

Date: **February 2, 2026**

To: **4-H Rabbit Project Members and Leaders**

From: **Kayla Mitchell, Program Coordinator - 4-H Youth Development**

Re: **2026 Rabbit Project Important Information and Updates**

This is a quick update on the events that will take place for the 2026 fair season within the rabbit department. Should you have questions, please feel free to contact the MSU Extension office at 269-467-5511. **Please note that the information contained in this letter is subject to change.**

NEW for 2026

- **Evaluations:** members exhibiting both breeding stock and market animals will only be required to do ONE rabbit evaluation.
- Each market pen must weigh a minimum total of **10 lbs.** and a maximum total of **20 lbs.** at fair weigh-in. There is no minimum weight requirement per rabbit, but 3 lbs. is recommended. We encourage breeding or purchasing rabbits two weeks earlier.
- We encourage all rabbits to be loaded out on Saturday, September 26, from 11:00 p.m. to midnight to get the barn cleaned. If necessary, they may also be loaded out on Sunday, September 27, at 5:30 a.m.
 - The St. Joseph County Grange Fair will NOT require loadout to be done by 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 27. There will not be fireworks or rides operating that day.
 - ALL YOUTH are still expected to be at barn clean up at 5:30 a.m. on Sunday to tear down gates and clean specie barns (this includes power washing the rabbit barn if it is not complete Saturday night).



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Reminders

- Market pens must be **commercial breeds** that are raised primarily for meat consumption per ARBA (i.e. Californian, New Zealand, Silver Fox, etc.). Contact Nancy Mangus, Rabbit Superintendent, if you are unsure whether a breed qualifies.
 - Market pens are made up of three rabbits of the same breed.
- **Countywide tattooing and registration** will be at the fairgrounds near the rabbit barns on Sunday, August 9, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., and Wednesday, August 12, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. All rabbit exhibitors must attend one of these dates with their rabbits.
- Each pen must weigh a minimum total of 10 lbs. and a maximum total of 20 lbs. at fair weigh-in.
 - **Underweight and overweight** pens will be ineligible to exhibit at the fair and will be sent home. *Exception:* rabbits may be moved to breeding stock classes where appropriate.
- There will be an "**unofficial**" set of scales available for use prior to getting in line at fair check-in on Friday, September 18, 2026. Please remember that you may weigh your rabbits officially only ONCE at the rabbit barn entrance.

- All rabbit exhibitors are required to feed and water their own market and/or breeding stock rabbits each day between 6:00 - 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Exhibitors must bring their own wheelbarrow, wagon, or bucket to clean under their cage **every morning**.
- **Dress Code** for *Showmanship* classes: long sleeve white shirt, dark colored pants, and closed-toed shoes. Dress code for *CloverBud, Market, and Breeding Stock* classes: long sleeve shirt, dark colored pants, and closed-toed shoes.

Important dates, deadlines, and events

Event or Deadline	Date(s)	Comments
Initial Tattooing & Registration	August 9 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. or August 12 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Required for all exhibitors
Fair Registration Due	August 15	Online via FairEntry
Barn Setup	September 17 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.	See Job List for Club(s) responsible for 2026
Fair Weigh-In/Check-In	September 18 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	
Evaluations	September 19 2:00 - 6:00 p.m.	Rabbit Barn
4-H Market & Breeding Stock Show	September 20 9:00 a.m.	Henningsen Show Arena
4-H Small Animal Sale	September 24 10:00 a.m.	Order of sale: rabbits, goats, turkeys, chickens
Market Rabbit Load-Out for Processor	September 26 10:00 p.m.	See Job List for club(s) responsible for 2026
Breeding Stock/Take-Home Released & Barn Clean-up	September 26 11:00 p.m. until done Or September 27 5:30 a.m. as needed	See Job List for club(s) responsible for 2026