



Rabbit

PROJECT PLANNING GUIDE

OBJECTIVES OF THE 4-H RABBIT PROJECT

1. To provide the experience of caring for and being responsible for the welfare of a live animal.
2. To develop a knowledge of management practices and skills necessary to produce rabbits for food or showing.
3. To help youth develop personal confidence and leadership ability through their interest in rabbits.

EXTENSION RESOURCE MATERIALS

Raising Rabbits - Beginner's Guide for Small Farmers and Others, AG-105
(published by The North Carolina Agricultural
Extension Program, A. & T. State University,
Greensboro, N.C.)

LEVEL 1
(9- to 11-year-olds)

Level 1 is for 4-H members 9- to 11-years-old or for beginners of any age. Age levels are relative since all youngsters will not progress at the same rate. These are some things that the 4-H Rabbit Project should teach and that participants should do. Other related activities will likely be suggested and are encouraged. The program at this level is designed to allow youth to gain a knowledge of rabbit breeds and the various uses for each breed, to learn the terminology of rabbit breeders, and to become aware of the necessity of providing an adequate environment with proper management.

| Things to Learn | Things to Do |
|---|--|
| 1. Breeds (colors, characteristics, uses) | Obtain manuals or books from your leader, library, pet stores or feed dealers. |
| 2. The terminology of rabbit breeders (Ex: male is called a buck) | Make a list of popular breeds and their most common use. Visit a rabbit grower. |
| 3. Providing necessary housing | Decide what breed you wish to use and for what purpose. |
| How much space | |
| What kind of materials to use for the hutch | Make a list of words used by rabbit growers. |
| How to provide protection | Build or purchase necessary housing and equipment. |
| What kind of feeders and other equipment is needed | Obtain samples of records to keep. |
| 4. Management and Feeding | Write a short story on what you have learned. |
| How to keep hutch clean and sanitary | |
| How to control flies and odors | |
| Kind of feed needed and how much to feed | |
| Kinds of records needed | |

LEVEL 2
(12- to 14-year-olds)

This level of the program provides the opportunity to put into practice those things learned in the first level. It is suggested that a minimum of three be kept. This should be two does and a buck. This provides a learning experience of breeding the adults and caring for the litter. It also will provide food for you and your family and may provide experience in selecting and preparing rabbits for shows.

| Things to Learn | Things to Do |
|--|--|
| 1. How to breed rabbits | Study rabbit manuals. |
| Age | Visit rabbit growers and watch a breeding demonstration. |
| Ratio of bucks to does | |
| How to breed | Breed your rabbits and keep a record of breeding including: |
| Gestation period | Date |
| How to feed and manage pregnant doe | Buck used |
| How to determine if doe is pregnant | Number of young produced |
| | Number of young raised |
| 2. Kindling and Litter Care | Work with 4-H leader to practice methods of pregnancy determination. |
| When to place nest box and kind of nesting material needed | Prepare nesting box and place in hutch at proper time. |
| What to do after kindling | Isolate doe during kindling and limit activity in the area for several hours. |
| How to feed doe and litter | Examine litter to determine number and to remove any deformed or dead rabbits. |
| 3. How to care for rabbits | Clean and disinfect rabbit hutch according to recommended procedures. |
| Sanitation | Provide shade and ventilation to keep rabbits comfortable. |
| Housing environment | Examine animals and look for: |
| 4. How to detect sickness and disease | Reduced food and water consumption |
| | Loose droppings |
| | Listless appearance |
| 5. How to wean litter | Call veterinarian or knowledgeable person. |
| 6. How to determine sex | Obtain information from rabbit breed association. |
| 7. How to select for future breeders or for showing | Study criteria for selection in the Rabbit Standard of Perfection. |
| | Show a rabbit at a local or state show. |

LEVEL 3
(15- to 19-year-olds)

The program at this level is designed for the individual to gain further knowledge of the rabbit business. You may do a special breeding project, raise rabbits for meat or laboratory use, or for showing.

| Things to Learn | Things to Do |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Special breeding project</p> <p>Learn about heredity and genetics or</p> <p>Learn how to clean tissue and use bone staining and nerve staining techniques</p> | <p>Visit the library and study the importance of and effects of dominant and recessive genes.</p> <p>Consult with your science teacher.</p> <p>Design and conduct a science project to illustrate the effect of genes.</p> <p>Design and present an exhibit of these techniques at your science fair.</p> |
| <p>2. How to make a profit by raising rabbits</p> | <p>Study and find out what the markets are in your area for meat, laboratories, pets, or pedigreed stock.</p> <p>Find out what production standards are needed for a profitable operation.</p> |
| <p>3. How to kill and package a rabbit for the meat market</p> | <p>Visit a rabbit producer.</p> <p>Visit a processing plant if available.</p> <p>Kill and package a rabbit for display or sale.</p> |
| <p>4. How to select a rabbit for showing</p> | <p>Study the Rabbit Standard of Perfection.</p> <p>Learn about fine points and disqualifications.</p> |
| <p>5. How to prepare a rabbit for showing</p> | <p>Study the manual.</p> |
| <p>6. What records should be kept</p> | <p>Keep records.</p> |

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