

Housing



Rabbits need to be raised in **stables** or **hutches**.

Rabbit hutches should be placed where the rabbits will be **protected from inclement weather and predators** (e.g. dogs, cats, rats etc).

Rabbits do not require a great deal of sunlight, so they can be raised indoors, however sunlight helps keep the hutch sanitation at a satisfactory level.

Remember: **fresh air is necessary**; draught is harmful; stable temperature is best.

A hutch that is 36" x 30" x 18" high, is large enough for a medium-sized rabbit and her young.



Rabbit Nest Box

Nest boxes are essential when the young are born and until they are strong enough to venture into the hutch.

Other necessary equipment are: feeders for pellet feeding; hay racks and waterers—**keeping a supply of water within reach of your rabbits is a must.**

The flooring can be lined with material, such as wood chips, to absorb moisture and minimize odors.



GET THE FACTS!

Farming Rabbits for Meat in the Cayman Islands



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working together, growing together

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General Information

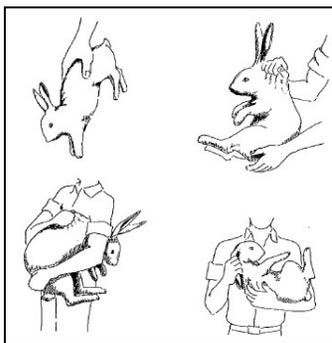
Rabbits could be the perfect backyard 'livestock'.

They are small and low-maintenance!

Meat rabbits are kept for many different reasons, some are:

- The meat is tasty and similar to chicken meat.
- The meat is higher in protein, lower in cholesterol and leaner than most traditional meats, such as chicken, beef and pork.
- Initial capital outlay is minimal. With some scrap wood and wire mesh, a hutch can be constructed.
- They require very little space.
- They can be successfully raised in backyards, as well as condos and apartments.
- The quantity of meat provided by a rabbit is big enough for a family dish and small enough to eat all the meat at once without the need for refrigeration or other conservation.
- To start a rabbit "business" one does not need a large initial investment. A few Does (females) with a Ram or Buck (male) is enough to start, once the kindling (having babies) begins the herd rapidly increases in size, so that very soon one can slaughter the young males.
- Because the Does produce offspring regularly they form a regular source of income instead of a large amount at once.
- Feeding rabbits can be very cheap. Even though supplementation with concentrate or grain is sometimes necessary and definitely will increase growth rates, roadside grass, kitchen vegetables, etc., can provide the main feed at almost no cost.
- Rabbits can be tended by anyone and unlike bigger animals need no force to be restrained.
- The manure can be used for fertilizer.

General Husbandry, Handling & Disease Prevention



Like all animals, rabbits require proper care if they are to (re)produce well.

Give your rabbits the best quality food and drinking water.

Clean the hutches regularly!

To handle rabbits, lift them as shown in box above.

Properly identify your rabbits with tags or other forms of ID's and practice good **record keeping**. Keep a close watch on their performance and use fast growers for further upgrading of your stock.

Separate the males and females that you want to keep before they become sexually active (females—4 months, males—6 months).

It is better not to put several litters together in one hutch in order to prevent fighting. After mating you should put the does in separate hutches.

Some steps to **prevent disease problems** in your herd are:

1. Try to **buy your rabbits from respected breeders**, or farmers with clean housing and healthy looking animals and after bringing them home keep them quarantined for at least 2 weeks.
2. Make **routine checks on the health of your animals**. Check nose, eyelids, ear edges and inside ears (for discharge, mange and ear mites).
3. Check the manure (dry or somewhat pasty is abnormal).
4. Feel the stomach (a spongy feel is abnormal).
5. Check front legs (certain coughs produce a kind of discharge which then makes the front legs dirty).
6. Check the odor in the hutch (diarrhea/enteritis often causes a foul smell).
7. Make a hutch design and use materials which permit easy cleaning.
8. Clean the hutches every day, keep them dry. If you suspect disease, disinfect!
9. Keep animals away from their manure.
10. **Separate animals you suspect are ill** so they do not infect healthy animals.
11. Clean, fresh, flowing air is essential, a strong manure smell is not good for you, nor the rabbits.

Record Keeping

The advantage to eating rabbit meat is that this livestock is usually housed off the ground, where they're not exposed to internal parasites. Consequently, they don't require deworming and rarely need other medications.

Good record keeping is essential to be able to check the production of any business!



Name of rabbit:	Roxy
Number of rabbit:	06
Date of mating:	June 10th
Mated with:	Richard
Kindling:	0

Example of an individual rabbit card



Example of ear tags