

## Lucky Rabbit's Foot

FFA members travel to McKinney for the Junior County Livestock show

Avery Fulton, staffer  
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From the beginning of the year up until the first week back from winter break, the FFA show team members dedicate time towards preparing their show projects for the Collin County Junior Livestock Show in McKinney. This could mean training and looking after an animal, such as a rabbit, lamb, goat, pig or cow, or designing a horticulture arrangement. With all the time that students have invested in their projects, it's distressing when something goes wrong at the last minute. For third year FFA member Alison Haughey, junior, this was the case Tuesday, January 6 at the rabbit show.

"I was trimming his toenails, and I went to trim one of them and it wasn't there. I felt scared," Haughey said. "I didn't know what to do, so I continued clipping his toes and I found two more. I spent the entire show freaking out and worrying that the judge was going to notice, and I would get disqualified."

In order to show an animal, it has to meet certain standards pertaining to its breed. Part of the breed standards is maintaining proper grooming of the animal, meaning a dirty coat or a few missing toenails could mean the difference between best in show and disqualification.

"You have to groom [the rabbit] and wash his fur," mini rex owner Sam Zike, junior, said. "Wipe it down with a wet cloth to get it clean. Brush him and make sure his eyes are clean."

Grooming for the breeding rabbits usually happens right before their show starts, during the judging of the meat pen rabbits. When it's finally make it onto the judging table, it's up to them to be on their best behavior. No thumping around.

"They call your breed and division down, and you put your rabbit in a little cage," Zike said. "Then, the judge takes it out on the other side, inspects it for breed standards and puts it back in. Once he inspects all the rabbits, he narrows it down to first through fifth place."

Luckily for Haughey, the polish rabbit's missing toenails could be covered and she was able to take home a ribbon. "He usually gets first, but he got third," Haughey said. "It's still better than getting disqualified."

