

Rabbits\_For\_Meat\_2004.txt

From: sjames1  
Date: Tue Mar 30, 2004 10:30 pm  
Subject: Re: {OHG} Rabbits

Good evening everyone :)

I've been raising & showing rabbits for 10 years & am a working member of the American Rabbit Breeders Ass., the Holland Lop Rabbit Specialty Club & the National Mini Rex Rabbit Club.

I started out 10 years ago with Californians. IMP&HO the Californians are the best way to go for meat rabbits. They only eat 6 ounces per day of feed plus a small handfull of hay whereas the Flemish Giants eat more than 12 ounces of food per day plus a BIG handfull of hay. They only get up to 6 pounds unlike the Flemish Giants that get up to 14 pounds & more. The smaller rabbits have better tasting & more tender meat than the bigger rabbits & you keep your cost down & increase your profits.

If you are going to sell the meat then you will need a license from your state Ag. office. Forget the local extension office, they know nothing. But be ready to be looked at with a fine tooth comb cause they will be at your house every month!!

Connie, you made some great points & I agree with 99% of what you said BUT & it is a VERY BIG BUT (sorry) I have to disagree with you on one very important point. Rabbits are NOT Rodents!!! Where it is very true they LOVE to Chew, on anything, they belong to the Order Lagomorphs, which includes rabbits, hares and pikas. These animals differ very markedly from rodents in several ways, most of which relate to their natural diet of grass. Rodents, like humans cannot live on grass. Lagomorphs are built to do just that. When I say "grass" I'm talking about wild rabbits. Domestic Rabbits should never be given grass as it will upset their tummies.

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They have special front teeth, with a second set of upper incisors behind the visible Bugs Bunny ones, so that the lower incisors force grass blades between the two upper sets to snip them off (like a mower blade and cutter bar). And they have special back teeth - broad and flat surfaced to grind tough flexible grass. All this is unlike rodents who have big strong front teeth to gnaw hard food with, and smaller less powerful back teeth that are only needed to crush any bigger bits of the gnawed stuff.

Once they have eaten the grass, lagomorphs have to digest it, and again this is very different from rodents. Rodents eat similar foods to humans and digest it in the same way. Lagomorphs have more in common with other grass eaters such as cows and horses - they all use gut bacteria to turn indigestible grass into something digestible. Cattle have a special stomach so they can ruminate and chew the cud, horses have a huge appendix to act like a brewer's vat and break down their food (or get colic when it goes wrong), rabbits pass food through their gut twice - first time for the bacteria to break it down to make caecotrophs, second time to absorb the goodness themselves. This act of coprophagy (eating their own excreta) is the most dramatic and obvious way in which we can be sure that rabbits are NOT rodents.

The best cage to get for your rabbit's is an all wire one. Connie is right that they will chew through a wooden one & be yard bunnies before you know it :) Wire is best to because it is easier to keep clean & doesn't collect the fungus & bacteria that the wood does, I learned this the hard way :( There are several great places on line that sell cages. "KW Cages" (kwcages@aol.com) is one, Trammells Treasures (they only have an email address tho), Hart's Bunny Barn (www.hartsbunnybarn.com), Quality Cage Co. (www.qualitycage.com), K.D. Cage co. & supplies (Kdcage@nltc.net), Ca-Mar's Equipment Co. (www.DaMars.8m.com), Klubertanz Equipment Co.,Inc. (www.klubertanz.com), & Bass Equipment Co. (www.bassequipment.com).

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If you look for rabbit shows in your area, there is usually someone there that sells cages & equipment.

The best thing for me to suggest you to do is to join the A.R.B.A. (www.arba.com). They are a treasure trove of information, a great place to advertise + they have a great scollarship program for youth. It is very family oriented & a great hobby for the whole family.

BTW, here is my website: <http://www.winsteadweb.com/index1.htm>  
just keep in mind that I REALLY need to update :)

Hope this helps :)  
Sherrie Winstead  
zone 7b in GA.