

WCSU 20/6.22/1.207
c. 2

RECEIVED

SERVICE

IN ACTION

MAY 24 1990

COLORADO STATE LIBRARY
State Publications Library

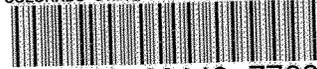
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

Economics of a backyard rabbitry—outlook and inventory

Michelle L. Salazar, Howard L. Enos
and Byron F. Miller^{1/}

no. 1.204

COLORADO STATE PUBLICATIONS LIBRARY



3 1799 00140 7766

Quick Facts

- A profit can be made from a backyard rabbitry, but a person must be willing to work hard to build a successful rabbit production enterprise.
- The start-up cost of the animals themselves will depend on the age of the breed and whether they have pedigrees.
- If the purpose of the operation is to sell rabbits, the white or fur fryers are worth more than colored fryers.
- Specialty breeds are nice rabbits to raise but they do not have the utility value, nor are they as economically valuable as the more popular "meat" breeds.
- Feed is the single most expensive item in the rabbitry, and care should be taken to avoid waste.
- It should be remembered that special dietary supplements will raise the feed bill.
- For more information on economics of a backyard rabbitry, see Service in action sheet 1.205, *Economics of a backyard rabbitry—the returns.*

prices as listed in Table 1 representing most of the required materials to build your own. Hutches also may be purchased; but if used equipment is being considered, it should be examined closely for quality of flooring wire and good design for cleaning purposes.

Breeding Stock

The start-up or investment cost of the animals themselves will depend on the age of the breed and whether they have a pedigree. Examples of two popular commercial breeds are given in Table 1. Remember that if the purpose of the operation is to sell rabbits the white or fur fryers are worth more than colored fryers.

Specialty breeds—such as Champagne, Chinchilla, Dutch, English Spot, Polish, Rex, Sable and Tans, to name a few—are nice rabbits to raise but do not have the utility value, nor do they economically produce as much meat as the more popular "meat" breeds.

The authors acknowledge that for some individuals it is quite possible to become enthusiastic about a particular fancy breed; therefore, they would appear to be more satisfying than commercial-type rabbits. These rabbits may yield a meat supply for food; yet, the objective of this sheet is to help families maximize their resources through rabbits, without consideration of aesthetic values, as a means of providing a ready supply of high-quality meat protein for home consumption.

Can a profit be made from a backyard rabbitry? Sure, why not. Raising rabbits is a laborious, intensive project, and rabbits have a dressing yield of about 55 percent; so, in today's economy, rabbit production has a narrow profit margin with management as the key to success.

Good management means avoiding waste, keeping good records, culling nonproductive animals and investing a lot of loving care, time and money. A profit can be made, but a person must be willing to work hard to build a successful rabbit production enterprise. It just doesn't happen, even if rabbits can multiply.

Outlook

For the backyard project, the ideal average litter size is eight (ranging from seven to nine) with five (ranging from four to six) litters per year of bunnies, each weighing four to five pounds (1.8-2.3 kilograms). A little mathematics without considering mortality (death loss), shows that eight bunnies times five litters times 4.5 pounds (2 kg) equal 180 pounds (81.7 kg) per doe per year. Market prices vary, but fryers sell today for anywhere from 35 cents to 50 cents per pound (.5 kg), and the average amount of return per doe after considering all other costs is about \$14 to \$20 per year.

At the \$20 rate of return, a family would need at least 500 (probably 1,000) rabbits (working does) in order to obtain all its income from the rabbitry. It would take a huge investment in facilities—about \$50 per doe unit or \$25,000 to \$50,000, not including land—operating capital, plus labor and many patient years to build up a rabbitry of that size. So for the balance of this fact sheet, rabbits will be considered as a supplemental family project—a simple backyard operation.

The first thing necessary to begin a rabbitry is a good sturdy hutch. For illustration purposes, consider April 1976

Feed

Feed is the single most expensive item in the rabbitry, and every effort should be made to avoid waste. Metal feeders that attach to the outside of the cage are the least wasteful as rabbits are unable to step into or sit in them like they can with a feeding dish. Yet, some rabbits learn to scratch feed from the hopper that hangs on the outside of the cage. When this happens, the owner should experiment with devices to block the size of the opening, thereby reducing the rabbit's access to the feeder.

A basic complete pelleted ration is the best, but sometimes special feeds and whole grains are desirable or a complete creep feed is needed for the young. It should be remembered, however, that these special dietary supplements will raise the feed bill.

A sample of the types of feeds, medications and remedies that only occasionally may be used, but need to be acknowledged and perhaps included in a program, are listed in Table 2. These items along with some average prices, are for illustration purposes only and are to be used as a guide. They are provided so that a person does not enter the project blindly.

See Service in Action sheet 1.203, *Guide to backyard rabbit management*, for more information on management of a backyard rabbitry.

^{1/}Michelle L. Salazar, CSU senior student, agronomy; Howard L. Enos, CSU extension associate professor, poultry science; and Byron F. Miller, CSU associate professor, animal sciences (revised 3/15/79)

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, John Patrick Jordan, acting director of Extension Service, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523. The CSU Cooperative Extension Service is dedicated to serve all people on an equal and nondiscriminatory basis.

To simplify technical terminology, trade names of products and equipment occasionally will be used. No endorsement of products named is intended nor is criticism implied of products not mentioned.

Table 1: Estimated cost to get started with a backyard rabbitry.¹

	Projected cost
HUTCHES —Three compartments	\$ 70.00
Materials needed:	
Lumber—Two 4' x 8' sheets CDX plywood	
Eight 2" x 4"s 8' construction grade	
Six 2" x 6"s 6' for legs	
Wire—1" x 1/2" welded wire	
at \$63.80 per 100' or 1/2"	
hailscreen at 55¢ per foot	
One piece 30" x 8' long	
Two 30" x 30" pieces to	
divide compartments	
Latches—three spring hooks for \$2.75	
Hinges—3" pin, two to a door—\$1.10 per pair	
Feeders—three, \$2.65 each	
Metal nest box—two for \$7.90	
Creep feeder—\$6.90	
Rooled roofing (90#)—\$8.40	
Paint—\$4.89	

BREEDING STOCK—two does; one buck \$ 60.00

Two popular breeds for meat²

Age Categories	New Zealand	
	White	Californian
Senior, 8 mos. or older	\$25.00	\$20.00
Intermediate, 6-8 mos.	\$20.00	\$15 - 20
Junior, 4-6 mos.	\$12 - 15	\$10 - 15
Pre-Jr., 8 wks -4 mos.	\$ 7.50	\$ 5 - 7.50

Mature breeders of commercial quality (without pedigree) \$15.00 \$15.00

FEED—First month inventory \$ 19.30
 100 lbs complete rabbit pellet @ \$9.00
 50 lbs medicated rabbit pellet @ \$6.00
 50 lbs whole oats @ \$4.00
 3 spools iodized salt @ 10¢ each

MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES \$ 25.70
 Watering dishes, disinfectants,
 wire brush, supplies \$ 9.70
 Tattoo kit \$16.00

TOTAL START-UP COST: \$175.00

¹Average material, stock and supply prices, Fort Collins, Colorado, April, 1976.

²All prices represent averages (with pedigree) and are not set prices.

Table 2: Typical feed and supplement inventory.

FEED	Price per 100 pounds ¹
Rabbit pellets for doe and litter	\$ 8- \$10.00
Medicated rabbit pellets	\$10- \$12.50
Creep feeding pellets for bunnies	\$17- \$21.00
Oats, whole	\$ 7- \$ 8.00
Wheat, whole	\$ 6- \$ 7.50
Salt spools	8-10¢ each

VITAMINS AND REMEDIES²

Item	Quantity	Unit Price
Vitapol	1 lb.	\$ 4.95
Ascorbisol	1 lb.	9.60
Sulfaquinoxiline	5.1 oz.	7.65
Terramycin	6.4 oz.	5.35
Furacin powder	50.0 gms.	2.45
Penicillin-Streptomycin	100 cc	5.65
Syringes (with needle)	6	2.55
Healing oil for ears	1/8 pt.	2.30

¹Quoted prices are averages during April, 1976 at Fort Collins, Colorado.

²Product names are used as examples for education purposes and are not endorsements by Colorado State University.

(See Service in Action sheet 1.205, *Economics of a backyard rabbitry—the returns*, for more information on raising rabbits.)