

RAISING MEAT PEN Rabbits

The Ultimate Guide to Successfully Raising
and
Showing Meat Pen Rabbits



Aaron Webster

Raising Meat Pen Rabbits

By Aaron Webster

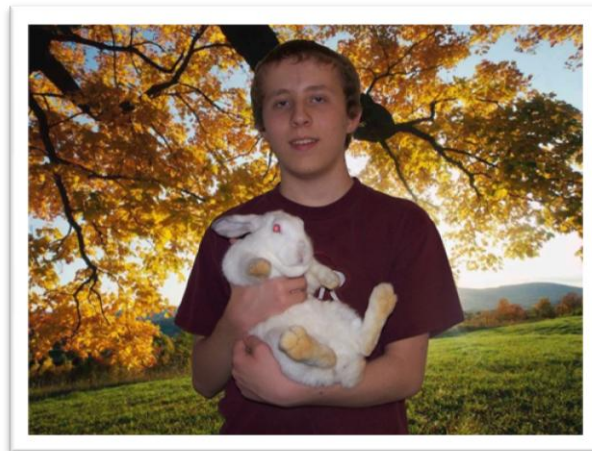


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Forward:

Wind and clouds swirled through the skies with only the treetops blocking their incredible force. Way below the ferocious winds, there was a faint shadow of something running under the moonlit sky. The something carried a dim lantern and ran with weak but determined footsteps. A hurricane was coming and the footsteps belonged to me, a thirteen year old boy at the time who was desperately trying to protect his beloved rabbits...

My real name is Aaron Webster however many around the World prefer to call me by my earned alias “The Rabbit Master”. I have been proudly raising rabbits since age 10 when I first began my 4-H Rabbit Project. Although today I am known by rabbit raisers all around the World as being the “rabbit guru” and have personally raised thousands of rabbits over the years, experienced lots of showing success, started one of the World’s most popular rabbit websites, wrote the book Raising Rabbits 101, and built up one of the most known rabbitries in the state of Texas, the truth is, my rabbit project started out with very humble beginnings. I started out with simply a trio of rabbits, no personal knowledge in the industry and a very limited supply of startup capital. In this book my goal is to reveal to you how I did it and give you first hand advice on how you can start successfully raising and showing meat pen rabbits yourself.



A photo taken of me at age 15, holding “Hope” the rabbit.

Introduction:

I decided to write Raising Meat Pen Rabbits with the purpose of specifically providing 4-H and FFA students with a complete guide to successfully raising and showing meat pen bunnies and as more or less a sequel to my first book Raising Rabbits 101. While there are currently numerous books on the market about raising and breeding rabbits I noticed that there really isn't much information available about specifically raising meat pen rabbits. The purpose of this book is to change that and provide the rabbit beginner and intermediate with a book that will help jumpstart them into the Meat Pen Rabbit Industry by providing them with an easy to read book filled with firsthand accounts and advice.

Making the decision to simply read this book from cover to cover will almost guarantee that you will have an advantage over anyone else who hasn't made the commitment to dedicate time into improving their knowledge of the industry.

In this book I cover everything that you need to know to jumpstart yourself into Raising Meat Pen Rabbits Industry or simply improve the success of your existing rabbitry. Also I suggest that you check out the various resources that I have compiled over the years and included throughout this book. Doing so will definitely help you advance your rabbit project faster and is bound to save you time, money and frustration in the long run.

Good Luck and I Hope you Enjoy this Book,

Sincerely,

Aaron Webster

Author of: Raising Meat Pen Rabbits | Raising Rabbits 101

P.S: I would love to hear your thoughts, comments or suggestions about this book. Feel free to email me feedback at any time. My feedback email is info@raisingrabbits101.com. If I receive suggestions about new topics I should cover, I will try my best to include them in the next edition of this book. THANKS!

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Chapter 1: Beginning Your 4-H or FFA Rabbit Adventure



What exactly is a Rabbit Meat Pen anyway?

When I use the term meat pen I am referring to a pen of three rabbits which usually weigh between 3 and 5 pounds. Normally the rabbits are either Californian or New Zealand and are exhibited by youth involved in either 4-H or FFA. A “meat pen” is one of the forms of rabbit competition; many times offered by an ARBA (American Rabbit Breeders Association) sanctioned show. When an exhibitor enters a meat pen into a show they ideally are choosing their best three rabbits (approximately 70 days old), to be judged in a fryer competition (judging on ideal meat qualities). Although they are judged based upon meat characteristics the rabbits themselves are very rarely used for meat since they generally are “the cream of the crop”. Instead they are usually kept for breeding stock or sold at auction for competitive prices if they place high enough in the show.



Do I need to eat rabbit meat?

Several decades ago in order to be successful with your meat pen rabbit project you would need to most likely process and eat your own rabbit meat. Now with the creation of resources such as RabbitBreeders.us and SellRabbitsOnDemand.com rabbit breeders can pretty easily sell all their excess rabbits to others for consumption and or alternative markets.

Benefits of Raising and Showing Meat Pen Rabbits

Great Learning Experience: If done right the process of raising and showing meat pen rabbits can be a very rewarding learning experience. It would literally take an entire additional book to describe everything that the process of raising and show meat pen rabbits has taught me directly and indirectly over the years. The knowledge and skills gained from the process of successfully caring for, managing and showing rabbits will undoubtedly aid youth participants and those who assist them in many different areas of their lives.

Rewarding Social Experience/Hobby: Participating in raising and showing meat pen rabbits is a rewarding hobby that will enable you to meet other like minded people and potentially some of your future best friends.

Opportunity to earn extra Money: While the vast majority of 4-Hers and FFA students don't make a profit off of their rabbits, unless you include their show winnings, you can indeed earn extra money from your rabbit project like I successfully did as a 4-H student. If you are interested in earning money from your rabbit project, the best advice I can give you is to do things a bit differently than everyone else and follow the modern 21st century rabbit raising advice that I have included in this book.

Great Scholarship Opportunities: Lastly participating in raising and showing meat pen rabbits as a 4-H or FFA student if done right, can help land you nice scholarship opportunities as you get close to graduation. This is undoubtedly a big plus considering the rising tuition costs and the huge spike in student loan debt that at the time of writing this book, is sweeping across the USA and rest of the Western World. Raising rabbits as a 4-H student, directly and indirectly, helped pay for the majority of my college tuition and room and board at a 4 Year University.

Do you have what it takes to successfully participate?

Commitment: While raising rabbits doesn't have to be rocket science, especially if you read this book cover to cover, it does require commitment. Like any other activity in life, not everyone is cut out to be a rabbit raiser. As a rabbit raiser you will need to dedicate time each day to caring for your rabbits and will have to spend a significant amount of money to get started. Unlike many of the other livestock projects students get involved with raising rabbits in many ways can be a much more dynamic project that requires effective herd management. At a bare minimum even if you live in a county where you can buy your meat pen bunnies (more on that later) you still need a minimum of three rabbits, that you need to manage. If you plan on raising your own you will ideally need quite a few more.

Time: Raising rabbits does require a significant time investment, especially if you plan on being successful with it. While you most likely won't have as many rabbits as I do, as I mentioned a moment ago, raising rabbits will require a time commitment. Each and every day you are going to need to spend time to at least feed and check up on your rabbits.

Some money to get started with: While raising rabbits can by far be one of the lower cost intensive projects, it does take a significant amount of money to buy your first rabbits, purchase your rabbit supplies and setup a living area. The good news is that by utilizing the resources and advice that I have provided you with in this book you can definitely save money and get started the "right way" so you don't find yourself having to repurchase supplies that weren't of good enough quality shortly after making your initial purchase..

Free gift for you: Recently I put together a special report titled "The 3 Essential Traits of a Successful Rabbit Raiser". Today I would like to go ahead and give this report to you FREE OF CHARGE as a special gift from myself, "The Rabbit Master". In this special report I reveal to you the 3 traits that you need in order to become successful in the rabbit industry and provide you with information on how you can develop them if you don't already consider yourself to have these traits. To download your free copy of this special report you can visit:

<http://RaisingMeatPenRabbits.com/essentialtraits> .

4-H and FFA Clubs

In almost all cases in order to show meat pen rabbits you will need to become a member of a local 4-H or FFA Club if you have not already done so. In my opinion both 4-H and FFA are very good organizations to join however there are some differences between the two organizations with regards to raising meat pen rabbits that should be pointed out.

The Breakdown: 4-H which I joined in 6th grade was the best organization I ever decided joined in my opinion and I recommend that if you plan on raising meat pen rabbits that you join as well. From personal experience I have found that 4-H tends to be more beneficial to rabbit raisers than FFA does. FFA is a terrific organization to be a part of if you plan on raising goats, pigs, lambs, steers, heifers, chickens, turkeys, etc however in most cases I have found that the vast majority of FFA leaders don't have a ton of experience with rabbits. So if you are currently a member of a FFA club and not 4-H or are planning on being in the near time future I suggest that you join 4-H as well. 4-H also is an extremely broad spectrum organization that focuses on much more than just raising animals due to the popular belief of many. 4-H students have opportunities in get involved in many non livestock activities as well including but not limited to leadership, community service, baking, photography, handicrafts, horticulture, technology, shooting sports, science, and Much more.

To learn more about 4-H you can visit the official website via: 4-h.org .

For FFA the official website is: ffa.org . Also for FFA faqs here is a terrific page I found:

<http://www.texasffa.org/whatisffa.aspx> .

Age Requirements: To become an official member of 4-H you need to be in at least third grade and (ages 8-18). The same goes for Junior FFA however the earliest FFA classes at school would start would be 7th Grade. That being said, in most districts FFA is only offered in High School.

School Credits: You can get credits in High School for taking FFA classes if your school offers it. On the other hand, 4-H is handled outside of the public school system and can be considered more of a separate community organization vs an extracurricular activity.

Choosing a Purpose

While people have different opinions about how you should go about doing things in life, I'm a big advocate of setting goals and "**choosing a purpose**" or mission before making the commitment to start something new. My personal belief is that it is extremely hard or "near impossible" in other words, to become successful at something without actually "defining that success" and setting goals along the way. The same goes for raising rabbits in my opinion.

Sure if you are reading this book right now there is a pretty good chance that your general goal is to raise and show meat pen bunnies but I believe you should take it one step further and define a specific purpose for your rabbit project ahead of time.

What is your underlining purpose for raising meat pen bunnies?

Are you interested in the learning experience? Want to raise rabbits for meat? Is your goal to raise money in scholarships to pay for college? Are you determined to get Grand Champion at your local rabbit show or are you seeking to simply do well? Are you interested in getting involved as a fun hobby and meet new friends along the way? Is it important to you that you make a profit from your rabbit project? How many rabbits do you want to have? ... etc, etc, etc.

Asking yourself these simple questions will help you "choose a purpose" or mission for your rabbitry and will help aid you in making important decisions with regards to your rabbit project.

Example: When I first started raising rabbits my general goal was to raise meat pen rabbits for show. Soon my goal became to develop the best quality meat pen bunnies possible to do well and place at the rabbit shows I attended. Later the "purpose of my rabbit project" became centered around experimentation and teaching others in addition to earning some money from my rabbitry to at minimum cover all the incurred expenses.

Quick Tip: Before proceeding any further, why not take a couple minutes to think about the "purpose of your rabbit project"? Grab a pen and paper and jot down some thoughts. Try discussing this topic with other family members and or friends that will potentially be involved or are currently involved with your rabbit project.

Buying vs Raising your own Rabbit Meat Pens

A debate that often takes place amongst members of the rabbit community who show meat pen bunnies; is whether you should buy or raise your own met pen bunnies?

In some counties you are allowed to buy your rabbit meat pen bunnies at a young age and then simply raise them for several weeks until the show.

Buying Meat Pen Bunnies PROS, CONS and Discussion

The major PRO associated with buying your own meat pen bunnies is the fact that you will only be raising them for several weeks vs having to raise rabbits the entire year, breed them and hope to get bunnies for the upcoming show. This allows 4-H and FFA students who might not have the time or resources to raise rabbits for an entire year to have a pretty easy animal project they can take part in. Another PRO to buying meat pen bunnies is the fact that the costs of your rabbit project will be pretty low. On average meat pen bunnies are sold for between \$20-50 each and since you will only be raising them for a few weeks feed costs will be minimal.

The major CON to buying your own meat pen bunnies in the eyes of many dedicated rabbit raisers is the fact that you will have a very minimal rabbit experience if you simply buy your pens and won't learn near as much, as you would if you raised your own. The second major CON in my opinion is the fact that if you buy your bunnies you will only have those to choose from which is usually about five in number. In many cases the number of bunnies that you have to choose from to take to the show has a direct correlation with the success that you can expect to have... provided that you select the right bunnies to bring.

Lastly it is important to point out that for most shows you will need to raise your own bunnies, so the buying vs raising your own bunnies debate in this case would be irrelevant anyhow.

Before making a decision about whether you should buy your meat pen bunnies or breed your own you should first obtain a copy of the official rules for your local show and see whether or not that is even allowed. Secondly you should consult with rabbit enthusiasts in your area who

have raised bunnies for the show you wish to attend in the past to get their opinion on the issue. Lastly you should take some time to reflect on the underlining purpose of your rabbit project to decide whether or not you should buy your bunnies or not.

My Opinion on the Issue:

As a long time breeder and former exhibitor who recently has sold meat pen bunnies to 4-H and FFA Students I have differing thoughts and opinions on the issue.

I believe that it is a good idea in many cases to allow students to purchase their meat pens however I do believe that you are going to get a LOT more out of the project if you raise and breed your own.

That being said I totally understand the reasoning behind someone wanting to simply purchase their meat pens, especially when their rabbit show is in the summer months when it is harder to ensure that you have bunnies born, due to the fact that bucks can go temporarily sterile in the heat, which is a big problem in states like Texas. Buying your own meat pen bunnies is obviously a lot easier than breeding and raising your own from birth which is going to make this angle of the project more attractive to a lot of people.

My Personal Recommendation: To everyone reading this book my personal recommendation is that you breed and raise your own meat pens rather than buying if possible. Or if you live in a location where you are allowed to buy and decide to, that you seek to raise your own someday in the future, maybe once you have bought bunnies for a couple years. This way you can expand your learning experience and potentially improve your rabbit showing success.

Either way... this book is filled with information to aid you in your journey and honestly I have to admit that it's pretty cool, getting to sell meat pen bunnies to 4-H and FFA students and having my rabbits get to compete in meat pen shows once again, despite being too old to show rabbits myself in youth meat pen competitions.

Meat Pen Rabbit Breed Selection

When selecting a rabbit breed to raise for meat pens you need to be sure to select a breed that is classified by ARBA as having a “Commercial” Body Type.

That being said out of all the “Commercial” Rabbit Breeds that different rabbit shows might officially allow in their rules. There are only four that I would even pay attention to since out of all the meat pen rabbit shows I have attended, to my knowledge these have been the only breeds that have been exhibited there.

- ❖ Californians
- ❖ New Zealands
- ❖ Palominos
- ❖ Satins

Out of these four breeds the Californian and New Zealand are BY FAR the most popular as far as meat pen rabbit shows are concerned. Around 95% of the rabbits taken to meat pen shows at least in my area of the country are either Californians or New Zealands.

My personal favorite is the Californian Rabbit Breed which I have raised since age 10 when I joined 4-H. In my area about 80 percent of the pens exhibited on an annual basis are Californians. My recommendation is to raise either the Californian or New Zealand for meat pens depending upon which breed seems to be most popular in your area of the country.



Californian



New Zealand



Palomino



Satin

Cost of your Rabbit Project

Although raising rabbits can be a lot cheaper than raising other animals such as pigs, horses, heifers and goats, you need to be prepared to spend a substantial amount of money to get your rabbit project started. The biggest expense associated with your rabbit project to start off with could potentially be the construction of a rabbit barn/shelter. If you already have a place where rabbits can safely live or that can be adapted for them to safely live in, the majority of the potential expense associated with your rabbit project will be already taken care of.

Excluding the potential construction cost of some sort of rabbit barn, shed or shelter the main initial expenses of your rabbitry will include the cages/hutches and the purchase of your first rabbits. Together the cages and rabbits should cost several hundred dollars. I also recommend that you take advantage of the resources that I recommend throughout this book and invest about \$100 into your rabbit education and about \$50 on rabbitry management/pedigree software to help you effectively manage your rabbit records and generate pedigrees. By spending a little extra on improving your rabbit education and buying rabbit software to help you manage things to begin with, it is almost guaranteed that you will save yourself a TON of time, money and potential frustration in the long run.

Personally I would recommend that before you start raising rabbits that you allocate a budget of at least \$500 (more if you plan on getting more than about 3-4 rabbits to start off with or if you will need to build a rabbit barn/shelter) to cover all the getting started expenses. If you try to cut corners you will most likely regret it in the long run.

Once your rabbit project is up and running the biggest expense that you will incur will most likely be your monthly feed bill. To cover the feed expense you should be prepared to pay an additional couple hundred total over the next several months or so, before you can at least start breaking even with your rabbit project by selling excess rabbits.

If you plan on buying your meat pen rabbits the initial costs to get started could potentially be a little bit lower as you won't need to buy cages for your rabbits to expand into.

Buying your Rabbit Breeding Stock

Since we are focusing on specifically raising meat pen rabbits for show here, there is only one rabbit buying outlet that I recommend.

You need to buy your rabbits from a dedicated and reputable rabbit breeder, who has ideally had some good success with their rabbits at shows. Avoid initially purchasing your rabbits from feed stores, pet stores, rabbit rescues or from rabbit raiser John Doe living down the street who doesn't know a thing about showing rabbits.

Plain and simple... you need to purchase quality stock if you plan on successfully raising meat pen bunnies.

The Cost: On average you can expect to pay between \$40-75 for a grown Californian or New Zealand Rabbit and between \$100-200 for a trio (consisting of two does and a buck). If I was to start out raising rabbits from ground zero again I would be prepared to pay between \$225-300 for what I call an "extended trio" (consisting of three does and a buck). Although you can probably still find breeder rabbits for about \$25-30 available on the market, I suggest that you start out with higher quality stock rather than simply buy a couple of John Doe's excess rabbits that may or may not perform well.

How many rabbits should I start off with?: While it seems that the majority of first time rabbit raisers have become accustomed to starting out with a trio of rabbits to breed for their meat pen rabbit show, I recommend that you start out with an extended trio (consisting of three does and buck). Having three does rather than two does will significantly increase the chances that you will get some bunnies born your first year.

If you want to guarantee that you will have bunnies born the first year I tell people that they should purchase 5 does and 2 bucks. I wouldn't recommend starting out with more rabbits than this unless you have raised rabbits before and already know what you are doing. Having too many rabbits right away can get a tad bit overwhelming to say the least. That is why I highly recommend that you start off small in order to get the hang of what you are doing first.

What should I look for when buying rabbits?: Since this is a meat pen rabbit project you will want to select rabbits that exhibit good meat qualities. Ideally the rabbits that you purchase should be wide, full and look healthy. When I first bought rabbits like the majority of newbies I didn't have a clue what I was looking for. For this reason it is very important to buy from a dedicated rabbit breeder with a good reputation or bring along a fellow rabbit raiser who has experience to come along and help you pick out your first rabbits.

Quick Tip: Some breeders will allow you to come by and briefly tour their rabbitry before making a purchase, personally I don't have time to handle frequent rabbitry tours however some smaller scale rabbitry owners may be more than happy to show you around first.

Where can I locate reputable rabbit breeders and find rabbits for sale?

If you would have asked me this question five years ago I wouldn't have been able to give you a definite answer other than "search the web" or "ask around" however today I am happy to say that I'm just the right guy to help you out.

In December of 2010 I decided to start a website for helping connect people interested in raising rabbits with local rabbit breeders in their area. To make a long and eventful story short... the website I started RabbitBreeders.us now facilitates more rabbit sales each and every month than all the competing websites combined. In fact RabbitBreeders.us at the time of this writing has received approximately 1.4 million visits since October 2011!! So for whatever its worth you could say that I help facilitate more rabbit sales each and every month than anyone else in the entire World. :)

Essentially RabbitBreeders.us is a huge Rabbit Breeders Directory which to date includes over 1,800 rabbitry listings from across the United States. RabbitBreeders.us also has a growing classifieds network featuring up to date rabbit classifieds from across the country.

In addition to RabbitBreeders.us I have also setup two sister Rabbit Breeder Directories, one for Canada (RabbitBreeders.ca) and one for England (RabbitBreeders.org.uk).

Rabbit Breeder Directories

Please check out the Rabbit Breeder Directory websites listed below to find rabbits for sale in your area and state (province or territory in you live outside the USA) or search for rabbits for sale by breed.

United States: <http://rabbitbreeders.us/>



Canada: <http://www.rabbitbreeders.ca/>



England: <http://rabbitbreeders.org.uk/>



Buying Meat Pen Rabbits

If you decide to buy your meat pen rabbits you will need to locate a Meat Pen Rabbit Breeder in your area. Traditionally finding meat pen rabbit breeders can be a quite difficult task due to the fact that the demand for meat pen rabbits usually exceeds the availability. That being said, I have taken the time to assemble a descent size list of meat pen rabbit breeders via RabbitBreeders.us, that you are free to browse through.

Search for Meat Pen Rabbit Breeders: <http://rabbitbreeders.us/meat-pen-rabbits>

Alternatively you can simply head over to the Californian or New Zealand Rabbit Breeders Page on RabbitBreeders.us and find a breeder that way. Note: not all breeders listed in our directory who raise meat pen rabbits have taken the time to get listed on our meat pen rabbits page as well which means browsing your state page or desired breed page could also prove to be just as effective.

How many meat pen bunnies should I buy?: In my opinion you should buy at least 5 meat pen bunnies to raise for any given show. If you buy less than 5 bunnies you will rarely have a good selection to choose from when it is time to select bunnies for your actual meat pen that you will be showing. If you can afford 6-8 bunnies and find a breeder who will provide, go for it! The more bunnies that you have, the better the selection that you will have to choose from in most cases.

How much should I spend on my meat pen bunnies?: In most cases you can expect to spend between \$20-50 per meat pen bunny that you purchase. I would recommend that you aim for the \$25-35 per bunny range if you are starting out. I personally sell my meat pen bunnies for about \$30/each when I have them available.

When should I order my meat pen bunnies?: If you want to help insure that you can actually find meat pen rabbits for sale and not just rely on luck, you should definitely consider pre-ordering your meat pen bunnies in advance. The process involved with pre-ordering your bunnies will vary from breeder to breeder however it usually works by; first contacting a meat

pen rabbit breeder and then putting down a deposit on the bunnies that you wish to purchase in advance of the breeding.

The problem with buying meat pen bunnies in advance: One of the major problems that can arise when you attempt to order meat pen bunnies in advance like I recommend is; the possibility of the breeder not having bunnies born. Even if the breeder has quite a few does that they are planning to breed unfortunately sometimes the does will fail to produce any bunnies. This problem tends to be quite common if you live in the southern part of the country and your rabbit show requires the breeder to produce bunnies in the summer months. As I will be discussing more later on in this book, bucks can go temporarily sterile in the heat which will hinder their ability to produce kits. I recommend that if you choose to order your bunnies in advance and are required to put down a deposit, that you make sure the deposit is refundable if the breeder doesn't have bunnies for you.

How old should my bunnies be when I purchase them?: The main factor that will determine the age of the bunnies that you will purchase is the date of show validation. Most meat pen rabbit shows require that you "tag in" or "validate" your bunnies on a given date if you plan on showing that year. Usually at validation the rabbit or fair committee will proceed to write down the ear tags of the bunnies that you have and give them a special tattoo in their right ear. Ideally your bunnies should be at least 6 weeks of age when you purchase them, any younger than this and they are just too young to wean from the mother in most cases.

How should I select the meat pen bunnies?: In most cases when buying meat pen bunnies I have found that the breeder will just go ahead and pick your pen out for you. Ideally the bunnies that you buy should be the largest from the litter (not the runts) and come from a good genetic line. Most of the time, the bunnies that you will get will be too young to evaluate fully.

Rabbit Supplies List

Before you proceed to actually go out and buy your first rabbits whether they are breeding stock or meat pen bunnies, I highly recommend that you purchase the required rabbit supplies. If you purchase your rabbits before setting up cages, feeders, etc, you will many times be forced to cut corners or pay quite a bit more to buy your cages than you would pay if you ordered them online in advance.

If you plan on raising your own meat pen rabbits you will need to purchase the following to start off with; Rabbit Cages or Hutches, Rabbit Feeders, Rabbit Water Bottles, A Bag of Rabbit Feed, At least one rabbit carrier for transportation, Rabbit Nest Boxes, A couple rabbit water bowls for backup, a scale for weighing your rabbits and a Rabbit Tattooing Kit. It is also recommended that you purchase a piece of rabbitry management software such as The Easy Rabbitry Management Software to keep track of all your rabbit records and a good general rabbit care book such as Raising Rabbits 101.

Note: If you plan on buying your meat pen rabbits it is still a good idea to purchase all of the following except maybe nest boxes and potentially a rabbit tattooing kit (if your bunnies have already been tattooed). Also you probably won't need as many rabbit cages or hutches to start off with.

How much will my rabbit supplies cost?: The price of the your rabbit supplies will be dependent upon where you purchase them and the quantity that you decide to purchase. On the next page of this book I will be revealing to you a resource that you can use to save a good deal of money on your rabbit supplies.



Purchasing your Rabbit Supplies

Purchasing your first set of rabbit supplies is an important step involved with getting started with your rabbit project. If you do this step right you will position your project properly for future success, if you do it wrong and cut corners you may potentially endanger your entire rabbit project.

After raising rabbits for a very large portion of my life, there is one main place that I recommend that you purchase your rabbit supplies from.

My Recommendation for all your rabbit supply needs: <http://PremiumRabbits.com/>

At PremiumRabbits.com you can find all your rabbit cages, hutches, feeders, nest boxes, rabbit tattooing equipment, water bottles, software and more, all for “affordable prices”.



Essentially by utilizing PremiumRabbits.com you will in many cases save 25% or more on the rabbit supplies that you purchase and will in most cases be getting a higher quality product.

A really cool thing about PremiumRabbits.com is that they have put together a nice “starter package” specifically for rabbit enthusiasts looking to start raising meat pen bunnies in addition to a starter package for those looking to simply buy their meat pen bunnies. The starter packages basically include everything that you will need to begin your rabbit project minus the actual rabbits and potential building materials for a rabbit barn or enclosure that you decide to build.

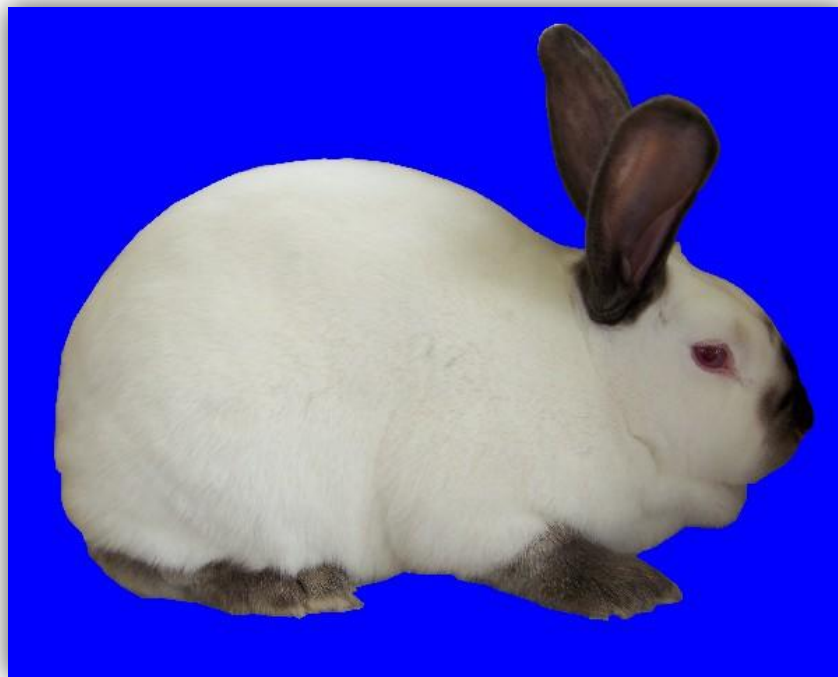
Check it out: <http://PremiumRabbits.com/>

Meat Pen Project Getting Started Overview

In Chapter #1 of this book I have discussed numerous subjects related to getting started with your rabbit meat pen project.

So far in this book I have already covered Meat Pen Rabbit Basics, Project Self Evaluation, Choosing a Purpose, 4-H and FFA, Meat Pen Rabbit Breed Selection, Buying Rabbit Breeding Stock, Buying Meat Pen Rabbits, Locating Rabbit Breeders, Purchasing Rabbit Supplies and more.

This means that if you have been following along closely, you should have just about all the information at your fingertips that you need to begin your 4-H and or FFA rabbit project.



Photograph of a Top Quality Californian Breeding Doe

To start off Chapter #2 of this book I will be covering the topic of feeding rabbits in great depth. So before you actually go out and buy your first rabbits you may want to go ahead and read that section of this book as well.

Chapter 2: Breeding, Kindling and Growing Bunnies



Feeding Your Rabbits

If you have ever participated in raising other animals such as pigs for show or know somebody who has you might just assume that feeding rabbits involves the same level of feeding “science”. You might assume that you have to feed them a certain mixture at a certain time in order to get them ready to show. The good news is that in reality rabbits can be very simple to feed. Although I do feed my rabbits a little bit differently to prepare them for show, pretty much all of the rabbit raisers that I know feed their rabbits the same thing in the same way. Also since the purpose of the book is to help you out to the best of my ability rather than keep “trade” secrets, I will reveal to you my exact feeding method in this section of the book.

Pellet Based Feed: Since you are planning on raising meat pen bunnies for show I highly recommend that you feed your rabbits a pellet based feed daily as their main meal. Feeding your rabbits a bunch of greens may work well if you are raising pet rabbits however for show you want to fill your rabbits out quickly and effectively, therefore feeding a diet based upon greens isn’t a good idea.

3 Popular Rabbit Pellet Based Feed Brands

- **Petrus** – Out of all the rabbit breeders that I have met in my area of the country, the vast majority including myself feed their rabbits Petrus Rabbit Pellets. Petrus Rabbit Pellets are a good quality rabbit feed that has worked well for my entire rabbit herd. To learn more about Petrus you can visit: petrusfeed.com .
- **Purina** – Although I haven’t personally fed my rabbits Purina rabbit food, I know of quite a few rabbit raisers who do. It’s an alternative to the Petrus brand. To learn more visit: rabbit.purinamills.com .
- **Sherwood Forest Natural Rabbit Food** – This fairly new rabbit food brand may just be revolutionary to the rabbit feed industry. It was recently developed by a long time rabbit raiser living in Utah who spent years upon years researching rabbit nutrition and health. If interested in learning more about this food and or making a purchase you can visit: <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/rabbit-food/> .

Hay as a Dietary Supplement: In addition to feeding your rabbits a pellet based feed it is a good idea to feed them some hay as well as a dietary supplement. Your rabbits should enjoy eating hay and it will help ensure that they are getting enough fiber in their diet to keep them healthy. If you are interested in getting some high quality hay that has been made specifically for rabbits you can head over to: <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/rabbit-hay/> .

Water “Most Important” Ingredient: While this may seem blatantly obvious, many of rabbits have unfortunately died on the hands of inexperienced rabbit raisers due to the lack of water. It is essential that your rabbits have access to fresh water 24/7, especially during the summer.

My General Rabbit Feeding Method



5 oz Dixie Cup- Feed Scoop



Bag of Petros Rabbit Grain



Rabbit Food Bucket

On average I feed my Californian Rabbits 5 to 6 oz. of Petrus rabbit pellets (18% protein) apiece, each and every day. Note: I feed all my rabbits once a day in the evening. They are also periodically given access to hay as a dietary supplement. When pregnant or nursing I will feed my does extra pellets.

Quick Tip: When a mother rabbit is nursing bunnies I recommend that you feed her as much pellets as she will eat. This is especially important when she is nursing bunnies that you hope to take to a show as you want them to grow fast.

To distribute out the grain I use a bucket and a 5 oz Dixie Cup and scoop the daily feed ration into J-Feeders clipped onto my rabbit cages.

Feeding Meat Pen Bunny Rabbits

In addition to being fed rabbit pellets like everyone else, I feed my meat pen bunnies a little bit of Sunflower Seed and some Barley. The Sunflower Seed is for improving the fur of the bunny rabbits and the Barley is for improving their “hardness”, or in other words flesh condition.

My meat pen bunnies are given a little bit of barley in a bowl as soon as they begin hopping out of their nest box on their own. If you are buying your meat pen bunnies you can start feeding a little bit of Barley to the rabbits as soon as you get them.

Quick Tip: Feed your rabbits the Barley and Sunflower Seeds at a different time of day then you would traditionally feed them the pellets. Doing this can potentially encourage your growing bunny rabbits to eat extra food. Since I feed my rabbits pellets in the evening the meat pen bunnies will get their Barley and Sunflower Seeds in the morning.

Another benefit of feeding Barley is the fact that it is easier for young bunnies to eat than pellets which will encourage them to start eating solid food at an earlier age.

The Sunflower Seeds can be fed to the bunnies in small quantities as it gets closer to show time. It is not a bad idea to feed the Sunflower Seeds starting at about three weeks before your show. Feeding Sunflower Seeds much earlier than this really isn't necessary and if you happen to have a bunch of bunnies like I typically do, it can get costly.

Quick Tip: Don't try to mix Barley or Sunflower Seeds with pellets or you are bound to have rabbits that will knock all their pellets out of their bowl or feeder in an attempt to reach them.

Should I feed my meat pen bunnies hay?: One time several years ago I did a little study on feeding bunnies hay and how it corresponded to weight gain. It turned out that the bunnies that were given more hay and less pellets grew quite a bit slower than the bunnies that were fed just pellets. If you are going to feed your meat pen bunnies hay I recommend that it be a higher quality hay such as Alfalfa from somewhere such as PremiumRabbits.com and not just a regular grass hay like what was used in the study. Although it can contain a good source of fiber I have found from my studies that regular grass hay isn't very nutritious for rabbits.

Rabbit Feeding Supplies

In order to feed and water your rabbits effectively you are going to need a variety of different rabbit feeding supplies.

You will need to purchase Rabbit J-Feeders and or rabbit bowls to hold your rabbits' daily food ration. Also you will need Rabbit Water Bottles and or water bowls to hold your rabbits' daily water ration.

Feeding: With regards to feeding your rabbits I recommend that you purchase Rabbit J-Feeders that clip onto your rabbit cages. Bowls are more time consuming to fill, frequently can get flipped and potentially are prone to get dirty.

Watering: With regards to giving your rabbits water I recommend that you utilize rabbit water bottles that will clip onto your rabbit cages. Once again bowls take longer to fill, get messy and can usually be flipped by your rabbits. That being said, I do recommend that you keep a few rabbit water/food bowls on hand just in case you buy rabbits that are used to drinking from them vs rabbit water bottles.

To purchase Rabbit J-Feeders and Rabbit Water Bottles you can once again head over to our recommended rabbit supplier: <http://PremiumRabbits.com/> .

Automatic Rabbit Watering System: If you plan on having a bunch of rabbits it might be a good idea to look into setting up an automatic rabbit watering system for your rabbits to drink from. If you are interested in setting up one of these systems I suggest that you talk to a rabbit breeder that already has one rigged up that would fit your specifications. If you only plan on raising a few rabbits for show I wouldn't really recommend an automated rabbit watering system as they can be a bit pricy and time consuming to setup.

You can find a basic guide to setting up an automated rabbit watering system if you are interested at: <http://raisingrabbits101.com/autowater> .

Breeding your Rabbits

If you are raising your own meat pen rabbits from birth, one of the most critical factors that will determine the success of your project is your ability to effectively breed your rabbits. If you don't have bunnies born you obviously won't be able to show. For that reason, in the next few pages of this book I have included information, tips and advice on how to successfully breed your rabbits.

Several Facts about Rabbit Breeding:

- Female rabbits are referred to as does and male rabbits are referred to as bucks.
- The rabbit breeding cycle from conception to gestation takes approximately 30 days.
- Male rabbits can go sterile in summer heat.
- The prime breeding age for bucks is between 1 and 3 years of age and the prime breeding age for does is between 9 months and 3 years of age.
- When rabbits give birth it is called kindling.
- The rabbit breeding cycle is also referred to as the rabbit gestation cycle.
- Most does and bucks don't reach breeding age until they are 6 months of age.

When should I breed my rabbits?: The date you breed your rabbits should depend on the date of your rabbit show. In most cases if you are breeding your rabbits to produce bunnies for a meat pen rabbit show your breed date will be approximately 100 days before the show. That being said, you should check with the show that you wish to attend as the majority give you a specific date to breed your rabbits on.

How often should I breed my rabbits?: Most rabbit breeders including myself recommend that you try to breed your does approximately three times a year. If you don't breed your does enough they will potentially stop having bunnies or more commonly the size of their rabbit litters will slowly decrease in number.

How to Breed Rabbits Tutorial

Here is the step by step process that I recommend that you follow for best results when breeding your rabbits.

Step 1: Preparation – Before breeding your rabbits there are several things that you should do. First you need to develop a rabbit breeding plan and write it down on paper. Don't just breed rabbits on the spur of the moment. You need to write down which doe you plan on breeding to which buck and make sure that both of them are unrelated for the most part. In the beginning if you only have a few rabbits this should be easy and may seem unnecessary however once you have a bunch of different does and bucks it can get confusing if you don't write things down and keep good records. Secondly you should do a quick evaluation to make sure that the animals that you intend to breed with are in good health. You should not proceed to breed with unhealthy rabbits.

Quick Tip: For keeping track of all your rabbit records and pedigrees I recommend that you purchase a software solution such as The Easy Rabbit Breeders Software Suite available via <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/rabbit-software/> at discount.

Step 2: Getting Started – Before proceeding with the actual breeding you need to locate the doe that you wish to breed and bring her to the buck's cage.

Quick Tip: Always bring the doe to the buck's cage and not vice versa as does can be territorial at times.

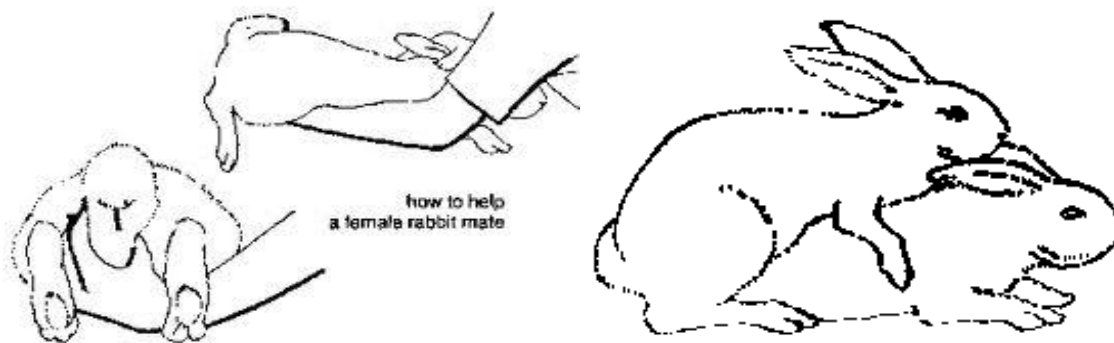
Step 3: The Breeding – Once you have located the doe and brought her to the buck's cage you are going to want to gently restrain her by putting one hand over her head and the other underneath her so that she won't be able to run around the cage. The buck should then hopefully see her, mount and then complete the mating by falling off in about a minute or less. If the buck you are using is an inexperienced breeder then it might take him a little while longer so be patient. If the buck you are using seems to be uninterested or is inexperienced in

breeding you can try to gently place him on top of the doe in front of him to help him get the general idea.

Step 4: Briefly Contain the Doe – Next you are going to want to briefly contain the bred doe and put her somewhere that she is unlikely to urinate, as some studies have shown that if she is immediately taken back to her cage and she urinates it will foil the potential pregnancy. I personally keep my bred does inside of empty nest boxes for about 20 minutes after the breeding takes place.

Step 5: Write down the Mating – You need to make sure that you record the breeding on a sheet of paper or enter it into your rabbit software program. It is important to keep track of when you breed your rabbits, as you will need to place a nest box in their cage(s) 27 to 28 days following the breeding.

Step 6: Rebreed the Doe – To help insure that your doe gets pregnant you need to breed her to the buck multiple times. The fewer does that you have, the more times you should breed each of them. I recommend that you breed each one of your does at least three times. If you only have a few does and your buck is willing, breed them more.



Getting Troublesome Rabbits to Breed

Anyone who has raised rabbits for a meat pen show for any number of years will most likely tell you that rabbits “don’t always breed like rabbits”. When it comes time to breed your rabbits for a show on a specific breed date many times your does and bucks will act troublesome. So in this article I have included some tips, tricks and advice for getting troublesome rabbits to breed.

Getting a Troublesome Doe to Breed: If you have enough rabbits, more often than not, you will come across a doe that doesn’t seem to cooperate during the breeding process.

Here are some tips and tricks for getting troublesome does to breed:

- Use the restraining breeding method discussed in the last article.
- Keep your does calm during the breeding process. Try gently stroking them before the breeding for a couple minutes to calm them down.
- Bring the doe to the buck’s cage and not vice versa.
- Make sure the doe that you wish to breed is in good health and condition.
- Try to keep your does in a cool environment to lower stress before breeding them.

Getting a Troublesome Buck to Breed: Like does, bucks at times also refuse to cooperate during the breeding process.

Here are some tips and tricks for getting troublesome bucks to breed:

- If you are trying to breed a buck that appears to be timid, try breeding him to a doe that is more agreeable for the first time to help him build up confidence.
- Keep an experienced buck that has successfully produced offspring for breeding or at least as a backup buck.
- Keep your bucks in a cool environment if possible. They can go sterile temporarily if exposed to extreme heat.
- Your buck should ideally be at least 9 months of age. Many bucks won’t be very good breeders before this age.
- Try moving out of the way during the mating if the buck isn’t breeding. From personal experience I have found that certain bucks won’t breed if you are standing next to their cage watching.
- Make sure that you have extra bucks on hand during breeding season, if possible, just in case one refuses to breed.

How to Tell if your Rabbit is Pregnant

After breeding your does you might find yourself wondering whether or not they are pregnant. Just like humans, however on a much smaller scale, rabbits can indeed exhibit signs of pregnancy.

Here is a list of some indicators that your doe might indeed be pregnant:

- The doe in question begins to eat less as her expected kindling date approaches.
- The doe begins to put on some extra weight. This most likely will only be visible if you weigh the doe before she gets pregnant and then reweigh her frequently during pregnancy.
- A few days away from the expected kindling date you notice the doe panting more than usual.
- The doe in question puts hay that you give her inside of her nest box.
- The doe pulls fur from her chest and places it in her nest box.

Palpation – A surer way to tell: A more accurate way to tell whether or not a doe is pregnant is to do a fairly simple pregnancy test referred to by many as palpation, although it does take practice.

Here is how you would go about palpating a doe:

- **Step 1:** Wait until approximately day 12 of pregnancy or later.
- **Step 2:** Move your doe to a flat surface such as a table built for rabbit judging and evaluation.
- **Step 3:** Pick up the doe with one of your hands and feel around the sides of her belly.
- **Step 4:** If you happen to feel any balls that seem “grape-like” along the sides of her belly they are most likely little kits.

Quick Tip: Take out a doe that you know isn’t pregnant and feel her down side by side the doe in question to see if you see a difference.

Rabbit Kindling Process

If the rabbit breeding went successfully you will hopefully need to start preparing for the Rabbit Kindling Process shortly afterwards.

Here are a list of Facts about Kindling and Birthing Bunnies:

- A Californian or New Zealand doe in her prime production age (9 months – 3 years old) will usually have litters consisting of between 6-9 kits on average.
- Bunnies are actually born furless and will have their eyes closed until approximately day 10 after birth. Their first fur coat should develop in about a week after birth.
- Bunnies are birthed inside of nest boxes.
- Bunnies will be solely dependent on their mother's milk for food until they reach approximately 4 weeks of age when they will start eating some of their mother's food.
- Ideally bunnies shouldn't been weaned until they reach at least 6 weeks of age.
- Rabbit breeds that are smaller in size will commonly produce smaller litter sizes than the larger breeds such as the Californian or New Zealand.

Preparing for Kindling – What you need to do:

The Nest Box: On the 27th or 28th day after breeding your rabbits you need to put a nest box inside of each of your does' cages for them to have bunnies inside of. On average it takes 30 days from conception to kindling however I suggest that you go ahead and put the nest box in the does' cages a few days in advance to be safe as sometimes the bunnies can come early. There are several different types of nest boxes that you can choose to use. There are the all wooden ones, the all metal ones and lastly ones with a metal frame and a wooden bottom. You can find nest boxes for sale via <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/rabbit-nest-boxes/>.

The Nesting Material: You will want to put some hay inside of your does' cages when you give them their nest boxes, for them to build a nest with. Make sure the hay that you use is soft and not too bristly. Alternatively some breeders choose to use odor absorbent wood shavings as nesting material instead of hay.

Rabbit Kindling Advice

If you put the Rabbit Kindling Advice discussed in this article to use in your rabbitry, you will have a better chance of keeping new born kits alive and preventing complications.

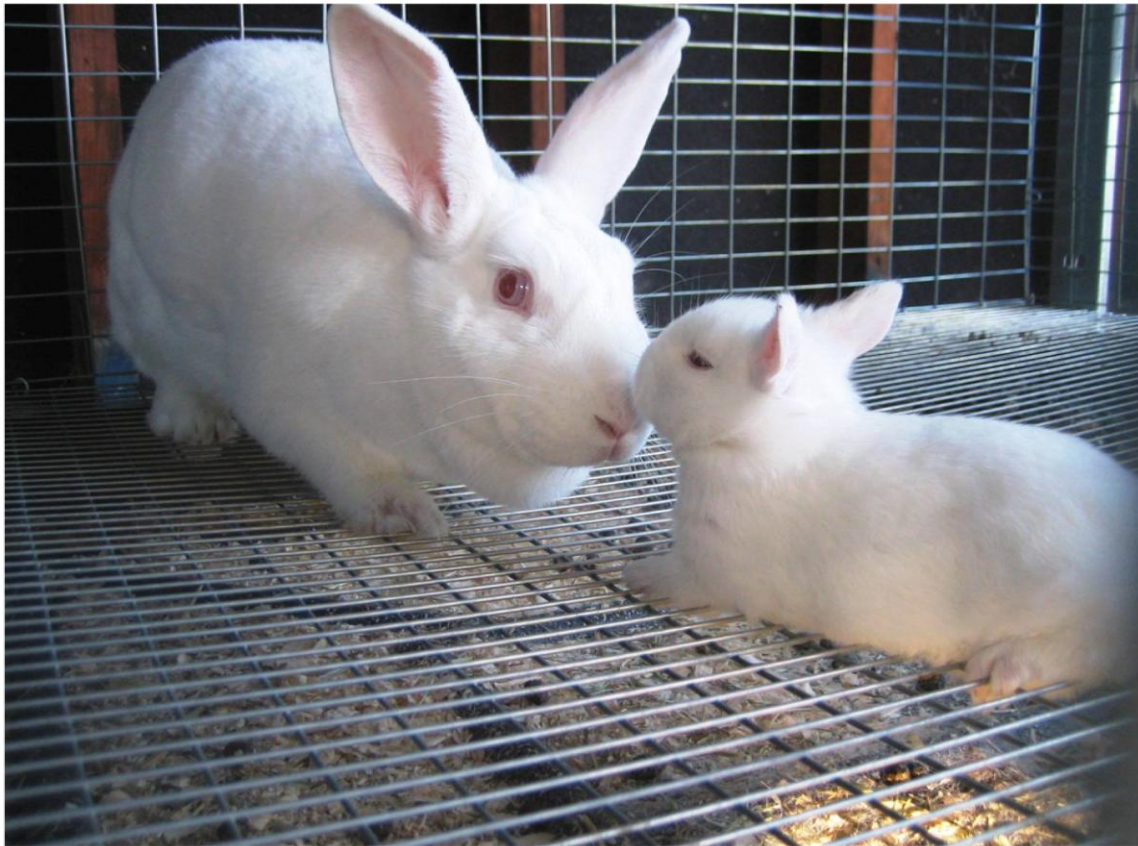
Examine your Nest Boxes: Shortly after your doe gives birth you should take her nest box out of the cage to a flat surface and gently go through it to make sure that there are no dead kits or extra birthing material left in the box. If there is any you should clean it up. Also, if you notice that all the bunnies are not covered up in the doe's nest you should carefully pick them up and put them inside the "fur ball" that the doe should have built inside of the nest box. If by chance your doe gave birth and didn't build a nest I would recommend trying to build one for her.

Protecting your Newborn Bunnies from the Cold: If the temperature outside is below about 40 degrees Fahrenheit and your newborn bunnies are outside, you will need to consistently go outside and check on them to make sure that they are all covered up inside the nest box. If they are not covered up I suggest that you pick them up and do so yourself. While bigger rabbits are perfectly fine in the cold weather, newborn bunnies that haven't developed a fur coat yet can freeze pretty quickly if you are not careful. Alternatively if you don't have many bunnies you can try taking the nest boxes inside for part of the day to keep them warm and then bringing them back out to the doe for awhile at least twice a day for her to feed them.

Don't be afraid to Foster Bunnies: If one of your does has 9 bunnies born and another doe has 2 bunnies, I would suggest fostering a few bunnies from the litter with 9 and giving them to the mother with 2, especially if the mother with 2 is an experienced mother. If a mother rabbit has too many bunnies to care for, many times a few of them won't survive, especially if the weather is very cold outside. Also the litter with only 2 bunnies will be less likely to survive as well since the 2 bunnies won't produce enough body heat inside of the nest to keep them warm. Also I would recommend fostering bunnies if one of your mother rabbits happens to die shortly after giving birth.

Quick Tip: I recommend that you breed your does in groups, so if something happens to one of them, you will have a backup doe that you can foster the litter to.

Chapter 3: Rabbit Health and Herd Management



Rabbit Health 101

When raising rabbits you have to be aware of the many different dynamics of your rabbit project, one of the most important of them being rabbit health. It is part of your job as a responsible rabbit raiser to notice when one of your rabbits is sick in some way and needs treatment.

First off, here is a list of signs that may suggest that a rabbit is sick and requires treatment of some sort:

- Rabbit begins sneezing more than would seem natural.
- Rabbit stops eating its food (the surest sign that something is up).
- Rabbit stops drinking water (can be hard to notice unless you are monitoring closely).
- Rabbit starts losing patches of fur (with the exception to seasonal molting).
- Rabbit begins to discharge white stuff out of its nose.
- Rabbit develops abscesses or lumps of some sort on its skin.
- Rabbit begins to shake its ears a lot more than normal.
- Rabbit starts acting unnaturally aggressive.
- Rabbit simply begins to exhibit aberrant behavior.

Here is a list of tips for preventing diseases and illnesses in your rabbit population:

- Keep your rabbit barn/shed well ventilated.
- Try to clean up excessive rabbit manure frequently.
- Make sure you clean your rabbit cages periodically.
- Quarantine new arrivals to your rabbitry for at least thirty days if possible before putting them near all your other rabbits.
- Try to keep your rabbits in spacious cages and avoid overcrowding them with rabbits.
- Keep your rabbits out of the direct sun, especially during the summer.
- Move sick rabbits away from your other rabbits to prevent the rapid spread of illnesses.

Common Health Problems, Symptoms, Causes and Treatments

Although there are quite a few different rabbit health problems that could potentially occur, there are only a few that you may typically see when dealing with raising meat pen rabbits. For that reason, in this article I'm going to be discussing the symptoms, causes and treatments of only the most common types of health problems and illnesses that your rabbits might experience.

Ear Mites: Also known as "Ear Canker", Ear Mites will most likely be the most common rabbit health problem that you will come across when raising rabbits. If you live in a location that has very hot summers like I do you are almost guaranteed to have issues with ear mites at some time or other during your rabbit raising career. Like the name suggests ear mites are caused by a mite infestation that occurs within your rabbits' ears. When a rabbit has ear mites you should be able to see a yellowish scabby material inside of your rabbit's ear if you look closely. The worse off the mites are, the more noticeable it will be. One sign of a potential ear mite infestation is if you notice that your rabbit is constantly scratching its ears or shaking its head more than would be typically expected. The best way to treat ear mites is to take a Q-Tip, dip it in mineral oil and rub it in your rabbit's ear in the spot where it has the ear mites. With the Q-Tip be sure to clean out the ear by gently removing any yellow crusty looking stuff before rubbing on the mineral oil. While ear mites can be a common issue that you deal with when raising rabbits that is pretty easy to treat, it can also be fatal if left untreated. Another way to get rid of ear mites, although I wouldn't usually recommend it unless absolutely necessary, is to give your rabbit a dose of Ivermectin (actually a horse de-wormer). One problem with Ivermectin is the fact that it is known to basically push a rabbit in a molt, which can be very negative if you have a show just around the corner. My recommendation is to stick with mineral oil and Q-Tips for treating ear mites.

Mastitis: Although not near as common as some of the others, Mastitis is a condition that mother rabbits can get that is caused by a doe's over continuation of milk production after or during the process of weaning. When a doe has mastitis their mammary gland may appear inflamed, swollen, hot or discolored, additionally the doe may develop abscesses as well. To

treat mastitis some breeders recommend that you give the infected doe a dose of injectable Penicillin G for three consecutive days in the amount of 20,000 to 40,000 IU per pound of body weight. Also you can attempt to strip the affected glands free of milk. The main reason I tell you about this condition is in order to give you a prevention tip. **Tip:** When weaning your kits do so gradually and not all at once. For instance, if you need to wean some bunnies from the mother earlier than would be typical, try weaning a few off at a time vs all of them at once.

Snuffles: Also known by some under its scientific name Pasteurellosis, Snuffles is a bacterial sickness that rabbits can get that will potentially kill them. Unfortunately many rabbit breeders including myself have lost rabbits at times due to this sickness. The surest sign that a rabbit has “Snuffles” is if you notice that they sound congested and have a white nasal discharge coming out of their nose. To help prevent the sickness you can try your best to keep your rabbits in a well ventilated clean environment and make sure they have constant access to a fresh water supply. Traditionally there hasn’t been any universal cure for getting rid of Snuffles, for years I have simply tried to move any rabbits that get the sickness to a separate location and hope for the best. That being said, I was recently contacted by a company that claims that they have come up with a product to get rid of Snuffles. The product goes by the brand name IMMUNIZE and apparently is going to be added to the <http://PremiumRabbits.com/> store, that I frequently recommend for all your rabbit supply needs, in the near time future. :)

Sore Eyes: Your rabbits can potentially get a bacterial infection called “Sore Eyes” also known as “Nest Box Eye”, when they are very young inside of their nest boxes. If you notice that your bunny rabbit’s eyes are stuck shut or fail to open at about ten days of age there is a chance that your rabbit has “sore eyes”. To treat this condition try to remove any pus that may have developed around the bunny’s eye(s) and apply ophthalmic ointment a couple times a day to the sore eye(s). For best results you can try to repeat this process for several days. To help prevent this condition try to keep your nest boxes as clean as you can.

Sore Hocks: If one of your rabbits has developed a condition called “Sore Hocks” you may notice that the rabbit has lost hair on their hocks and or has developed scabs/sores in that region. Sore hocks can be caused by a lack of cage cleanliness or can even be a genetic problem

as some researchers have pointed out. To treat the condition you can try treating the sore hock(s) with an astringent once a day until the sore spot looks better. To help prevent this condition some breeders recommend placing a wooden board in your rabbits' cages for them to rest their feet on. Another prevention tip is to make sure that you purchase good quality cages.

Weepy Eyes: Similar to the condition known as "Sore Eyes", Weepy Eyes is also caused by a bacterial infection. Weepy Eyes is essentially a condition that rabbits of all ages can get caused by the blockage of the tear duct between the lower eyelid and the rabbit's nasal passageway. Your rabbit probably has Weepy Eyes if you notice matted fur at the corner of its eye or under the lower eyelid. The eye tissue may also appear irritated and discharge may be visible in the region. Other times as I have noticed from personal experience "Weepy Eyes" is simply an aftereffect of the condition that we discussed a moment ago called "Snuffles". To treat the condition you can try to apply ophthalmic ointment on the eye a couple times a day until the eye heals. To prevent the condition keep your rabbits in a clean well ventilated area with minimal external environmental stress factors.

Wet Dewlap: A "Wet Dewlap" like its name infers is caused by a doe getting her dewlap (roll of fat under her chin) wet for a prolonged period. When a rabbit has a Wet Dewlap it will usually be pretty noticeable. The rabbit's dewlap will be exceptionally moist and in many cases may look green. The most effective almost surefire way to prevent this condition is to use rabbit water bottles instead of water bowls. The problem with water bowls as far as this condition is concerned is that the doe can potentially lay there with her chin in the water bowl all day. If a rabbit develops this condition I would recommend simply cutting off some fur off the dewlap region, replace the water bowl with a water bottle and wait for the condition to go away on its own. Some breeders however recommend applying antibiotic ointment to the location.

How to Sex a Rabbit

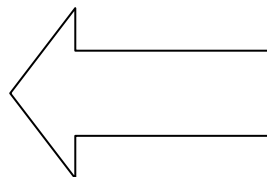
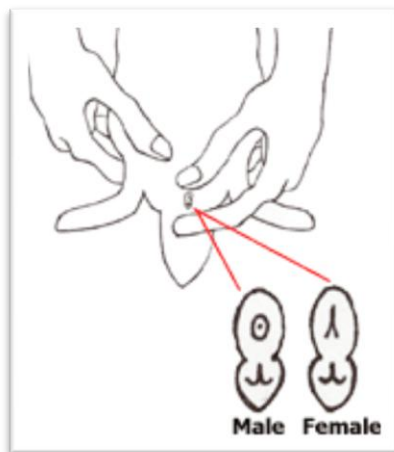
If you raise rabbits you need to learn how to sex them. But fear not because in this article I am going to teach you exactly how to do it in three easy steps.

Step 1: First locate the rabbit that you would like to sex and move it to a flat surface.

Step 2: Next take a hold of the rabbit's tail with one hand and lift it upwards a little bit or if you feel comfortable enough handling your rabbits you can cradle it in your arms while trying to sex them.

Step 3: Use two fingers to press down on your rabbit's vent area which is just in front of the anus. If the rabbit is a male his part should protrude. If the rabbit is a female you should see a slit or central line running up and down.

Quick Tip: If you are having trouble figuring out how to sex a rabbit by yourself, find another rabbit breeder in your area who can teach you hands on.



Sexing a Rabbit Diagram

When a rabbit is older the sex becomes obvious: Once a rabbit is several months old its sex becomes more obvious. Does will develop dewlaps on their chins and the reproductive sacks on the bucks will become visible if you flip them over.

Personally I can just look at a rabbit now and usually tell its sex by the shape of its head and overall appearance.

How to Tattoo a Rabbit

As a rabbit raiser who plans on showing their rabbits you will need to learn how to tattoo them yourself. Tattooing your rabbits is also essential for effective rabbitry management.

Here is a step by step tutorial on how to effectively tattoo your rabbits:

Step 1: Order your Rabbit Tattooing Supplies – For tattooing your rabbits I recommend that you use a rabbit tattooing kit which you can purchase via <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/rabbit-tattooing-equipment/> . My preference for tattooing is to use a Rabbit Tattooing Clamp, I have noticed that some of the other types available don't seem as effective or easy to use as the clamp. In addition to the rabbit tattooing kit you will need to order some Q Tips and ink. For ink I prefer to use Black India Ink which seems to work best and is a lot cheaper than some of the other brands of ink available. To purchase Q Tips and ink you can go to <http://rabbitbreeders.us/amazon> . Additionally you will need some ophthalmic ointment for rubbing in your rabbits' ears after making the tattoo.

Step 2: Choose a Rabbit Tattooing System to use – Before you proceed to go ahead and tattoo your rabbits you ideally need to decide on a tattooing system to use. If you are just planning on buying some meat pen rabbits and showing those you can just tattoo whatever you feel like however if you plan on raising lots of rabbits, having an effective and unique tattooing system can potentially help you manage your rabbits better. Although tattooing systems are beyond the scope of this book I have included a couple pages on it within my Raising Rabbits 101 book available at discount via <http://raisingrabbits101.com/> .

Step 3: Setup your Supplies – You will want to tattoo your rabbits on a flat surface with a piece of carpet or something of that nature on top of it so the rabbits that you will be trying to tattoo won't slide around during the process. Be sure to take out your rabbit tattooing equipment along with some Q Tips, Ink, some ophthalmic ointment such as Terramycin and lastly a few wet paper towels.

Step 4: Tattooing the Rabbit – To tattoo a rabbit first apply ink to the rabbit tattooing device and make sure that the letters and or numbers are aligned properly. Then take hold of the rabbit's left ear with your non dominant hand, align the tattooing clamp in the middle of the ear making sure it's centered and then count to three in your head. On three give the clamp a good squeeze and then release.

Note: It is normal for the rabbit to potentially squeal for a moment or two and kick its feet.

Step 5: Applying the Ink - Next take a Q Tip, dip it in ink and rub it inside of the region in the ear that the tattoo was made. Ideally you want to try and rub the ink inside of the imprint holes that were made.

Note: If the rabbit's ear bleeds at all use the wet paper towel to clean it up and rub ointment onto the location.

Step 6: Applying the Ointment – Lastly take a Q Tip and apply some ophthalmic ointment onto the ear in the location that the tattoo was made.

Quick Tip: I recommend that you tattoo your rabbits at an early age as their ears will grow harder and become more difficult to tattoo as they grow in size.

Keeping Rabbitry Records

Keeping good rabbitry records is one of the most important things you can do as a responsible rabbit raiser. There are a number of different types of rabbit records that you should keep track of as a meat pen rabbit raiser, which I will be discussing in this article in addition to providing you with a recommendation to help you manage all these records.

Common Types of Rabbitry Records that you should keep track of:

- ❖ Rabbit Breeding Records – doe and buck you bred, date of breeding
- ❖ Rabbit Buying and Selling Records – rabbit(s) that you purchased, date of purchase, price of rabbits, rabbit(s) that you sold, date of sale, company/individuals involved
- ❖ Rabbit Finance Records – feed purchase records, rabbits purchased, rabbits sold, earnings, losses
- ❖ Rabbit Health Records – sickness involved, treatment given, rabbit treated
- ❖ Rabbit Kindling Records – doe who kindled, date of kindling, number of kits in litter
- ❖ Rabbit Show Records – rabbit show attended, date of show, show winnings

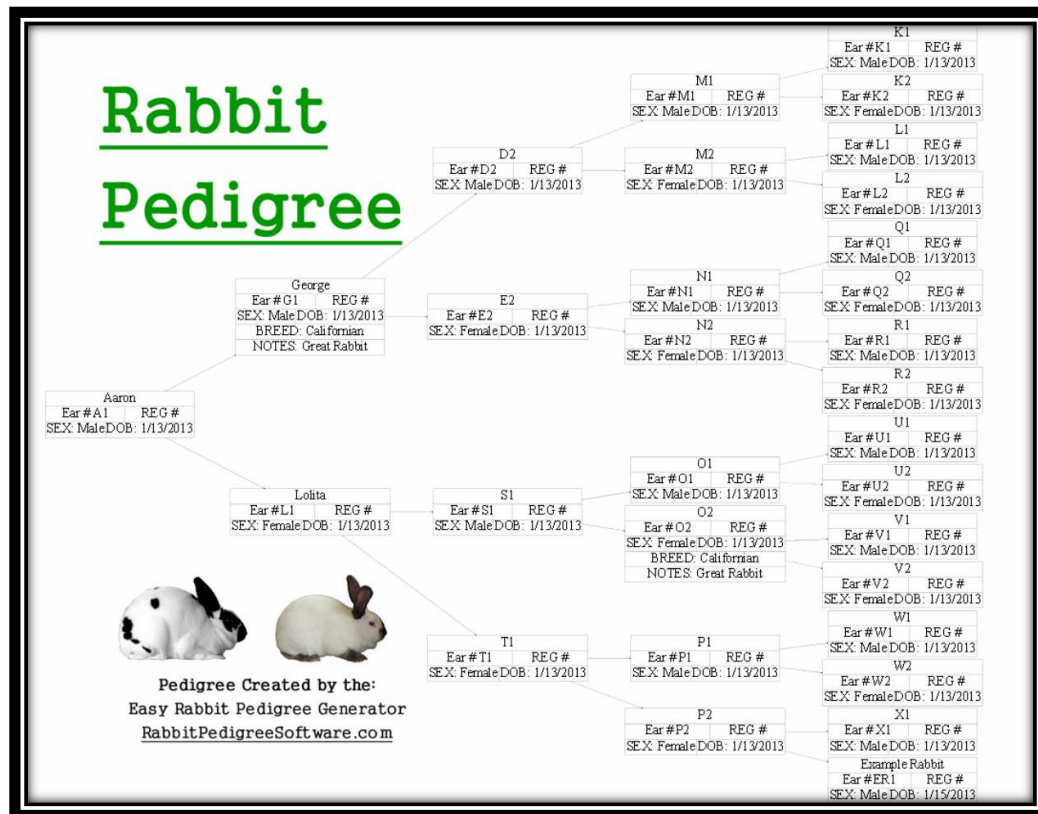
In order to keep track of all these records you can either use a spiral notebook (very time consuming and can be hard to manage), a computer document (still takes a good deal of time and can still be hard to manage) or my recommended solution; a piece of rabbitry management software that efficiently helps you organize everything.

If you are interested in purchasing a software program for helping you manage all your rabbit records (highly recommended) I suggest that you grab a copy of The Easy Rabbitry Management Software Solution available via: <http://RabbitryManagementSoftware.com/> .

This program is very reasonably priced and extremely simple to use in my opinion.

Rabbit Pedigree Records

In addition to keeping good rabbitry records you are going to want to keep individual rabbit pedigree records on your rabbits as well. Keeping rabbit pedigree records are essential for monitoring the genetic line of your rabbits to avoid things like excessive inbreeding, and by having them you will be able to more easily sell your rabbits.



Rabbit Pedigree Software:

Back in the day rabbit raisers used to have to keep track of all their rabbit pedigree information by hand. Now you can simply utilize a piece of rabbit pedigree software to do most of the work for you and then print out pedigree certificates with a click of a button.

Currently for creating my rabbit pedigrees I use a program called: The Easy Rabbit Pedigree Software. While the program isn't as feature rich as some of the other solutions on the market it is very simple to use and quite a bit cheaper. To learn more visit:

<http://RabbitPedigreeSoftware.com/> .

Selling Rabbits 101

If you plan on raising rabbits for any length of time at some point you will need to start selling some of your rabbits. Your ability to successfully sell your rabbits may very well be the determining factor, of whether or not your rabbitry is successful. Without having a good plan in place to sell your rabbits your rabbitry can quickly become overcrowded, poorly managed and very cost inefficient.

The good news is that over the past few years I have developed a couple resources which could potentially help you sell as many rabbits as you can reasonably produce for a very small fee.

Resource #1

The first of these two resources is the website that I mentioned earlier on in this book called RabbitBreeders.us. Since the establishment of the website the site has received over 1.4 million visits from rabbit raisers all around the World, many of them in search of rabbits for sale. I am actually allowing rabbit breeders in the United States to submit their rabbitry information to be listed completely free of charge on the website right now which is bound to give your rabbitry some free exposure.

To learn more visit: <http://rabbitbreeders.us/>

(Click on the Submit Rabbitry tab on the navigation bar to proceed to the submission process)

Resource #2

The second resource is a service I created called “Sell Rabbits On Demand”. Essentially as a member of this very low priced service you will be able to post as many unique rabbit for sale classifieds to our website network including on RabbitBreeders.us as you can submit. As a member of the Sell Rabbits On Demand System you may very well never have to worry about selling rabbits again.

To learn more visit: <http://sellrabbitsondemand.com/>

Alternative Revenue Sources

The primary revenue source available to your rabbitry (excluding show winnings) is the sale of rabbits. That being said, the majority of rabbit raisers fail to cover their expenses from simply the sale of rabbits. So in this article my goal is to introduce you to other potential revenue sources for your rabbitry. Even if you raise rabbits as simply a hobby you should make it your goal in my opinion to at least financially break even with your rabbitry.

Selling Rabbit Meat: One way a meat pen rabbit raiser can make extra money is to process their rabbits and sell the high quality meat to locals in their community. Although doing this is not for everybody, if you can process your own rabbits you are bound to find people willing to purchase the meat. You can find information and videos teaching you how to process your rabbits within the members area of a really awesome new membership website created for rabbit raisers titled: The Rabbit Mentor. To learn more about how you can gain access to this membership website visit: <http://therabbitmentor.com/> .

Raising and Selling Worms: Some rabbit raisers earn extra money from their rabbitry through the sale of worms, which are simply raised underneath their rabbit hutches. If you live in a region where a lot of people go fishing, if you raise and sell your own worms you are bound to find buyers. If interested in raising and selling worms I suggest that you visit somewhere like <http://rabbitbreeders.us/amazon> and pick up a book on the subject.

Rabbit Fertilizer: One of the easiest ways to earn a little extra money from your rabbitry is to sell rabbit manure to the gardening community. Rabbit manure is actually one of the highest quality manures in existence for fertilizer purposes. You can simply create a pile of it, let it compost for awhile and then bag it up, potentially just reusing rabbit feed bags and then sell it.

Rabbit Ambassadors Program: Alright I have to admit this is another resource created by myself! As a member of the brand new Rabbit Ambassadors Program I have started, you can earn extra money by simply reselling products such as this book to fellow rabbit raisers. Essentially as a member you will be given special wholesale pricing in which you can buy products and then resell at retail price. To learn more visit: <http://rabbitambassadors.com/> .

Chapter 4: Meat Pen Selection and Showing



Meat Pen Show Preparation

One of the most important factors that will potentially determine the success of your meat pen bunnies at show is your management of your project beforehand. There are a couple of different things that I recommend you do prior to your meat pen show for best results, which I will be covering within this article.

Managing Weights: Probably the most important thing that you can do prior to the actual Meat Pen Rabbit Selection is to manage the weights of your rabbits. It is recommended that you start weighing your rabbits consistently, starting about four to five weeks out from your show. You will want to make sure that your rabbits are growing fast enough and that some aren't growing too fast. You need to remember that for most meat pen rabbit shows your rabbits must all be individually between 3 to 5 pounds. That being said, ideally you want to get all your meat pen bunnies as close to 5 pounds as possible without going over the weight limit. Since you will be attending a "Meat Pen Rabbit Show" most judges will put emphasis on the weights of your rabbits, even if they don't specifically admit it. Note: At the more competitive rabbit shows that I have attended I have never seen a pen of rabbits place if any of the pen rabbits were less than 4 pounds. From personal experience I would recommend that you aim to get your rabbits between 4.5 and 4.9 pounds each. The year I made Grand Champion at my show the rabbits all weighed 4.8 pounds.

Quick Tip: If you are looking to find a good scale for weighing your rabbits you can do so by visiting: <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/rabbit-scales/> . Additionally for helping you keep track and monitor the weights of your rabbits I recommend a piece of software called: The Easy Rabbit Weight Tracker. **Note:** The Easy Rabbit Weight Tracker is currently being offered as a free bonus at the time of this writing when you purchase a copy of The Easy Rabbitry Management Software via <http://RabbitryManagementSoftware.com/> .

To Wean or Not to Wean: When raising your own meat pen rabbits you may want to consider weaning some of your rabbits from their mother if they start to grow too fast. By weaning rabbits you will almost always cut down their weight growth. Also by doing this, you can focus

more on feeding the rabbits that are currently not growing as fast, more food to help “even” out the weights without having to worry about the weaned rabbits gaining too much weight.

The reason I don’t personally like to wean my meat pen bunnies if possible, is the fact that I have noticed that it can sometimes hurt their overall condition. I have watched great looking rabbits lose almost all their previous condition just before a show, as most likely a direct result of being weaned and then put on a diet.

Quick Tip: In order to avoid having to wean your rabbits, monitor their weights closely starting several weeks out from the show at least two times a week.

An alternative to weaning the biggest rabbits in a litter assuming they are indeed growing too fast (many times your best rabbits by the way) would be to wean the smaller potentially runts of the litter and then just feed the bigger rabbits along with the mother a bit less food. The reason I would consider this approach is the fact that normally the smallest rabbits in the litter will not be your ideal meat pen bunnies and by doing this you can allow your better rabbits in the litter to keep drinking nutritious milk from the mother.

Feeding your Bunnies: Although we already discussed feeding earlier on in this book, I would like to bring up a few more things before ending this Meat Pen Show Preparation Article. Although I talk about monitoring the feed of your rabbits as your show date approaches, I recommend that for the first four or five weeks that you give your rabbits and their mother as much food as they can eat. At this age it is still too early to tell usually how fast they will grow, and for that reason you don’t want to accidentally cause a potentially “perfect weight” rabbit several weeks from now to fall behind in weight. Secondly with regards to feeding your growing bunnies you will ideally want to feed them twice a day. By feeding them twice a day you can potentially stimulate them to eat extra food.

Quick Tip: I personally will feed my growing meat pen bunnies as mentioned earlier on in this book, their Barley + Sunflower Seeds in the morning and then their grain in the evening.

Meat Pen Rabbit Selection

So by now you should be feeling excited, after all your hard work and dedication you have almost made it to the big show day! But before you can sit yourself down and relax a bit you will need to **Select your Meat Pen**.

Selecting a Rabbit Meat Pen the Basics: When selecting a rabbit meat pen you want to select rabbits that will do well according to the ARBA Meat Pen Rabbit Standard.

The ARBA Meat Pen Rabbit Standard is divided up into a 100 point system focusing on 4 different categories of criteria consisting of:

- **Meat Type (40 Points):** The most important thing to look for in a meat pen rabbit according to ARBA is Meat Type. Ideally you want to select rabbits that appear wide, full and meaty. Meat Type can be broken down into three main body parts; Shoulders, Loin and Hindquarters, therefore the rabbits that will do the best at your show will most likely have nice shoulders, a nice loin and nice hindquarters. The number one meat location on a meat rabbit is the hindquarters, followed by the loin and then lastly the shoulders.
- **Condition (30 Points):** The second most important thing to look for in a meat pen rabbit is Condition. The definition inferred by the word Condition on a meat pen rabbit can be somewhat subjective however when I refer to Condition, I am meaning a combination of the overall “feel” and appearance of the rabbit with an emphasis on flesh condition especially of the loin region. You want your rabbits to be in good health, have a nice overall feel/appearance, have firm flesh and lastly have a hard full loin.
- **Uniformity (20 Points):** The third most important thing to look for in a meat pen which I will be talking more about momentarily is uniformity. You want the 3 rabbits that you choose to ideally be as close in Meat Type, Condition and Fur as possible and all be of a similar weight.
- **Fur (10 Points):** Lastly the fourth most important thing to look for in a meat pen rabbit is its fur. Ideally you want your rabbits to have what you call “Flyback Fur”, meaning that

when you run your hand across the rabbit against the fur it will “flyback” into place and not just continue standing straight up.

Checking for Disqualifications: Before beginning the actual Meat Pen Rabbit Selection process my advice is to go through a DQ elimination process.

Here is a listing of potential ARBA Standard Disqualifications that you need to make sure the rabbits that will go in your meat pen don't have:

- **Ear Mites** – your rabbits can't have “Ear Mites” also known as “Ear Canker” or there is a chance that the judge will disqualify them depending upon how strict they are on DQ's.
- **Malocclusion** – your rabbits' front teeth should overlap your rabbit's bottom teeth, not the other way around or butt up directly against each other.
- **Completely White Tail** – the bottom of the tail on Californian Rabbits at least needs to have some color to it meaning that it should not be completely white.
- **Nasal Discharge** – your rabbits can't have nasal discharge or snuffles or they will be disqualified.
- **Broken or Missing Toe Nails** – your rabbits should have five intact toenails on the front two paws and four on each of the back two paws.
- **Broken or Missing Tail** – your rabbits must not have a broken or missing tail. The tail must also have the tip of it attached.
- **Discolored Toe Nails** – your rabbits need to have color on each of their toenails meaning they can't be completely white.
- **Hernia/Lumps** – your rabbits must not have a Hernia or any sort of unnatural lumps anywhere on their body.
- **Smut** – some judges will disqualify rabbits for having “smut” or in other words discoloration of fur anywhere on their body which contradicts the ARBA breed standards.

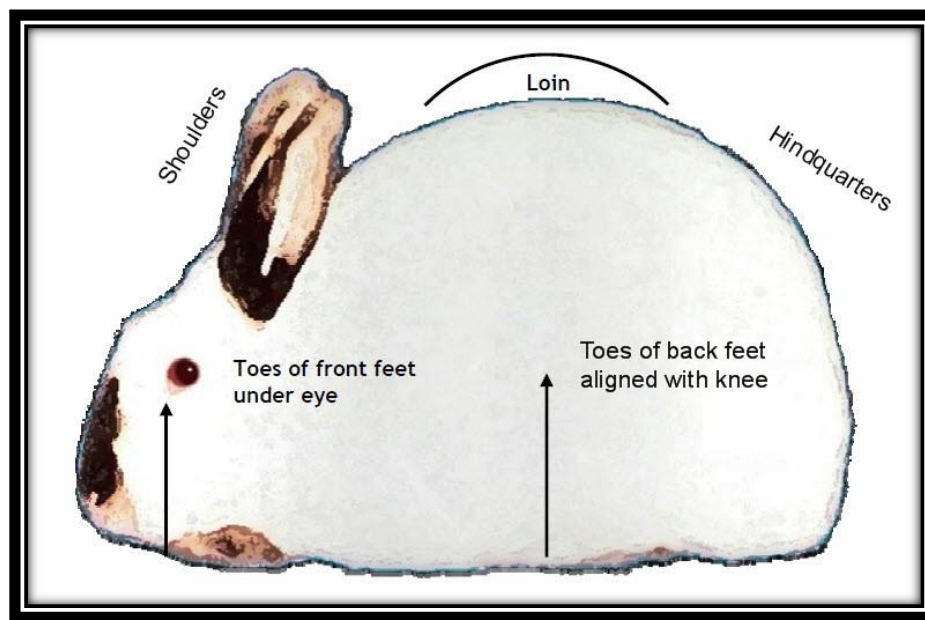
Choosing your Best Meat Pen Rabbits – My Method:

Step 1: Make a spreadsheet for use in pen selection. You will want to have several different columns including: Name/Ear Tag, Weight, Shoulders, Loin, Hindquarters and Comments. This can either be done by drawing lines down a sheet of paper or utilizing Microsoft Excel.

Step 2: Once you have checked all your potential meat pen bunnies to make sure that they didn't have any DQ's, you will want to start off by weighing each of them individually and recording their most recent weight on the spreadsheet under the weight column.

Step 3: Next proceed to evaluate each of the meat pen bunnies individually by looking at their Shoulders, Loin and Hindquarters and writing either: Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good or Excellent in each of the columns for that individual bunny based upon the meat qualities. If you have any comments such as "One of the best" or "Lacks Hindquarters" you can add that in the comments section of the spreadsheet.

Setting up a Rabbit for Evaluation: Before proceeding to evaluate a rabbit you should "set it up properly". To properly set up a rabbit: first align it sideways with the head facing your dominant hand. Next align the rabbit's front two feet so that they are straight and below the rabbit's eyes. Lastly the hind feet should be aligned evenly with the knees of the rabbit's hindquarters. See the image below for a visual of the proper evaluation setup position.

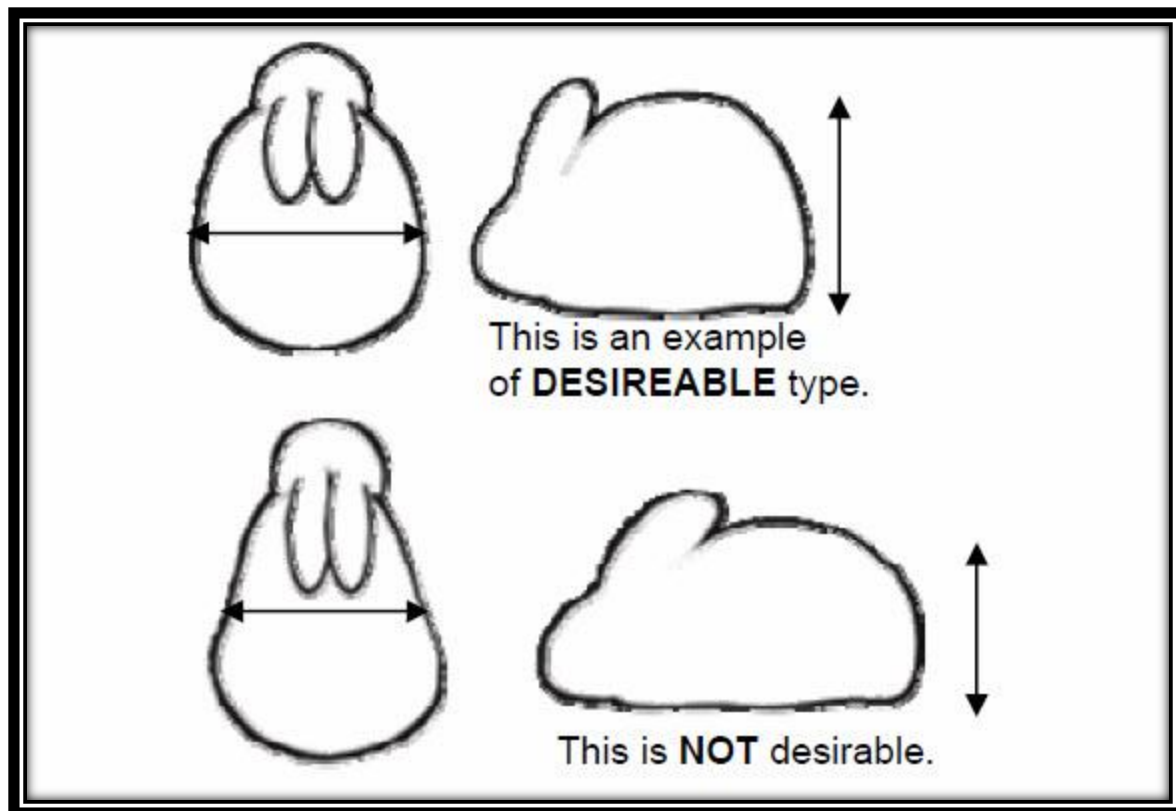


Evaluating Shoulders: When evaluating the shoulders on a rabbit you want them to ideally be: wide, firm and begin to rise quickly.

Evaluating the Loin: When evaluating the loin on a rabbit you want it to be: wide, full and hard.

Evaluating Hindquarters: You want the hindquarters on a rabbit to be full (meaty), round (not chopped) and carry proportionally down to the table. Also you don't want your rabbit to have wider hindquarters than the rest of the body so that hips will protrude when looking at it from above..

Evaluating Depth: Ideally your rabbit should have good depth meaning that the rabbit rises quickly and isn't flat when setup for evaluation.



Evaluating Condition: You want the rabbit that you are evaluating to: feel firm, look healthy, have a good coat and have firm flesh that doesn't move around a lot when moving your hand across it. When using a spreadsheet I just factor in the condition into the "Meat Type" columns or make note of any exceptionalness or faults within the comments section.

Evaluating Fur: Although the “fur” on a meat pen rabbit is technically considered the least important thing, it is still important that you put some emphasis on it, if you plan on placing at any major show. The main thing to look for with regards to the fur of a rabbit is: you want it to be “flyback” meaning that when you move your hand against it the fur will fall back into place rather than stand straight up.

Step 4: Once you have evaluated each of the bunnies you can start matching the bunnies that have similar characteristics together to try and find a pen. For instance if one rabbit has good shoulders, a very good loin and excellent hindquarters you will want to match rabbits with similar characteristics with that rabbit, such as the trait of excellent hindquarters. If you only have a few bunnies to choose from you most likely won’t find an “ideal 3” to match together. That being said, if you are attending a smaller show, they still might be able to do quite well as long as the rabbits don’t have any major faults or DQ’s.

Step 5: Once you have selected three rabbits for your potential pen (may take awhile if you have quite a few rabbits to choose from) you will want to set them side by side on a flat surface and look at them from different angles. Look at them directly face on and then from the top to see how well they look together.

Pictures of my Grand Champion Meat Pen Rabbits are shown below:



Here is a listing of several tips to utilize during the Meat Pen Rabbit Selection Process:

- Pick your Meat Pen no earlier than 24 Hours in advance of your rabbit show. I have personally had rabbits dramatically change over a day, for the better and for the worse.
- Seek assistance during the Meat Pen Selection Process. Ideally you will want to have somebody who knows what they are doing help you pick your meat pens for the first couple years. Honestly its near impossible to learn what to feel for in a rabbit without hand's on training.
- Make sure you wear long sleeves or a coat when choosing your meat pen bunnies. If not chances are you will get scratched.
- Create and utilize a spreadsheet to help yourself out during the rabbit evaluation phase.
- Start off by looking for rabbits within the same litter when selecting your meat pen. Rabbits from the same litter will usually be at least somewhat uniform with regards to their meat qualities and overall "feel".
- Feel free to utilize a mirror to help you see different angles of the rabbits that you are evaluating.
- If you or the rabbits that you are evaluating become exhausted try taking a short brake and come back later to finish the meat pen selection process.
- Focus on "Meat Type" and "Condition" first before over obsessing with "Fur" or "Uniformity" as they do make up 70% of the points on the ARBA Meat Pen Evaluation Standard.
- Own a digital scale so that you can weigh your bunnies with it.

The Show Day

So the big day has finally arrived! By now you should have already picked out your meat pen and be ready for your first rabbit show experience!!

Transporting your Rabbits: Since you will need to safely transport your rabbits to the show I recommend that you purchase a quality rabbit carrier in advance from a place such as <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/rabbit-carriers/> .

Quick Tip: It's a good idea to get a 3 compartment rabbit carrier if you can find one so the rabbits can be kept separate from one another. This will avoid them potentially fighting or messing on each other.

What to Bring: In addition to your rabbits you will want to bring a rabbit carrier, water bottles, food bowls, extra food and anything else you feel that your rabbits will need. At quite a few meat pen rabbit shows if your pen places, your rabbits will be held at the rabbit show for awhile, which means you need to be prepared to feed and water them there.

Pre-Weigh In: Some rabbit shows offer you a chance to weigh your rabbits on their scale “unofficially” before the show starts. This can be helpful if you happen to have a rabbit that is very close to going overweight and want to make sure it will make it inside of the weight limit.

Quick Tip: If you have a rabbit that you think may not make it within the weight limit, I suggest that you bring an alternate rabbit for backup.

The Actual Show: Most of the time the judge will choose to divide the show into several phases. In each phase the judge will eliminate more rabbits until the final phase in which they will choose the “placing pens”.

What happens if your pen places?: Depending upon the show that you attend many times the pens that place will get to go to an auction or win prize money. If the pens go to auction, usually the judge will select several “alternate pens” as well.

Rabbit Showmanship

Many meat pen rabbit shows will offer a Rabbit Showmanship Contest that you will have the ability to participate in, if you are exhibiting meat pen rabbits that year. Although Rabbit Showmanship isn't going to earn you a bunch of money like the Meat Pen Show potentially can, participating can increase your knowledge of your project and give exhibitors who don't place with their Meat Pens another shot. Additionally some shows will give away jackets, caps, t-shirts and even cash prizes to the winning participants.

Usually Rabbit Showmanship contests will have at least two separate divisions: a senior division (typically high school students) and a junior division. The different divisions will usually vary in difficulty and winners most likely will be selected from each.

The Rabbit Showmanship Contest will usually have two separate parts to it: a written test and a hands on evaluation section.

Written Test: For the written test you will be given a document with questions about your meat pen rabbit project on it. The questions may vary from feeding to breeding to breed history etc. Additionally you may be asked to fill out a blank parts of a rabbit chart from memory.

Hands on Test: For the hands on portion of the test you will likely be asked to go evaluate your rabbit in front of the judge, check for DQs and determine its sex.

Some of the hands on test criteria specifically includes: Carrying the Rabbit, Posing the Rabbit, Checking its Ears, Turning the Rabbit Over, Checking the Rabbit's Teeth, Checking the Rabbit's Eyes, Checking the Nose, Checking the Toenails, Checking Hocks and Front Feet, Checking the Legs, Checking the Body, Checking the Sex, Checking for straightness in the tail, Checking for Smut, Checking for Quality and Cleanliness, etc.

If you would like to learn more about Rabbit Showmanship I suggest that you grab a copy of The Youth Rabbit Project Study Guide. You can order the book at discount via:

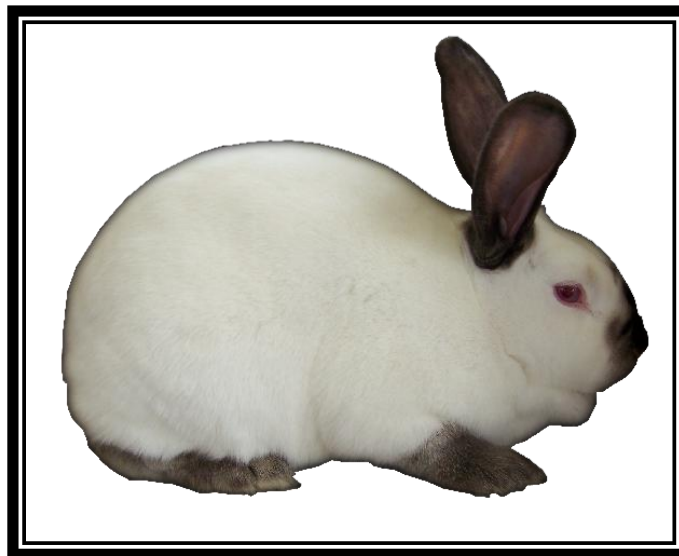
<http://www.premiumrabbits.com/youth-rabbit-project-study-guide/> .

Rabbit Breed Shows

In addition to participating in meat pen rabbit shows, another thing you might want to consider doing would be to enter your rabbits in a rabbit breed show. Entering your rabbits in a breed show means that you can have another chance at showing.

Rabbit breed shows are usually put together by clubs and members of ARBA (The American Rabbit Breeders Association).

At Rabbit Breed Shows rather than just being able to show meat pen bunnies you can generally show rabbits of all different ages. This means that you can potentially bring your adult does and bucks to the show if you wish and let them be judged.



47 Breeds to choose from: Currently at the time of this writing there are 47 different ARBA recognized breeds that can be shown at some of their shows. This means that if you are interested in participating in rabbit breed shows and not just meat pen shows, you are free to adventure out and start raising different breeds of rabbits for show as well.

More information: While rabbit breed shows are beyond the scope of this Raising Meat Pen Rabbits Book you can learn more about the different breeds of rabbits in the book Raising Rabbits 101 and learn more about showing them in the book: The Youth Rabbit Project Study Guide. Both books are available via: <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/rabbit-books/> .

Chapter 5: Exclusive Bonus Section



A PARENT AND FELOW RABBIT BREEDER'S VIEW ON THE RABBIT MEAT PEN PROJECT

(Various Rabbit Raising Advice, Stories, Tips, and Philosophy)



Contributed By: George Webster – <http://www.aarabbits.com/>

Introduction: The 4H or FFA programs are intended to help form kids into responsible adults. We have truly loved our rabbit experience and can look back on how it has helped form our oldest son. We hold fondest memories of bringing those original 3 rabbits home and naming them and building those wood framed cages with chicken wire sides. The disappointment of not getting bunnies the first year for the County Fair. The incredible thrill of GRAND CHAMPION Meat Pen at the County fair on Year 4 and the \$7,000 auction prize for our son.

My Journey: Raising Rabbits as a Child

YEAR ONE- WE'VE JUST BEGUN

My dad sold rabbits to men of Portuguese decent in Chicopee, Massachusetts. I probably mentioned some of these stories to my son. When I was about 13 I tried raising rabbits and selling them for meat. There were Friday night livestock auctions in rural Massachusetts where rabbits could be bought and sold. We bought old painted wire mink cages and set them on saw horses in our old dairy barn. My most memorable experience was unfortunately a bad one.

The Large Portuguese man who "Ripped Off" a 13 yr old kid.

One day all my cages were full and I really needed to sell about 20 rabbits (one of the rules of the rabbit project- you can never have too many cages). We called the man my dad had dealt with in past years and he was going to come and pay 50 cents per pound for the rabbits. When he arrived I was the only one home and he informed me that the bottom had dropped out of the rabbit market. He would only pay \$1.75 per rabbit or about 25 cents a pound.

Well I had to sell some rabbits... so I sold as few as possible (seven). He gave me twelve dollars and a fifty cent piece and waited while I went into the house to get his 25 cents change. He drove off in his Cadillac and when we had someone phone his home, he was selling rabbits for about \$1.25 a pound. In the future we sold the rabbits to a short Puerto Rican man with a limp who drove a Plymouth Duster. Sometimes the Large Portuguese man would stop by in search of rabbits... TOO BAD! We never had any to sell him, even at 50 cents per pound.

Getting Back in the Industry

One day in late October- my wife and 6th grade son informed me he wanted to do rabbits for 4H. Gasp- I'm in Texas now where do I find rabbits? You need to have your rabbits by November 12th. After many inquiries, someone in our town had rabbits. Great. Great. "Oh sorry we don't sell rabbits to people in our county. It would be like competing against our own rabbits. I do have a list of breeders for you- not one closer than 200 miles away." Ughh.

RULE- Share your rabbits and you shall be blessed.

COME UP WITH A PLAN

Whether you are starting out or have done the rabbit meat pen project for years like us, the

best thing to do it to come up with a plan. Our plan for this year is to enter meat pens in Houston in early March and our county in Mid April. We will divide our rabbits into 2 categories: those that will be bred on October 1st and then bred again for the county fair around the first of the year and those that will be bred around Thanksgiving for the Houston show. Since our summers are very hot, we do not breed in the summer. Last year all the does we bred on October 1st did not conceive and only about half conceived that were bred at Thanksgiving. Almost all that were bred at the first of the year conceived. The herd went into a temporary sterile state due to the above average temperatures. Breeding on October 1st has worked in previous years.

The plan will involve the buck/doe combinations that you wish to use. Rabbit meat pen show rules usually require that bunnies not be more than 70 days old. So optimally we wish to breed 101 days before the show. The majority of the rabbits have their litter in 31 to 32 days after mating. The 70 day rule is really one of honor... because as I used to mock "like the rabbit police are going to show up at your house". That being said, last year we did get visited from the Houston rabbit committee. They checked our does' ear tags. So much for thinking there are no rabbit police.

For the October breeding we may experiment with buck-doe combinations and see how the bunnies look before the first of the year breeding.

One new family who got their rabbit trio Sept 1st has an October county show where she will enter her buck in the breeding show. She can then breed for either Houston or Beaumont show and enter a meat pen.

ADVICE: The first year your objective should be to just get a meat pen to the show. The second year you can try to place and even get into the auction.

The first thing to think about is having bunnies to bring to the fair. The first year don't fret about whether your rabbits are grand champions. A trio of rabbits (2 does and a buck) is about the bare minimum needed. We have found on average that you can expect about 3 bunnies per doe. Rabbits typically have 6 to 8 bunnies, but some will not conceive and others will lose the litter meaning some bunnies will die.

I would think of your rabbit herd as "THE TEAM." Let's say you have 5 does and 2 bucks and your plan is to breed all does to buck A. What if Buck A will not breed your does? Good thing you have Buck B. What would you have done if you didn't have Buck B? Better to have bunnies with Buck B, than no bunnies at all.

The rabbit project truly amazes me. It is one in which a first time participant can win Grand Champion. In all the county fairs we have been in... a different kid gets 1st and 2nd every year.

Where Does the Money Go?

The money awarded to the top pens has its good and bad points. I have to admit we would have never started the rabbit adventure were it not for the allure of the prize money. My kids initially got involved in 4H because they heard the grand champion chicken raised by a friend got \$9000. Not everyone gets money. At our county fair the top 10 pens out of about 70 or so go to the auction. 1st and 2nd place bring 5 to 10 thousand, while the others usually get 1 to 3 thousand. I prefer the fairs in which the allotment is not so "top heavy". There are some fairs in which all the animals are auctioned off. Just remember this money is all "charity". For your kid to get money, remember some kind generous soul had to donate it. We hear the phrases "it's for the kids". One admirable family will tell of how this money is being saved for college with the boy being interviewed thanking God and his parents with the mom in tears with pride over her son. Another family at the same time might be theoretically boasting of how his or her plans for the big money paid off. The great PRIDE in their rabbits may lead them down a "less glamorous rabbit trail" so to speak, and they may become another one of those people who will not sell or share their genetics with others and then... wonder why several years down the road that their project isn't as successful as it once was. Lessons will be learned. My hope is that kindness will triumph in the end. "To whom much is given, much will be required."

Most families have more than one child and I favor having the sibling enter a pen as well. It is good for the rabbit project. It allows for an extra pen of rabbits to be put before the judge. Some may strongly believe that if a kid does not feed the animals, they should not enter a pen. Most families will enter more than one pen using the "less participating sibling". In many instances, the sibling's pen ends up going to the auction. What happens to the money gets really interesting. In our case the sibling decided to split the money with his brother (gave him \$2000 and kept \$4200). The brother did not want to accept the \$2000 dollars but we convinced him to take it. In another family, the sibling did not get to keep the winnings; it went to the one who really worked the rabbit project (they were both supposed to). Another family where both siblings participate, it was decided before the show that the younger would split her winnings with the older but the older would not split her winnings (the older had college expenses). The younger thought this was unfair and neither pen went to auction. The money adds another dimension to the rabbit project.

I wanted my younger son to go to our "freezer sale" and use some of his winnings to support other kids. There was a sleep-over that night... so it didn't happen. I remember the girl who

got \$20,000 for grand champion pig did that. The money brings out character: as good or as bad as it may be.

RULE- The rabbits give us an excuse to gather.

RULE- Take responsibility for submitting Intent to Show Forms, Tattooing bunnies for validation and getting to the show.

My Ag teacher didn't email about when to validate my bunnies. Our 4H Leader did not notify us. Valid reasons... someone dropped the ball. **Take responsibility and find out these dates.** If you know the name of show there is probably an online listing.

THE RABBIT PROJECT- A LIFE AND DEATH ROLLER COASTER

When we got our first rabbits we could never have imagined the adventures good and bad that were ahead of us. The disappointment when Cornflower had those two frozen bunnies the first year. The thrill when my son got 13th place at the county fair his second year. The poisoned rat that was stuck in the cage with our first buck named Rocky. The look on my son's face when he felt the "YV" rabbits in Year 4 (the best he had produced until that time), that I was about ready to sell to an AG teacher. The list goes on and on...

Now after many years of our rabbit project/journey and with the experience we've gained, we can now see patterns and get a bit philosophical about the whole thing. The rabbit project is one of those beneficial journeys your family embarks on. Sometimes it's magical with great feelings of success and sometimes it's painful and you are sorry it ever happened.

This year some setbacks have occurred with people who got breeding stock from us this year, which has caused aggravation, but with our philosophical approach we now view this as just part of the journey. Although we feel bad when someone gets an animal and sickness or death occurs, this stuff happens. Maybe through greater diligence we may have avoided the problem, but on the other hand to be able to supply breeding stock for them to start their journey is a success in itself.

A couple stories...

We sold some rabbits to an enthusiastic girl who seemed the type who would go far with the project. One great doe they got developed a respiratory infection (white discharge from nose).

Now when someone buys a rabbit that gets sick... this is hard to deal with. They took the rabbit to the vet and gave it antibiotic treatments with no improvement. The rabbit was eating and drinking and my advice was to breed it. We had a doe with white discharge and let her have a litter. It was a great healthy litter with no sick bunnies and the mom got better. Many will tell you to just kill the rabbit. Our experience apparently has yet to become contagious.

Our philosophy is "THE STRONG SURVIVE" which is hard for some to accept.

One mom with twin boys came and got a trio with a couple of older does. One of the does died in about a week and she came back and we gave her another doe.

One lady got rabbits and phoned back a few months later and claimed the rabbits she bought had fur mites. This may have not been a big deal... but she was allergic to fur mites. When we see a rabbit losing hair on his face we will put a few drops of ivermectin on the rabbit and it usually clears up. This caused a lot of trouble for the family. We used to use Ivermectin for ear mites but now we just use mineral oil. Dosing a rabbit with Ivermectin before selling might have prevented this. Ivermectin is said to cause a molt and it is not approved for rabbits (although many rabbit breeders use it)... a typical dose is 3 drops in each ear.

When people buy rabbits from us we tell them to water them in bowls, until the rabbits for sure now how to drink from the watering system they have. Once we had people come to get some really nice healthy rabbits in the summer from us and come to find out they died the next day because they didn't know how to drink from the water bottles they gave them!

THE BIRTHING



Most rabbits will deliver their babies about 31 days after conception. We had one group of 3 sisters that delivered at 30 days. Occasionally we will have a rabbit deliver just one baby, followed up the next day by about 8. We learned this the hard way. No nest and just one baby born on the wire... we assumed that was it. We removed the nest box and the next day we found eight bunnies that were unfortunately all dead because we removed the nest box. If we see a rabbit nest... there is a 95% chance she will have babies. Sometimes we see older does nest that don't actually deliver which we call a false pregnancy.

We will put in an empty nest box 28 days after breeding. If the doe goes into the box and starts scratching the bottom of the box, this is a good indication that she will start to build a nest. We will give her a handful of hay. When the doe nests she will gather the hay in her mouth and bring it in the box. If you see a doe with a "hay-bone" in her mouth, you have a 95% chance that she will deliver bunnies. Time to get excited. When you see her start the hay-bone, give her enough hay to fill the box. We usually let her do it. However, if we've put the box in late or it's a hot day we will put the hay in the box after we've seen her nest. Lots of people will put the box in full of hay... we don't do it because we want to know who is nesting. The doe may start nesting while you're not there and seeing the hay in the box will alert you.

Nothing says "I'm not going to have bunnies" like pooping and peeing in the nest box.

Some does will start nesting as soon as you put the box in the cage. Others (especially first time mommas) will wait until the last minute to start nesting, if a doe nests 3 days early, she will normally not pull much hair however some may pull a token amount. When you see a doe pulling a lot of hair from her chest and belly... then the bunnies are likely very close to being born (within the hour). A good nest is one where the entire floor of the box is covered with hay and there is a "hay pocket" in the back of the box for the bunnies to nestle. When it's time to deliver you will see the doe in the front of the box with her back facing the opening. When the babies are born she licks and nurses them. The babies are expected to crawl from the mom into the back of the box to nestle in the pocket. The doe will usually have put some fur in the pocket. Realizing this dynamic is very important in saving bunnies and this is where the good managers can really excel in the 4H project. I always wonder just how many would be grand champion bunnies died in the nest box.

We keep watch when the Fair bunnies are born. Yes sometimes the mommas can do everything right and getting bunnies seems effortless. More than often however, the opposite is true. After the doe builds the nest... we pull the nest box and add hay when necessary to make sure we have a good nest. Two of the main problems we find are: there is no hay in the bottom of the hollow or there are dips in the front of the box in which bunnies get trapped.

In order for the bunnies to survive, they need to be nestled together in the hollow covered with fur. We have a list with the dates the does were bred and we expect them to be born starting Day 31. As soon as we see a litter born and mom jumps out of the nest box, we snatch the box out of the cage and inspect it. We count the bunnies then remove the dead ones and any of the afterbirth that the doe has not eaten. We will add hay and fur if necessary. You should save extra rabbit fur and have it available for the colder weather birthing. If the bunnies are nestled in the hay with bunny fur on top, it is 90 degrees in the bunny hollow (I measured it), even if it is 20 degrees outside.

THE FEEDING

Consistent feeding and watering is probably the most important part of the rabbit project. We feed once per day in the evening. We use PETRUS 700B which is 18% protein with calf manna added. We use a 5 ounce Dixie cup to administer the feed to the galvanized J feeders. In the cooler months each rabbit 10 weeks old and up gets about 2 cups or 10 ounces by volume per day. Some rabbits will not eat the entire 2 cups— so they get 1-1/2. You want to feed so the next day everyone's feeder is empty. In our summer the amount of feed might go down to 1 cup. One rule we have is that a mom with babies in the nest box always has food in her feeder. Any food that is moist (from humidity or pee) is removed.

If the feeder is not empty... it means the rabbit is not eating. This happens all the time. It is important to recognize if a rabbit is not eating, so you can give him something different that he will eat. The important thing is to get the rabbit eating. If a rabbit does not eat... he will die. The first thing we do is give him a handful of quality horse hay. We will also feed a half cup of barley. Barley is commonly given to rabbits as it contains 11% protein and the rabbits love it. The PETRUS bag suggests giving your show bunnies barley or oats to make them firmer. We will give the momma and her litter a 5 oz cup of barley in the morning as soon as they start jumping out of the nest box at 2 to 3 weeks old. The bunnies will start eating the barley before pellets. We always put the barley in a separate bowl (preferably one they can't easily flip) otherwise they may scratch out grain to get to the barley.

We also will give a rabbit that is not eating some green oak leaves (about 3) such as water oak—which can be found on small trees even in the winter. A small amount of green grass or a piece of blackberry briar is also given. In a few days many rabbits will once again return to eating. If an animal stops eating the pellet ration then he is in danger of being cut from the TEAM. Of course those first few beloved rabbits that have names usually stay on the team regardless of how they behave. Although we did CUT Harriet, one of our original does who failed to have babies after 3 matings, she had gotten fat and we figured she would never have babies again.

Not eating could be a result of not getting enough water. New rabbits may not know how to drink from the automatic waterer or the water bottle. Sometimes if you move cages... some take a while to figure out how to get water.

Although it takes a lot more time in rabbit care... we always have a water bowl in the cage as well. Our rabbits have a gravity fed watering system with a brass dew drop nipple in each cage. There are some rabbits that prefer to drink from their bowl and there are some rabbits that haven't figured out how to drink from the nipple in the new cage. You'll find the rabbits who haven't figured it out– they are the ones that immediately drain the water bowl when you place it in the cage. An automatic watering system is great for the rabbit project. The rabbits always have water, which can save lives in the summer and can enhance growth. We didn't install the automatic watering system until year 4 when we went from breeding 8 does to 28 does.

We frequently visit the thrift and resale shops in search of bowls that rabbits cannot easily flip, to use for water bowls and barley feeders.

Be consistent in the feeding. Have the same person feed at approximately the same time each day. If you have 2 kids... have one feed and one "water". Rotating the feeder could cause problems.

THE BREEDING

The most important part of a successful rabbit project is that does are having litters of 6+ bunnies about 3 times per year. This means we have young healthy does that are well managed. When a doe is over 3 years old her litter size usually decreases. Currently we only have 3 does over 3 years old, but their bunnies have the very best genetics. Their litter sizes are getting real small 2, 3 and 5, but these are our very best. Female rabbits need to be well managed with regard to weight. If a doe gets too fat she will lose her ability to conceive. We had a female 2TA who a judge at a Houston show (Randy Shuemaker) made great comments about. The next year we bred her and her meat pen babies did very well (12th place). We bred her after the show and she did not conceive. Over the summer she got too fat and she never had babies again.

We have an abundance of bucks (48 does 21 bucks) partly to keep a large genetic pool for experimentation purposes and partly to be able to breed a large number of does on the same day. We want a buck that will breed on demand and that means a buck that will allow us to restrain a doe in his cage. The first time we breed a buck we try to put a willing doe in his cage (a willing doe is one who may try and ride the buck). You always put the doe in the buck's cage.

This is very practical, if we put a buck in the doe's cage he may be so distracted by the new surroundings, that breeding is difficult. It is also thought that a doe may be territorial about her cage and attack the buck. The first few times we bred, we allowed the buck to chase the doe around the cage, however now we simply practice restraining her like the majority of experienced rabbit breeders.

Two short stories in closing...

SCUM OF THE EARTH

One year we sold 5 week old bunnies to some families in an FFA group. People that do rabbits are usually great people and we didn't hesitate taking a check. One lady came with her 2 kids and got 10 bunnies and gave us a check for \$250. WOW was that one bad check... Wrote letters, phoned (never answered). I spoke with a lady in the FFA group and there were financial problems with the family. Guess what? One of the pens won Grand Champion and the other got 6th place. Both went to the auction and they received \$6500. WE NEVER GOT PAID. An oversight? I wrote a letter asking for payment with a copy of the returned check and had someone in the FFA group give it personally to the lady. NO REPLY...

SALT OF THE EARTH

Despite the negative there are many folks who just love the Rabbit Project and thrive on making it a success for kids. One lady from Nueces County comes to mind. Her daughter had already graduated, but her love for the kids and the rabbit project caused her to join the rabbit committee and play "rabbit matchmaker". She contacted us one fall and she drove 5 hours to get 5 pens of rabbits for kids who would otherwise not have gotten rabbits. She was deeply invested in each kid and they each had their own special place in her heart. Well justice was served that year as 2 pens went to auction and the individual fryer contest yielded 1st and 3rd place.

Sample Meat Pen Rabbit Growth Chart

Rabbit Meat Pen Growth Chart: (Days Until Show and Weights)										
Ear Tag	30	24	21	19	17	12	10	8	4	3
2WS-M	2.30	2.90	3.15	3.25	3.55	4.00	4.15	4.30	4.60	4.70
1YXS-F	2.60	3.20	3.25	3.25	3.45	4.00	4.25	4.35	4.70	4.75
2YXS-M	2.45	2.95	3.00	2.95	3.10	3.60	3.85	4.10	4.35	4.45
1YS-F	2.60	3.05	3.35	3.50	3.65	4.05	4.15	4.35	4.50	4.75
1TQS-M	2.70	3.10	3.30	3.45	3.75	3.95	4.10	4.30	4.60	4.70
2TQS-F	2.50	3.00	3.10	3.30	3.55	3.90	3.95	4.15	4.40	4.45
1GQS-F	2.45	2.95	3.20	3.35	3.45	3.85	3.90	4.05	4.30	4.55
3LU-F	2.55	3.05	3.20	3.30	3.60	3.85	4.00	4.15	4.40	4.75
2MV-M	2.25	2.60	2.80	3.05	3.25	3.65	3.75	4.00	4.35	4.40
1MQV-F	2.30	2.70	3.05	3.10	3.30	3.80	3.90	4.15	4.45	4.50
2MQV-M	2.20	2.65	2.90	2.95	3.20	3.65	3.80	3.95	4.40	4.45
1RXP-F	2.85	3.30	3.60	3.75	3.90	4.30	4.20	4.40	4.50	4.80
3RXP-M	2.65	3.05	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.90	4.10	4.30	4.55	4.60
1RP-F	2.75	3.20	3.30	3.55	3.65	4.05	4.20	4.35	4.70	4.70
2RP-M	2.65	3.05	3.20	3.40	3.50	3.90	3.90	4.25	4.50	4.60
1SQP-M	2.45	2.90	3.15	3.20	3.50	3.95	4.00	4.15	4.45	4.65
2SQP-M	2.40	2.80	3.05	3.10	3.40	3.80	3.95	4.15	4.40	4.60
2RQP-F	2.40	2.80	3.10	3.20	3.50	3.85	3.90	4.15	4.55	4.75
4RQP-F	2.40	2.85	3.10	3.25	3.65	3.95	4.05	4.35	4.55	4.70
1QP-F	2.60	3.10	3.35	3.45	3.60	3.95	4.15	4.35	4.40	4.55
4QP-M	2.40	3.00	3.20	3.30	3.50	3.90	4.05	4.25	4.45	4.55
2AB-M	2.80	3.15	3.00	3.05	3.35	3.95	4.15	4.30	4.50	4.70
1QXB-M	2.35	2.85	3.20	3.30	3.50	3.95	4.00	4.20	4.50	4.70
2QXB-F	2.45	2.85	3.15	3.25	3.40	3.90	3.90	4.10	4.30	4.65
3QXB-M	2.30	2.75	3.10	3.20	3.35	3.75	3.80	4.00	4.25	4.45
1AXB-M	2.45	2.85	3.15	3.25	3.50	3.90	4.10	4.15	4.55	4.70
2AXB-F	2.30	2.65	3.00	3.10	3.35	3.70	3.85	4.10	4.50	4.50
2PXH-F	2.45	3.00	3.30	3.35	3.55	3.95	4.10	4.15	4.35	4.50
3PXH-M	2.50	3.00	3.30	3.40	3.45	3.85	4.10	4.25	4.65	4.65
2GH-M	2.35	2.80	3.15	3.15	3.55	3.90	4.10	4.40	4.50	4.70
3IH-M	2.40	2.80	3.00	3.15	3.35	3.90	3.95	4.05	4.35	4.55
1IXH-M	2.35	2.80	3.15	3.40	3.55	3.90	4.15	4.25	4.70	4.65
1DXH-F	2.30	2.80	3.00	3.10	3.35	3.85	3.90	4.05	4.35	4.50

Chapter 6: Rabbit Resources/Glossary and Final Words



3 “Essential” Rabbit Resources

After raising rabbits for many years there are numerous resources that I recommend that you should at least checkout. That being said since I know many of you are starting out on a limited budget like I was when I first got started... **Here is a list of just 3 essential rabbit resources (one is even free) that if you are serious about your meat pen rabbit project, you MUST at least check out.**

Resource #1: PremiumRabbits.com



Description: PremiumRabbits.com can be considered the go to place for find rabbit cages, hutches, food, books, water bottles, software, nest boxes and more for sale.

URL: <http://premiumrabbits.com/>

Resource #2: TheRabbitMentor.com



Description: The Rabbit Mentor is a really cool membership website that was built for rabbit raisers with the purpose of providing them with monthly training videos on various aspects of their rabbit project such as breeding, kindling, rabbitry management, selling rabbits, feeding, etc... As a member of The Rabbit Mentor Program each month you will gain access to a new training video in addition to gaining access to a boatload of other free information as soon as you become a member via the Free Downloads tab within the exclusive “members only area”. Currently a HUGE discount is being offered on the program in which you can gain LIFETIME ACCESS for a small fee. So head over to TheRabbitMentor.com right away!

URL: <http://therabbitmentor.com/>

Resource #3: RabbitBreeders.us (This one is FREE)



Description: At RabbitBreeders.us you can access the World's Largest Rabbit Breeders Directory, in which I am proud to say that I assembled myself, with the intent of providing a great free resource for rabbit enthusiasts like yourself. Using the website you can find rabbits for sale in your area and state or even submit your own rabbitry to the directory free of charge. Since establishing the website, RabbitBreeders.us has received over 1.4 million visits from rabbit raisers all around the World! I also have taken the time to establish two sister sites, one for Canada and the other for England that can be accessed via RabbitBreeders.ca and RabbitBreeders.org.uk. This is a terrific free resource that you can't afford not to check out :)

URL: <http://rabbitbreeders.us/>

Other Useful Rabbit Resources

Here is a listing of some other useful rabbit resources that I suggest you at least check out as well...

[Resource #4: SellRabbitsOnDemand.com](http://SellRabbitsOnDemand.com)



The advertisement is framed by a thick black border. At the top, a blue banner contains the text *SELL RABBITS ON DEMAND* in a yellow, serif font, flanked by two white rabbits. Below this, a white box contains the following text in red: **Discover the NEW NO STRESS SYSTEM that Rabbit Breeders Like You have started using to Sell Rabbits On Demand Without Wasting Money On Expensive Advertising...**. Underneath is a small grey box with the text (Watch the FREE video below for details!). The center features a video player with a play button icon. The video player's background is a light beige textured surface with the text **SellRabbitsOnDemand.com** at the top, followed by the same red text as above. Two small white rabbits are positioned at the bottom left and right of the video player. Below the video player, a small Facebook 'Like' button is visible with the text '165 people like this. Be the first of your friends.' At the bottom of the advertisement is a large yellow button with the text **GET ACCESS NOW!** in bold black letters.

Description: One of the most useful things that you can do for yourself when attempting to build a successful rabbitry, is to come up with a plan regarding how you plan on selling your excess rabbits. When you become a member of the Sell Your Rabbits On Demand System that I have helped develop, we allow you to post as many unique rabbit classifieds as you can submit to our high traffic rabbit classifieds network, which includes our main website: RabbitBreeders.us.

URL: <http://sellrabbitsondemand.com/>

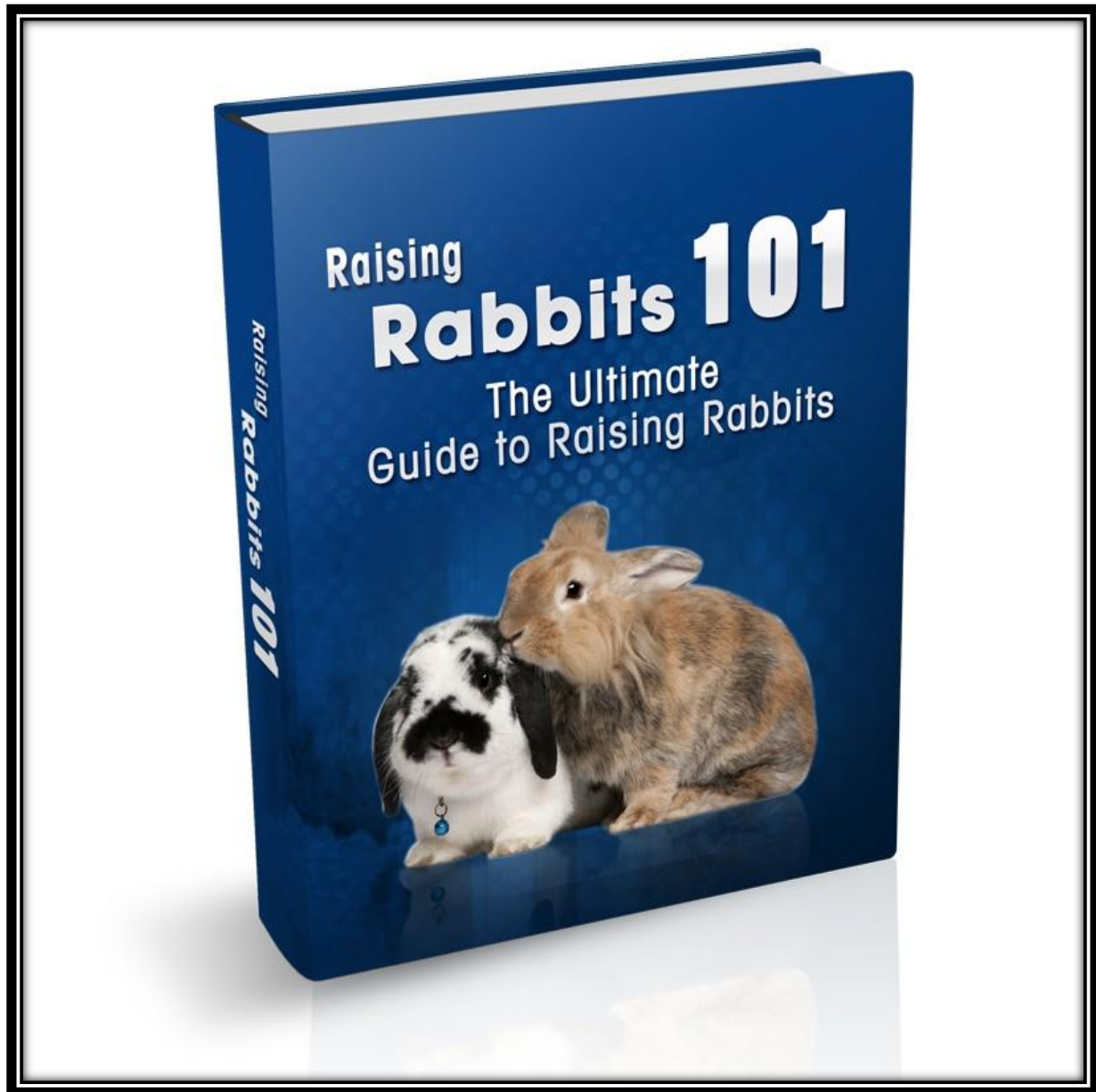
Resource #5: The Easy Rabbitry Management Software



Description: The Easy Rabbitry Management Software is a terrific and easy to use piece of rabbit software that allows you to keep track of all your rabbitry records. Using this piece of software you can easily keep track of all your rabbit breeding, buying + selling, finance, health, kindling, showing records and much more. The software is as simple as installing, hitting a few buttons, entering your record data and then “boom” you’re done.

URL: <http://rabbitrymanagementsoftware.com/>

Resource #6: Raising Rabbits 101 Book



Description: Raising Rabbits 101 has been labeled by some as being the “Ultimate Guide to Raising and Breeding Rabbits”. While this book is geared towards teaching you about how to raise meat pen rabbits, Raising Rabbits 101 is written to give you a complete overview of the rabbit raising industry and provides you with information on all the different rabbit breeds. If you have not already grabbed yourself a copy of the book I highly suggest that you do so.

URL: <http://raisingrabbits101.com/>

Resource #7: Rabbit Ambassadors Program



Rabbit Ambassadors Program

“Increase rabbitry sales in a new creative way...”

Easy Rabbitry Management Software

RabbitryManagementSoftware.com

Description: If you are interested in earning extra money with your rabbitry I highly suggest that you check out The “Industry Changing” Rabbit Ambassadors Program that I put together with rabbit enthusiasts like yourself in mind. The program allows you to earn money by selling popular rabbit industry products to fellow rabbit enthusiasts. As a member of the program you will actually be able to resell this book in addition to Raising Rabbits 101, The Easy Rabbitry Management Software and some of other products that I have mentioned throughout this book in addition to others. The program works by allowing you to purchase the products at special wholesale prices and then resell them at normal retail price, pocketing the difference.

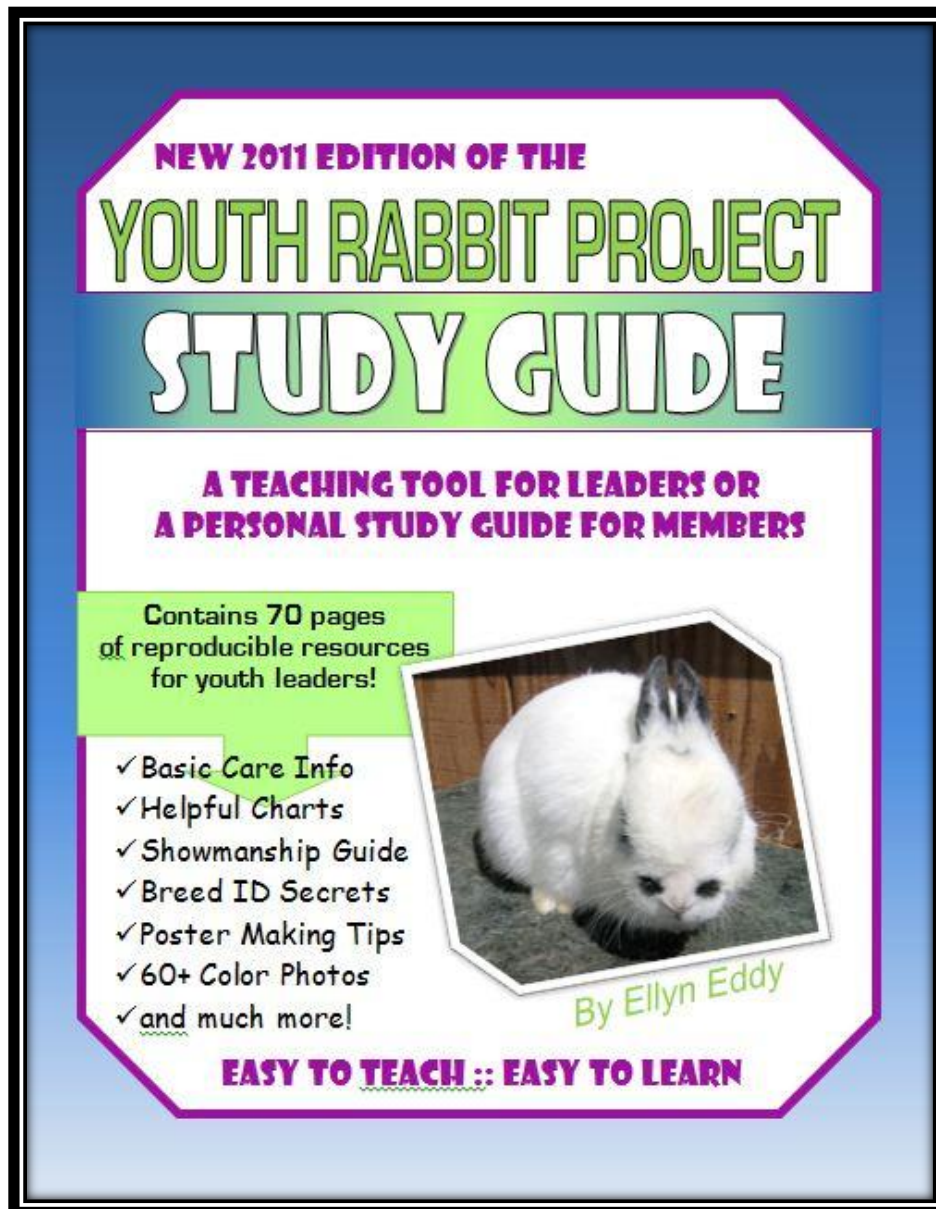
URL: <http://rabbitambassadors.com/>

Resource #8: RabbitPedigrees.com

Description: If you are looking to learn more about rabbit pedigrees or find recommended software solutions RabbitPedigrees.com is the website for you. On the website you can also find free rabbit record keeping templates via the Free Rabbit Downloads Page. At RabbitPedigrees.com you can even additionally order custom rabbit pedigree designs.

URL: <http://rabbitpedigrees.com/>

Resource #9: The Youth Rabbit Project Study Guide



Description: The Youth Rabbit Project Guide is a very useful guide that is a great extension of the material discussed in this Raising Meat Pen Rabbits Book. In this book you will be educated on a variety of different topics ranging from rabbit showmanship to the different rabbit breeders to basic rabbit care and more. Check out the link below to grab yourself a copy.

URL: <http://www.premiumrabbits.com/youth-rabbit-project-study-guide/>

Resource #10: The Easy Rabbit Pedigree Software



Description: The Easy Rabbit Pedigree Software is a simple and easy to use piece of rabbit software that allows you to store pedigree data and instantly generate your own rabbit pedigrees. You can grab a copy of this easy rabbit pedigree generator via RabbitPedigreeSoftware.com. The program is a lot cheaper than the majority of other pieces of rabbit pedigree software on the market.

URL: <http://rabbitpedigreesoftware.com/>

Resource #11: Rabbitry Website Design Service

RABBITRY WEBSITE DESIGN SERVICE







Brought to you by Aaron from
RabbitBreeder.us and Ellyn from
TheNatureTrail.com

Description: Having a rabbitry website is a great way to help promote your meat pen rabbitry. On your website you can post information about the rabbits that you have for sale and showcase your winnings. If you would like to get a website created for your rabbitry we have the perfect low cost service for you available via RabbitWebsiteDesigns.com.

URL: <http://rabbitwebsitedesigns.com/>

Resource #12: Amazon



Description: Many of the different products that we have recommended throughout this book including products such as Raising Rabbits 101 can be found on Amazon. If you know what you are looking for Amazon can be a great place to shop for supplies online. Click on the link below to begin your search.

URL: <http://rabbitbreeders.us/amazon>

Final Words:

Dear Friend,

Raising and Showing Meat Pen Rabbits can be an enjoyable learning experience if you are willing to put forth the level of dedication and commitment the project requires. Personally I became a part of the Raising Meat Pen Industry when I joined 4-H at age 10 and continued to raise and show through age 18. Although I started out with a limited budget, just three rabbits and no personal knowledge or industry experience I was able to build up one of the most well known rabbitries in the state of Texas by the time I graduated from High School. Although I definitely ran into my share of difficulties and obstacles along the way I was able to persevere and continue towards my goal.

That being said, I honestly believe that you are just as capable of making your rabbit project a success as I was, provided that you are willing to make the commitment right now.

If you are indeed serious, I highly recommend that you get started right away and begin putting the material included within this book to use in your rabbit project. In addition to utilizing the material that I have provided you with inside of this book, I suggest that you check out at least a few of the recommended resources mentioned throughout this book. If I didn't honestly believe that the resources mentioned inside of this book would prove beneficial to your rabbit project, I wouldn't have taken the time to include them in the first place.

If you only check out two resources in this entire book I suggest that you go to <http://premiumrabbits.com/> and <http://therabbitmentor.com/> . Between these two websites you will be able to literally get access to all the rabbit supplies and information/training that you need to successfully grow your rabbitry.

In closing let me just say that even if nobody else seems to have faith in your success, I do.

So my final advice for you is to DREAM BIG, WORK HARD and STAY COMMITTED!

Happy Rabbit Raising + Good Luck in all your rabbit endeavors and beyond!!

Sincerely,

Your Friend

Aaron "The Rabbit Master" Webster

Abbreviated Glossary for Meat Pen Rabbit Raisers

List of terms and abbreviations pertaining to raising meat pen rabbits- next page contains definitions

Abscess	Inbreeding
Adult	Inventory
ARBA	Kindling
Balanced	Kit
Bloodline	Line Breeding
Breeder	Litter
Buck	Live Weight
Buck-Teeth	Malocclusion
Class	Market Age
Classification	Molting
Convention	Nest box
Crossbred	Pair
Culling	Palpation
Dewlap	Parasite
Doe	Pathogen
Domestic Rabbit	Pedigree
DQ	Processing
Ear Canker	Rabbit Cage
Feces	Rabbit Hutch
Fertility	Rabbitry
Flesh Condition	Registration
Forequarters	Snuffles
Fostering	Tattoo
Fryer	Trio
Gestation	Weaning
Hindquarters	Wolf Teeth
Hock	Youth Exhibitor

Abbreviated Rabbit Terms and Definitions

A

Abscess- a lump on a rabbit's skin which is hard and filled with pus

Adult- in most rabbit breed shows which have four main breed classes, an adult rabbit is considered to be a rabbit that is at least six months of age or older

ARBA- acronym for the American Rabbit Breeders Association

B

Balanced- a rabbit which has an "equal" distribution of meat and flesh across its body, used to describe a show or meat rabbit

Bloodline- a term used to describe the ancestry of a given rabbit or herd; usually in terms of physical and genetic makeup (Example: This rabbit came from Joe Jone's winning bloodline!)

Breeder- a term used to describe any rabbit raiser which produces offspring with his or her herd, or a rabbit which is used to breed

Buck- a common name used to refer to a male rabbit

Buck-Teeth- a trait that is usually genetic, which refers to a form of malocclusion in which a rabbit's teeth meet together evenly instead of the upper teeth overlapping the bottom teeth

C

Cannibalism- the practice of a doe eating her own kits; usually occurs when a doe is overly stressed or when one of her kits dies in the nest box

Chopped- a rabbit which lacks overall balance; usually refers to a rabbit lacking in the upper or lower hindquarters

Class- a group of rabbits that fall into the same gender, pattern and age group

Classification- a system of arranging or identifying rabbits

Convention- the national or state based rabbit show which is held by ARBA

Crossbred- a rabbit which has direct ancestors from more than one rabbit breed

Culling- the process of eliminating or slaughtering undesirable rabbits from a litter; the term is frequently used by rabbit exhibitors who are in the process of selecting their best show bunnies from a group of litters

D

Dewlap- the flap of extra fat under a rabbit's chin; usually only seen on does

Doe- a common name used to refer to a female rabbit

Domestic Rabbit- a rabbit that has been bred to specifically live in human captivity

DQ- any show rabbit disqualification, trait many times caused by weak genetics

E

Ear Canker- an inflamed scabby condition inside a rabbit's ear caused by an infestation of the ear canal by ear mites; especially common in warm and moist southern climates

F

Feces- rabbit waste products, manure

Fertility- term refers to a rabbit's ability to "get bred" or simply to reproduce

Flesh Condition- the condition or firmness of a rabbit's flesh

Forequarters- the section of a rabbit's body which begins at the neck and extends to the last rib

Fostering- the process of taking kits from the mother rabbit, and placing them in the nest box of another doe; many breeders have different opinions about this technique

Fryer- a market age rabbit, usually about 10 weeks of age and five pounds in weight

G

Gestation- the period of time between breeding and kindling

H

Hindquarters- the end section of a rabbit consisting of a rabbit's hips, legs, bottom loin and rump

Hock- the middle joint or section of a rabbit's hind leg which is located between the foot and hip

I

Inbreeding- a breeding program which promotes the mating of closely related rabbits (Example: Brother to Sister, Father to Daughter); surprisingly some studies have shown that limited inbreeding can be very beneficial to your overall rabbit herd... see also Line Breeding

Inventory- list of all supplies and rabbits that you currently own

K

Kindling- the process of giving birth to young offspring

Kit- the proper term for a baby rabbit

L

Line Breeding- is the purposeful attempt at inbreeding rabbits to a degree, in hopes of producing a better rabbit blood line; when Line Breeding is preformed several from each litter are usually culled

Litter- a mother's offspring, group of bunnies

Live Weight- the weight of a meat rabbit before it is slaughtered for market

M

Malocclusion- the misalignment of a rabbit's teeth

Market Age- the age at which meat rabbits are ready to be sent to market; most breeders agree that the best market age for a rabbit is when it reaches 5 pounds

Molting- the process in which a rabbit sheds an existing layer of fur; in warm climates a rabbit usually "molts" during the summer months

N

Nest Box- a box provided to a doe so that she can prepare a nest for her soon to be arriving bunnies inside of it, also called kindling box or simply "bunny box"

P

Pair- a term that usually refers to a couple of rabbits consisting of a male and a female

Palpation- the process of feeling a doe's abdomen with the hopes of determining whether or not the doe is pregnant

Parasite- an organism that is harmful to the well being of your rabbits

Pathogen- any living organism that causes disease

Pedigree- a record keeping paper which shows the ancestry of a given rabbit, normally between 3 and 5 generations are shown

Processing- the process of slaughtering and dressing a rabbit for market

R

Rabbit Cage- an enclosed structure where rabbits are contained; normally made of wire, sometimes wood

Rabbit Hutch- any enclosed structure in which rabbit are kept; usually made of wood, wire or both

Rabbitry- any place where domestic rabbits are raised or kept

Registration- the process of getting a rabbit registered by an organization such as ARBA

S

Snuffles- a contagious nasal or lung infection that rabbits can “catch”

T

Tattoo- an identification mechanism used to indentify rabbits by the process of placing a letter or number marking in one of their two ears

Trio- generally a “trio” of rabbits consists of three breeding age rabbits; 2 does and a buck

W

Weaning- a term used to describe the process during which bunnies begin to grow independent of their mother for nourishment; Some breeders will forcibly wean kits between 4 and 8 weeks of age, others leave the bunnies with their mothers for a longer period of time

Wolf Teeth- protruding teeth in a rabbit's upper and lower jaw which is caused by the improper alignment of the upper and lower front teeth, preventing them from being grinded down naturally; generally breeders will automatically cull all rabbits with wolf teeth

Y

Youth Exhibitor- exhibitors under age 19