessary.

**June**

\*Prepare a letter for meat pen or fryer buyers.

\*Check into showing at the Ohio State Fair. Entry deadline is June 20th. You can participate in skillathon, showmanship, breed id, judging and poster contest. You are required to coop your animals Wednesday through Sunday. Make your hotel reservations if you plan to show at the Ohio State Fair.

\*Maintain good sanitation practices. Clean pens weekly. Sanitize food and water bowls. Provide good ventilation in your rabbitry to prevent odors and overheating. Good ventilation helps with fly control.

\*Maintain good feeding and watering practices. Make sure rabbits have plenty of clean, fresh, cool water.

\*Continue working with animals. Practice showmanship. Trim toenails. Groom, removing loose fur or wool. Do monthly health checks. Work with animals in cool part of the day.

\*Continue to keep good breeding records.

\*Continue working in project books. Study for skillathon and showmanship. Utilize website (Starkcountyjrfair4h.com).

\*It is too late to breed for junior aged animals for the fair. They will be too small and the mothers will not be in condition to go either.

**July**

\*Send out meat pen letters. Start weighing fryers to monitory weight gains or loss. Don’t handle too much. You don’t want to stress the animals out.

\*Attend pre-registration clinic. You can get your animal tattooed for free if your animal does not already have one. Have your entry form with you (it is attached to your rabbit rules) and fill out as much as you can. At the clinic the rabbit committee will check over your rabbit and help you enter it into the correct breed, age, variety, and sex class. We will also help you determine which showmanship class you will enter. You can turn in your entry form here.

\*Entries must be turned in, in **July to the Jr. Fair Office. No late entries will be accepted. Check rabbit rules for date that they need to be turned in by.**

\*Provide good ventilation in your rabbitry to prevent urine smells and overheating. If using fans, do not blow them directly on your animals. Clean more frequently to reduce smells.

\*If your rabbitry gets above 85 degrees F, you can put a frozen ice bottle (2 liters work well) in their cage to act as an air conditioner. If you have a wool breed cover the bottle with a tube sock.

\*Water frequently. Rabbits need clean, fresh water at all times during hot weather. Keep water bowls or bottles very clean. They will drink better from a clean bowl or bottle. Change water several times a day.

\*Groom animals more often to ensure their coat is in good condition for the fair. Remove loose fur and check for any matting and stains they may have. Do this in the cool part of the day.

\*Practice showmanship more often. The more you work with your rabbits the better they will be. Practice in the cool part of the day.

\*Finish up project books. Prepare to have them judged at skillathon. Study for skillathon. Make your poster for the educational poster contest.

\*Continue checking website for project updates.

\*Continue monthly health checks. Trim toenails.

\*Maintain good feeding program. Animals will probably eat less in the hot weather. Feed them later in the day when it is cooler. This is when the animals are more active.

\*Keep good breeding and feed records.

\*It is too late to breed for junior aged animals for the fair. They will be too small to take to the fair and the mothers will not be back into condition.

**August**

\*Check on website 1st week of August to see what stations will be on the skillathon this year.

\*Visit with the potential buyers you sent your meat pen letters to. Ask them in person to purchase your animals. Weigh your fryers once a week and record weights. Monitory food consumption and weight gains or loss. Do not handle to much. You don’t want to stress the animals out.

\*Participate in showmanship and skillathon contests. Skillathon is mandatory for

project completion. Check rules for date and time.

\*Turn in educational poster at skillathon that you made for the poster contest.

Remember there is a cash prize for the best posters.

**\***Continue monthly health checks. Do this as you are practicing for showmanship.

\*Maintain good feed and watering program. Feed later in the day when animals are more active. Make sure water is clean and fresh. You may need to water 3 or more times per day. Sanitize food and water bowls or bottles weekly.

\*If temperatures go above 85 degrees F where your rabbits are kept, continue to use frozen pop bottles as air conditioners for your rabbits.

\*Make sure ventilation in your rabbitry is good to prevent urine smells and overheating. Don’t blow fans directly on rabbits. Clean more frequently if necessary, to prevent urine smells and good sanitation. Rabbit manure is a good fertilizer for your garden. Control fly population.

\*Trim rabbit’s toenails and make sure rabbits are groomed for skillathon and again for the fair show. (Do in the cool part of the day).

\*Get your animals to fair check on the Monday before the fair starts between 12:00pm and 8:00pm. **Check in closes at 8:00pm.**

\*Make sure you are at the fair (Tues or Wed) to put your animal on the show table.

\*Make sure you clean your rabbit’s cage while they are at the fair. You are responsible for feeding and watering your own rabbits while at the fair.

**September**

\*Feed, water, and clean your rabbits while they are at the fair.

\*When taking your animals home from the fair, you **MUST** take your animal to the **check out** table. There we make sure you are leaving with the correct animal.

\*Come to the rabbit barn for tear down. Help clean and put away the equipment that has been your rabbit’s home for the week. This is the first Wednesday after Labor Day at 6:00pm.

\*Write a thank you note to the person that donated the trophy you were lucky enough to win.

\*Write thank you notes to meat pen/fryer buyers.

\*Don’t forget to thank all the people that helped you have a successful 4-H year.

(Parents, siblings, advisors, extension office staff, committee members, fair staff)

\*Maintain good sanitation practices at home. Clean cages, feed and water bowls

or bottles weekly.

\*Continue proper feeding and watering program. Weather can still be really hot,

adjust your feeding and watering schedule accordingly.

\*Make sure you have proper ventilation in your rabbitry.

\*Continue monthly health checks. Properly groom your animals. Trim toenails.

Practice showmanship.

\*Plan breeding program for the rest of the year. Keep good records. Fall is a good time to breed for older rabbits for next year’s fair. Breeding 4 or 6 class animals at this time will result in senior aged animals for next years fair.

\*Evaluate breeding stock to see if a change is needed for next year.

**October**

**\*Pick up meat pen/fryer checks at Rabbit and cavy committee Oct Meeting.**

**(second Monday of October). In the Jr Fair Office.**

\*Attend ARBA sanctioned rabbit shows to learn more about raising and showing rabbits.

\*Maintain good feeding and watering program. Keep good feed records.

\*Continue with good sanitation practices. Clean pens weekly. Sanitize food and water bowls or bottles weekly.

\*Take all wire cages outdoors, scrub and sanitize them. Leave them in the sun to dry for about an hour. The sun is the best natural sanitizer. Burn off fur or wool. This may be the last good month for this type of cleaning.

\*Prepare rabbitry for winter weather.

\*Continue monthly health checks while practicing showmanship. Trim toenails.

\*Continue grooming your animals, they may be putting on their winter coats.

\*Breed your rabbits if your breeding program requires it. Breed 6 class animals

if you want senior aged animals for next year’s fair. Make sure your breeding records are up to date.

\*Continue to check website for updates.

**November**

\*Maintain good feeding and watering program. Keep good feed records. Evaluate your feed to see if it is doing a good job for you.

\*Continue with good sanitation practices. Clean pens weekly. Make sure food and water bowls or bottles are clean. Rabbits eat better and drink more when the bowls are clean. Would you drink or eat out of a dirty bowl or bottle?

\*Prepare rabbitry for winter weather if you haven’t already.

\*Continue monthly health checks while practicing showmanship. Trim toenails.

\*Continue grooming your animals.

\*Breed your animals if your breeding program requires it. As it gets colder and the days get shorter it becomes much harder to get your animals bred. If you do want to breed as the days get shorter you will need to leave a light on in your rabbitry so they get 14 hours of continuous light.

\*Continue to check junior fair website for updates (starkcountyjrfair4h.com).

**December**

\*Maintain good feeding and watering program. Keep good feed records.

Don’t forget rabbits need water at all times. Frozen bowls may become a problem.

Be careful when getting the ice out of the bowls. Crocks break easily.

\*Continue with good sanitation practices. Clean pens weekly. Make sure food and water bowls or bottles are clean. Even though it is cold outside this still needs to be done to keep down the ammonia in your rabbitry. Rabbits can smell 7 times better then we can.

\*Make sure your rabbits are ready for winter.

\*Continue monthly health checks while practicing showmanship. Trim toenails. Continue grooming your animals.

\*Breed your animals if your breeding program requires it.

\*Continue to check junior fair website for updates (starkcountyjrfair4h.com).

\*Send Christmas or Holiday cards to meat pen/fryer buyers just to remind them that you appreciate them.

\*Consider what projects you will take next year. Will you take a marketing

project? Expand into a second, third or fourth breed, if allowed in project rules?

Remember to always check the rabbit rules for updates.

**ENJOY YOUR RABBITS ALL YEAR LONG!!!**