

Getting Started in Your Rabbit Project!!

Before you begin to search for your first rabbit take time to read publications from your library or extension office, talk to other 4-H'ers, rabbit leaders, or rabbit breeders in your area. They are a wealth of information—and the more informed your decision, the more successful your rabbit project will be.

Choosing the perfect breed.

There are more than 40 different breeds of rabbits!

Breeds of rabbits come in 4 categories.

- 1) Small 2-6 pounds at maturity
- 2) Medium 6-9 pounds at maturity
- 3) Large 9-11 pounds at maturity
- 4) Giant 11 pounds + at maturity



SMALL BREEDS 2-6 Pounds	MEDIUM BREEDS 6-9 pounds	LARGE BREEDS 9-11 pounds	GIANT BREEDS 11 pounds +
American Fuzzy Lop	Belgian Hare	American	Giant Angora
Britannia Petite	French Angora	American Chinchilla	Checkered Giant
Dutch	Harlequin	Beveren	Flemish Giant
Dwarf Hotot	Lilac	Californian	French Lop
English Angora	Rex	Champagne D'Argent	Giant Chinchilla
English Spot	Rhineland	Cinnamon	
Florida White	Sable	Crème D'Argent	
Havana	Satin Angora	English Lop	
Himalayan	Silver Marten	Hotot	
Holland Lop	Standard Chinchilla	New Zealand	
Jersey Woolly		Palomino	
Mini Lop		Satin	
Mini Rex		Silver Fox	
Netherland Dwarf			
Polish			
Silver			
Tan			

Things to think about before you buy.....

What is your need for this rabbit? Rabbits can be used for 1) meat and fur production (medium and large breeds) 2) wool production (wool breeds such as Angoras or Fuzzy Lops) 3) pets or 4) exhibition. In most cases as a 4-H'er, you may only be using your rabbit as a pet or for show, so almost any breed or breed size will be appropriate.

Before you decide which category you want to purchase, think about the **cage size** and **rabbitry space** you have. If you have very small cages a large or giant breed rabbit will not be comfortable in them

Consider **feed costs**. Giant breeds eat up to 8 ounces of feed per rabbit per day, versus 2-3 ounces for a small breed.

What do you feel **most comfortable handling**? If you are a new 4-H'er, you might feel more at ease your first year with a smaller or more docile rabbit.

Consult your fair book and look at the **classes** offered. Are you interested in showing in the commercial class? Fancy class? Or what about a meat pen? For meat pens you will probably want to buy a larger breed like Californians or New Zealands. If you want to show in a fur class, you may want to buy a Rex or Angora. (Realize though, that long-haired rabbits will likely take extra work to keep their hair in excellent condition.)

Now that you know what breed you want, where can you find a rabbit?

- 1) A **reputable breeder** in your area is probably your best source.
- 2) Attend **4-H shows** at the county or state level, or attend ARBA shows. You will find a wealth of rabbits for sale, equipment for sale, and breeders willing to give great advice.
- 3) **Exotic animal sales.** Some towns have exotic animal sales that include rabbits.
- 4) **Pet stores.** (If you buy a rabbit at a pet store, be sure to ask if the rabbit for sale is "pet quality" or "show quality". It is very important that you make sure your rabbit is a good "show quality" rabbit that meets all the breed requirements in the ARBA Standard of Perfection.

Now that you've found the perfect rabbit—What else should you consider before you buy?

- 1)**Health**—does this rabbit look healthy? Does it have a good appetite?
- 2)**Age**—Is it old enough to be weaned without complications (Over 6 weeks) The best age of rabbit to buy may be from 3 months to 1 year. If you buy a rabbit that is 2 years old or older, it may be out of condition. Remember, at our fair show several rabbits per class. Try to buy rabbits of different breed categories (etc. fancy, commercial,) sex (buck, doe) or age (junior (under 6 months) senior (over 6 months) so they will not all be in the same class.
- 3)Will this rabbit be good age or the right conformation type to **reproduce** if you want to breed it after you show it?
- 4)Does it have good **conformation**? Are its legs and tail straight? No abscesses or deformities? Nice round meaty shape to it? Nicely shaped head?
- 5)Does it have healthy looking **fur**? Its fur should shine and be dense. Do not buy a rabbit that is losing hair in patches or all over its body.
- 6)Do its **teeth** look healthy? They should overlap over the bottom and not wolf out.
- 7)Are its **eyes** clear? If they are watery, cloudy, dull, or spotted you may have a sick or blind animal.
- 8)**Ears** should not look crusty inside and be of appropriate shape and length.
- 9)**Feet** should be well padded and not bleeding. There should be no toenails missing and they should be the correct color and all one color.
- 10)Does the rabbit have all the correct **markings and color characteristics** set forth in ARBA's Standard of Perfection? Take into consideration that some breeds such as Harlequins and Dutch have very distinct markings that judges must adhere to. If you are concerned you do not understand all the marking restrictions, consider buying something a little less confusing your first 4-H year.
- 11)**Cost.** 4-H rabbits can cost anywhere from \$5 to \$50.00 with the majority in our area costing around \$15-\$40.00. Reputable breeders may charge higher prices than other sources—if they do make sure they are guaranteeing you a quality bloodline.

**Now you've done it!!!
You have the perfect rabbit!!!
ENJOY!!!!!!**