

# Rabbits Hop To Show Fame

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Food And Family  
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**HARRISBURG** (Dauphin Co.) — Talk to Jenna Carnibe a few minutes, and you'll quickly discover that being a rabbit and cavy queen is no hippity-hop job.

The 17-year-old is well versed in rabbit and cavy breeds and the characteristics required to garner points in each category. Put 20 different breeds in front of her and she can identify and specify the idiosyncrasies of each variety.

"I want to be a vet, and this (showing rabbits) has given me a head start," Jenna said. "I already know a lot more about rabbits than many vets do."

Jenna's statement is not boastful. Instead, it's meant to reveal the astounding amount of information that many breeders accumulate in caring for rabbits.

Feed and health care are important proponents in raising champion breeds. Jenna, who lives in Butler, raises about 70 head and enters about 20 shows annually. About nine years ago, Jenna started with a pet rabbit, a Dutch breed. She and her brother soon added Mini-Lops and later, Jersey Woolies.

Since then, her 15-year-old brother has relinquished his rabbits to pursue other interests, but Jenna continues to add to the stock kept on the small farmette owned by parents Ken and Connie Carnibe.

To become queen, candidates must be a member of the state Rabbit and Cavy Association and fill out an application detailing their experience with the industry. At the state convention conducted each February, candidates are interviewed by judges, and must judge four classes and identify 20 different breeds. Prospective queens must present a 3-5 minute promotional talk about the industry.

In addition to being selected queen, Jenna was also named Pennsylvania youth breeder of the year. This is dependent on the running total of points accumulated from showing and placings for rabbits. She also won first place in senior division judging and breed identification.

At the national level, Jenna rates second in overall judging. "This experience really ties into my future plans to become a vet, helps me with public speaking, and teaches me responsibility and record keeping," Jenna said.

Jenna said that she enters her rabbits mostly in Ohio competitions since that state is only about one hour from home, closer than most of the competitions in the eastern part of her home state.

As queen, Jenna has attended many county fairs to promote the industry. To attract attention, she accompanies an association member who is dressed in a rabbit costume. Fairgoers are quick to ask questions and eager to accept literature about rabbits and the association.



Pennsylvania Rabbit and Cavy Queen Jenna Carnibe holds her Jersey Woolie named Gus, which won best of variety at the Farm Show.



Although chickens were banned from the Farm Show this year because of the risk of avian influenza, some Chinese roosters were sneaked in the back door. David Nolt examines two of the Chinese roosters that attracted the attention of collectors.

In addition to caring and showing rabbits, Jenna, a junior at Butler Senior High School, is a member of the marching band, which played at the Citrus Bowl Parade, and of the French Club. Jenna is a member of the Pittsburgh Pride fast-pitch softball traveling team and the recreation center team. She is president of her county's 4-H club.

More than 800 entries were entered in the rabbit and cavy divisions at Farm Show. Jenna garnered ribbons for best of breed in mini-lop division and two best varieties in Jersey Woolies.

"Rabbits get stressed easily, es-

pecially lops," Jenna said. "The rabbits spook easily and run into the sides of the cage, which can break the rabbits' back."

The Lops long ears also break easily if bumped.

"It seems I lose my best ones," she said.

During Farm Show week, Jenna helped care for the 800 rabbit entries from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. During judging, she remained until 1 a.m.

These hours alone show that raising rabbits is much more than a hobby. It's a job, and one that points to a prospective career for Jenna.



"Geronimo" is Best of the Show out of 700 entries in rabbit and cavy competition. The Champagne d' Argent rabbit is owned by Ed Hildebrand, Biglerville dairy herdsman. The breed is born colored coal black, the fur becomes silver-colored by 4-5 weeks, and lightens after each molt, becoming almost white in maturity. The breed originated from France and arrived in the U.S. between 1922-1925. Hildebrand and his wife Ellen owned about 50 Champagne d' Argents that they breed and sell. Outstanding breed characteristics are condition (firmness of flesh), quality of fur coat, color, conformation, and meat quality. As a youth, Hildebrand showed heifers at the Farm Show. About nine years ago, Hildebrand began raising rabbits as a hobby.

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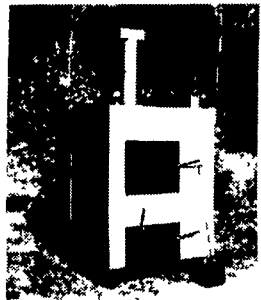
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