

How to Register Purebred, Pedigreed Show Rabbits with the ARBA

What does “Pedigreed” and “Registered” mean?



Official rabbit registration papers

If you are new to showing or breeding rabbits, you may be a little confused about pedigreed rabbits and registered rabbits. Many of us have an idea about AKC registered dogs and try to apply that knowledge to rabbits, but that just doesn't work! Registration is handled differently for rabbits. One of the main

differences is that rabbits are not automatically qualified for registration just because the parents are registered (in fact, many registered rabbits have no registered parents or even grandparents). Another difference is that rabbits must be personally examined by a licensed registrar in order to be registered.

Let's start at the beginning. If you are buying a rabbit that you might like to show or breed for show animals, make sure that you get a complete three-generation pedigree on the rabbit. By complete, I mean that the pedigree must contain the name, variety (color and indication if the pattern is broken), and weight for each ancestor for three generations. It's okay if some of the ancestors are non-showable colors. It's also nice to have the ear numbers for each of those animals. Additionally, a good pedigree will list any legs won, the registration number of registered animals, and any grand champion numbers that may apply. Besides obtaining the pedigree, make sure your new rabbit has no disqualifications, which we will discuss in more detail below. The same things that disqualify a rabbit from being shown disqualify it from being registered.

Most show rabbits have pedigrees. However, not all rabbits with pedigrees qualify for official registration with the American Rabbit Breeders Association.

How do Rabbits Qualify for Registration?

The next step is to join the American Rabbit Breeders' Association (ARBA) if you have not done so already. (If you are interested in rabbits and haven't joined, join now!) Only ARBA members may register their rabbits. You must show your ARBA card to the registrar at registration.

All rabbit breeds must be at least six months old before they may be registered. This applies to six-class breeds [large breeds like Californians, Flemish Giants, New Zealands, Satins, etc.] as well as 4-class breeds [small breeds like Holland Lops, Mini Rex, Jersey Woolies, etc], even though six-class breeds are not considered seniors until they are eight months old. Once your rabbit is six months old, you should make a final check to see if he or she has any disqualifications. Weight is an easy thing for you to check at home. Weight is also an important issue for rabbits that will eventually go over the weight limit, which is 4 pounds. If you want to register your larger rabbits, you should

attempt to do so as soon as possible after they turn six months old. I try to register all of my rabbits before breeding them, in fact.

Make sure that your rabbit is a showable color when you purchase it. The accepted colors vary for different breeds. Check your [Standard of Perfection](#) for a list of allowed colors in your breed. Right now, martens, and tans are not showable for Holland Lops and therefore not registerable. Only black, blue, chocolate and lilac otters are showable. Check official Holland Lop standards for a complete list of showable colors. (Note: white spots in solid animals can disqualify the rabbit, so make sure any solid rabbits you purchase are completely solid.)

Check teeth, tail, toes, and nails. Malocclusion, missing nails, extra toes, missing toes, missing tail, or any other anomaly will prevent your rabbit from being registered. Injuries that have not healed properly will also prevent your rabbit from being registered. That's another good reason to register your rabbits early. A registerable rabbit can be spoiled by a simple accident such as pulling out a nail. Any disqualification from competition will render a rabbit ineligible for registration.

The complete standards for each breed are included in the ARBA Standard of Perfection. As long as I've checked the obvious, I don't worry about understanding every detail; that's what the registrar is for. There are myriad rules for eye color, nail color, etc.

Rabbits must have a permanent tattoo in their left ear to qualify. If you have not already had your rabbit tattooed, you may request that the registrar tattoo your purebred bunny. Generally, expect to pay an extra \$1 or \$2 for this service. If your rabbit is qualified to be registered, he or she will receive an additional tattoo in the right ear.

When you present your rabbit to the licensed registrar (rabbit shows arrange to have a registrar present), bring your rabbit, your ARBA card, and the rabbit's pedigree. Also, have \$6 for the registration fee. Registrars are available at most ARBA sanctioned shows (some shows are exempt from the requirement).

Note: if you have a number of animals to register, you may be able to invite a registrar to your barn and have a number registered at once. When I have about fifteen bunnies to register, I make an appointment and my registrar makes a barn visit. Besides not having to tote rabbits to a show, I benefit by being able to register pregnant or nursing does.

The registrar will weigh your rabbit and look over every part, including teeth, nails, tail, and genitalia. If your rabbit meets the qualifications, the registrar will tattoo the right ear, check your ARBA card, and accept your fee. You must also complete an application form that includes three generations' information on your Holland Lop. As mentioned above, if you come to a rabbit in the family tree that is registered, you complete the information for that rabbit, but not for that rabbit's ancestors. For example, if the sire of your rabbit is registered, you complete the information for the sire (name, weight, color/pattern (variety) and registration number), but not for the grandparents or great grandparents.

After a couple of weeks, you will receive your pedigreed rabbit's registration papers in the mail. Voila! You are done.

How does a Rabbit Become a Grand Champion? Earning an ARBA "Leg of Grand Championship" Certificate at a Rabbit Show

If your rabbit qualifies for a "leg" at a show, the secretary will mail you the certificate along with your show report. The title on a leg says, "Record Of Leg Of Grand Champion Certificate." ARBA legs can be thought of as legs of a race. There are three legs in the race and the finish line makes your registered rabbit a grand champion.

What is a Leg?



ARBA Leg Certificates given to winning rabbits

Legs can be awarded for first place in a class competition (such as solid senior bucks or broken junior does), Best of Variety or Group, Best Opposite Sex of Variety or Group, Best of Breed and Best Opposite Sex in an ARBA sanctioned show. Your rabbit can also win a leg by winning Best in Show, but by then, he or she has probably already picked up a leg along the way! Strangely enough, Best Reserve in Show does not earn a leg and BRIS wins will not be listed on your legs. Best 4 Class breed and Best 6 Class breed also do not count toward legs.

Not every class winner will earn a leg. Winners must beat a certain number of rabbits to qualify. Two numbers are very important when determining whether your rabbit will receive a grand champion leg for these wins. These numbers are "five" and "three." There must be five rabbits competing in the category and there must be three different breeders represented. For example, if your rabbit comes in first of eight rabbits, but there are only two different breeders who exhibited, your rabbit does not earn a leg. If there are four Broken Senior Does with three different breeders, your show rabbit will not earn a leg for first place. But if that Broken Senior Doe goes on to win Best of Variety (BOV) or Best Opposite Sex of Variety (BOSV) and the competition was among a total of five or more broken (for BOV) or broken does (for BOSV), then a leg will be awarded. Your rabbit must win in a competition among five or more rabbits from three or more breeders.

Do All Legs Count Toward A Grand Champion Certificate?

At least one of the grand champion legs must be earned while your rabbit is a senior. So, your rabbit can earn one or two legs as a junior (or more) and the rest as a senior and be graded. Or, your rabbit can earn all three legs as a senior. Your rabbit cannot earn two legs from the same judge in the same day.

How To Obtain A Grand Champion Certificate



Official Grand championship certificate from the ARBA

A rabbit must be registered with the ARBA before it can become a grand champion, even when your rabbit has collected all three legs.

When you receive the results from a rabbit show, generally in the mail in a couple of weeks, you will receive your rabbit's leg on a slip of paper. The certificate will list how your rabbit gained the leg (more than one way may be indicated, but only one leg per show counts). Add your rabbit's registration number in the appropriate place on the form. Maintain that slip of paper until you have collected three legs (being mindful of all of the requirements discussed above). Then mail the legs along with the current fee (\$4) to the current executive director of ARBA. The address is on the back of some legs, but can always be obtained on the ARBA website under the listing of directors and officers. [Note: you may want to photocopy the legs because they will not be returned to you.]

Note: be sure that you are the owner of record for that rabbit because that owner is who the Grand Champion certificate is awarded to. If you bought a registered rabbit and did not have it properly signed over to you (see the back of the registration certificate), you are not the owner of record. To remedy this situation, have the person who sold you the rabbit sign it over to you on the back of the form. Then send the form, along with the fee, to ARBA to have your ownership recorded. You can change owner and send in your GC legs for your certificate at the same time. Once all of the correct paperwork and fees have been filed, your Grand Champion Certificate will be sent to you. You are now the proud owner of a Grand Champion and have the right to use either GC or "Grand Champion" in front of your rabbit's name!