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Rabbit Tracks – Starting a 4-H Rabbit Project
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RABBIT TRACKS: *Starting a 4-H Rabbit Project*

What You Can Learn

Raising rabbits can be an ideal 4-H project, filled with fun and rewarding experiences. A rabbit project is ideal if you live in an urban area or on a small farm where lack of space, facilities or money makes it hard for you to raise larger animals. Rabbits are farm animals just like other livestock, and they require the same care and dedication. The husbandry practices you learn in a 4-H rabbit project can be applied to other animals.

Rabbits can be raised for pleasure and profit. They can be pets or be raised for their meat, fur or fertilizer, or as research animals. Many 4-H'ers and adults really enjoy showing their rabbits at fairs and rabbit shows. Whatever your reason for wanting to start a 4-H rabbit project, you must be willing to work hard to make it a success.

What Will a Rabbit Project Cost?

Before you start a rabbit project, think about the costs involved. Foundation stock, housing, feed and labor can be expensive. Your start-up costs will depend on how large and what type of project you want to run.

Rabbits can be raised indoors or outdoors; tailor your rabbit housing and equipment to your own situation. Pens or hutches should be as comfortable as possible and large or small enough for the rabbits they will hold. The housing should supply adequate light and ventilation, provide protection from predators, and prevent drafts and direct



exposure to the elements. Buy good quality, purebred stock and supply them with nutritious feed and clean water.

Information on selecting pens, equipment, feed and foundation stock is presented in the **Domestic Rabbit Guide** (4-H 1313), the **4-H Domestic Rabbit Guide Leader Supplement** (4-H 1426) and other bulletins available from your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Estimated start-up costs for a 4-H rabbit project are listed below.

Stock—\$10 to \$30 per head for young, purebred animals.

Hutches—\$15 to \$75 per pen. This will depend on how big the pens are, the number of pens per unit, whether you buy new or used pens, what they're made of and whether they're meant for indoor or outdoor use.

Equipment—\$3 to \$10 per pen for feed and water containers. \$5 to \$10 per compartment for carrying cages (this will depend on how big your rabbits are and the number of compartments in the carrying cage).

Feed—\$.10 to \$.15 per pound for rabbit pellets. Although you can feed your rabbits other feeds, rabbit pellets are formulated to meet their nutrient requirements and are readily available. Depending on their size, each rabbit will need 1 to 4 pounds of pellets each week.

Veterinary Care—This will vary according to the number of rabbits you raise, the type of facility you have, your management techniques and how extensive a preventive health care program you decide on.

Labor—Only you can decide how much your time is worth.

Before you commit yourself to a 4-H rabbit project, outline your goals, analyze and plan your project, and consider problems that might come up. Answering the questions below may help you understand what a 4-H rabbit project involves and how deep a commitment you'll have to make to succeed.



Questions to Ask Yourself

1. Why do I want to raise rabbits?
2. What breed or breeds of rabbits do I want to raise? How much will they weigh when they're full grown?
3. How much money can I afford to spend to buy rabbits?
4. Will I keep my rabbits in indoor or outdoor hutches?
5. Do I want to buy or build my rabbit hutches? Who can help me build them?
6. How much will each pen cost?
7. How many pens do I need?
8. Will I have time to feed, water and care for my rabbits every day?
9. Will my parents let me raise rabbits? Will they help with my 4-H rabbit project?
10. Is there a market or use for my rabbits?



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
NEWAYGO COUNTY
817 S. Stewart
Fremont, MI 49412
Phone: 616/924-0500

This bulletin was written by the members of the 1985-87 State 4-H Rabbit Developmental Committee. It was designed and illustrated by Cynthia Alderson, 4-H Graphic Artist. The bulletin was edited by Rebecca McKee, 4-H Publications Editor.

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