

Dallas girl leads rabbit team to nationals

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Emily Roberts, a junior at Dallas High School, wants to help put Oregon on the map — the rabbit map.

Roberts and a small team of young rabbit breeders have a chance to do just that this weekend at the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) National Convention in Portland.

Oregon's four-member team got its first taste of national competition at last year's ARBA convention in Texas — the time in a long time that Oregon has sent a team — and hopes to improve on that performance.

"It will be a good show though because the West Coast is very competitive as far as the quality of the animals go," Roberts said. "We have a lot of judges and a lot of good breeders over here."

Roberts has already made a name for herself as a cavy (guinea pigs) shower and breeder, having been crowned "queen" in the royalty competition at the American Cavy Breeders Association for two years in a row.

She went to her first national competition in seventh grade and has attended more than 20 local and national-level shows each year since she began working cavs and rabbits.

Now, Roberts and the small but mighty Oregon team could be on the verge of taking national titles on their home turf.

She will be vying for the title of youth rabbit queen. The royalty competition has five elements: application, 15 essay questions competitors answer before the convention begins; timed judging; breed identification; a 200-question exam; and an interview before a panel of judges.



JENNIFER ROBERTS/for the Itemizer-Observer
Emily Roberts works with her Himalayan rabbit, preparing for competitions.

Roberts said the pre-convention front runners are on the strong Washington state team, but she's calling her team the rising star.

"The Oregon team has gotten a lot of new kids who are really excited about the royalty competition, which I'm really excited about that because I want to see our program grow," Roberts said.

They are off to a good start.

The team attended the recent Washington state competition, getting second, third and fourth placers in the judging contest.

Roberts won three individual titles, but couldn't be given the overall title of queen because she was from out of state. She was most proud of her breed identification title.

"Last year at nationals that was my challenge," she said. "I'm amazed at how

Westminster of Rabbits

What: American Rabbit Breeders Association national convention.

When: Saturday through Tuesday.

Where: Portland Expo Center, 2060 North Marine Drive, Portland.

For more information: www.arba.net.

much I've learned."

Perhaps she shouldn't be. Roberts keeps her ARBA breed standard — or as Roberts calls it, "the rabbit bible" — with her at all times.

"Where other girls have compacts or makeup, she's got her ARBA standard in her purse," said Emily's mom, Jennifer Roberts, smiling.

Jennifer, in addition to accompanying her daughter to competitions, is constantly challenging her to learn more.

"You quiz over dinner and when we are driving," Jennifer said. "We quiz while we are waiting. We do mock interviews."

Emily spends hours at the beginning and end of the day caring for and working with her rabbits and guinea pigs — she will be taking a number of them to the convention, too.

With just days before the start of competition, Emily is about to see if all that preparation will propel her to national queen status.

"My goal is to introduce myself to a lot of new kids and make new friends."

Sudoku solution

9	3	4	7	6	8	2	1	5
1	8	6	2	5	4	7	3	9
7	2	5	1	3	9	4	8	6
4	1	3	9	8	2	6	5	7
6	7	8	5	4	3	1	9	2
2	5	9	6	1	7	8	4	3
5	6	2	4	9	1	3	7	8
3	9	1	8	7	6	5	2	4
8	4	7	3	2	5	9	6	1

Grow: Kids learn the ropes of gardening

Continued from 18A
Small wild pansies needed to be replanted away from the strawberry bed and with the other flowers, onions needed to be planted with garlic — winter crops.

Flowers will help feed the pollinators throughout the winter, Siegel said. She said flowers will be planted at the end of each row.

"If you put them in the very middle, they'd be attracted to the very middle and see all the other things along the way and do those first," suggested Tyler Thompson, 7.

All of her students have been very enthusiastic about gardening, Siegel said. "Some of the kids say, 'I just watch TV at home, I want to do this instead,'" she said.

While they've already eaten most of the vegetables they grew this fall — and loved them, Siegel noted — there are plenty of projects to keep the kids busy and outdoors all winter.

"The class will build fairy houses, bird houses and bird feeders, and keep the pollinators fed," she said.

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