

Suggestions for Successful Rabbit Raising

This information comes from documents created by Wade Hibler.

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Topics covered in this document

Ordering Rabbits
Feeding Rabbits
Housing Rabbits
Rabbits General Care and Show Prep

Ordering Rabbits

[Place order with breeder ASAP, and no later than Aug 31.](#)

We can provide a list of breeders to you, but you are welcome to use any breeder you choose. We do not recommend any breeder over another.

Information your breeder will need from you:

1. Your show date and validation date
2. How many pens you want – a pen for a show is three rabbits + 1 alternate.

Questions to ask your breeder:

1. When is the last time you had a virus affect your rabbits?
 2. How did you handle it?
 3. Are you willing to advise me on health, nutrition, and general care once I've bought my rabbits?
1. Are you willing to provide supplemental transition feed with purchase?
 2. What feed do you use and where can I find it?

Taking delivery of your rabbits

You will need to have a portable cage or carrier to transport your rabbits. Depending on how long you'll be on the road with your rabbits, you may want to consider having a hanging water bottle in each rabbit container.

[Consult with your breeder before you go pick them up.](#)

Local places you can most likely find all the rabbit supplies, including feed, that you need, in no particular order.

HILL COUNTRY FEED & HAY – Burnet

TRIPLE C FEED – Burnet

Tractor Supply – Burnet & Lampasas

Firehouse Feed - Briggs

Water bottles will look something like this.



Small ceramic bowls like this will work for food pellets.



Feeding your Rabbits

Taking care of your feed

- To keep your feed from *losing its nutritional value*, do not store feed for more than 3 or 4 weeks.
- Do not let stale, moldy feed accumulate in feeders. Keep your feed dry, out of excess heat, and free from insects and rodents. This can be done by using a container like a garbage can with a tight-fitting lid.
- The feed is dusty and can harm your rabbit's respiratory system, so try to sift it before feeding.

Type of feed

Recommended feeds:

Petrus	Purina	Bluebonnet	MG
Show Rite	Pen Pals	Rowe	Nutrena

- It is **highly recommended** that you feed what your breeder uses. If you have to use a different feed, mix it ½ & ½ with your breeder's feed until it's gone.
- It is highly recommended that you choose the freshest feed you can find. To find out how fresh it is, check the MILL DATE on the back of the bag. If it's over 2 months old, the vitamins in it will not be effective for your rabbits.
- Pellets should be firm and not broken into small particles. The particles (fines) will not be eaten and will go to waste.
- Protein – between 16% and 17% is best for meat rabbits

****Conditioning Feed is a supplement to the pellet feed, NOT a replacement.**

- 3 weeks prior to show: start with 1 tsp per day per rabbit.
- Build up to 1 TBLS per day, per rabbit.
- IF SCOUR (diarrhea) begins with the addition of CONDITIONING FEED, reduce amount given to that rabbit each day.

CONDITIONING Feed Mix: (to be added to pellet feed)

4 parts CR Oats
2 parts Barley (optional)
1 part Black Oil Sunflower Seeds
1 part Show Bloom (optional)

Giving Rabbits “Extras” or treats

Never feed your rabbits any “extras.” or treats. Not only will these “extras” and treats stop your rabbits from eating their daily feed rations, but it can also cause them to scour (diarrhea) and die. **If your rabbit gets sick, feed it alfalfa hay to stop the diarrhea. The hay will restart its digestive system.**

How much Food & Water

- In general, a 50 lb. bag of feed should feed 5 rabbits 5 – 6 weeks.
- **SAMPLE SCHEDULE:**
 - Week 1: ¼ to 1/3 cup of feed per rabbit per day
 - Week 2: 1/3 to ½ cup of feed per rabbit per day
 - Week 3: ½ to ¾ cup of feed per rabbit per day
 - Week 4: ¾ to 1 cup each day...adjust based on what they actually eat.

NEVER let your rabbits go without water! Keep water fresh and clean the water bottle often. In warmer weather, add ice cubes to their water.

When to feed

- Feed your rabbits once a day in the evening. Your rabbits are nocturnal – they sleep in the day and, eat at night. A consistent schedule is best for them.
- Be sure to empty and clean out the feeders of uneaten food before filling new food.

Housing your rabbits

Sanitation –this is the most important part housing your rabbits.

The housing for your rabbits must:

- be clean at all times
- have access to plenty of fresh air and some sunlight
- have protection from hot and cold weather and wind.
- be protected from all dogs, other predators and inclement weather
- provide enough room for growth
- Rabbits can tolerate night temps in the upper 20's

A modern rabbit hutch/cage is constructed with welded wire.

- **the floor** of the hutch – ½ by 1” welded wire - do not use “hardware cloth”
- **the sides and top** - 1”X 2”welded wire

SIZE of hutches/cages should be approximately 24”D X 36”L X 18”H

- **Hutches/cages made entirely of wire are more sanitary & durable than those made with wood.** Wire hutches/cages allow for rabbit waste and spilt water/food to fall to the ground and not remain in cages; aka self-cleaning. This helps with control of disease and good air circulation.
- If you use a dog crate, change bedding daily as urine & feces can accumulate quickly.

Some suggestions for above and beyond housing your rabbits.

- Hutches/cages can be hung in a building with adequate ventilation. This type of housing is more efficient than outside housing, especially when equipped with attached feeders and automatic watering systems.

Temperature Control - **EXTREME COLD & HOT TEMPS KILL RABBITS.**

- To keep your rabbits from over-heating, do not place hutch/cage in direct sunlight. Place the hutch/cage in partial or complete shade with good air circulation.
- On hot days (**90 degrees and above**) place frozen water bottles in cages/hutches with rabbits and direct fans on rabbits
- You may consider investing in an ac shed; keeps temps in low to mid 80s

Rabbits General Care and Show Prep

- For BCLS, you will get your rabbits from your chosen breeder in early December and show them in early January.
- You have approximately 1 month to care for and prepare your rabbits to show. The following information is intended to help you do that.
- As you read through the goals for show prep, keep in mind your show pen should be 3 healthy rabbits that are the most similar in weight, muscle firmness, and fur texture.

Weight-gain monitoring and goals for show prep

- Record the weight of each rabbit on the day you get them. To properly monitor their weight-gain progress, weigh and record the weight of your rabbits once a week.
- Your rabbit will weight approximately 1.5 to 2 lbs when you get it. Each rabbit should gain 8 to 10 ounces per week.
- IDEAL weight on show day for *each* of the three rabbits in your pen is very close to 5 lbs.

Selecting rabbits for show including:

- Meat type, Order of Importance (of features), Condition, Uniformity, Fur

Helpful website:

Rabway.com