

Rabbit Farming- Is an Economical Tool for Small Farmer

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INTRODUCTION

Rabbit meat is considered as a most delicious dish in multi star hotels and metropolis hotel and restaurants now days. Although rabbit is the most delicate attractive animal which is liked by young children to play with, its economic importance as a meat animal has attracted attention of meat lovers due to following reasons:

- 1) The beautiful hairy skin has very good market demand for manufacture of jackets, hand gloves, caps, purses and many other articles. Some breeds are famous for soft wool and a pet animal.
- 2) Rabbit meat requires only 1/4th energy as compared to goat meat.
- 3) Rabbit grows fast like poultry and the quality meat is com- parable with chicken meat.
- 4) Meat contains higher proteins and mineral percentage as compared to other meat and has low levels of fat.
- 5) Rabbit can grow in any climate and is a prolific breeder throughout the year and we can market meat at our choice in any seasons of the year.
- 6) Rabbits can grow well on dried green fodder like barseem/ Lucern and disease problems are comparatively less.
- 7) Rabbit is easy to handle and rabbit farming on modern lines can be good and profit earning business.
- 8) Meat is ready in short time, is less expensive. Rabbit meat of excellent quality is available at about 11 to 12 weeks/ age.

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- 9) There are no religious superstitions and rabbit does not compete with human food and can thrive on Kitchen waste of vegetables.
- 10) Body weight gives more per cent of flesh than bones and rabbit has better feed conversion efficiency.

To Start a Rabbit Farm

One must get adequate and 'full' information about the rabbit keeping and must have adequate land with plenty of water and the necessary finance. One must get a good practical experience of working on any rabbit farm so that he gets idea of routine working and possible hazards.

This business can be done by an unemployed youth or a housewife and any lady for that matter provided they get the proper training.

Breeds of Rabbits available in India

- 1) **For wool** – Angora
- 2) **For Meat and Skin-**
 - (i) White giant,
 - (ii) Grey giant
 - (iii) Newzeland white
 - (iv) Soviet chinchilla

The above breeds can be available from following sources- the central sheep and Wool Research Centre- Avikanagar (*Rajasthan*) taking one unit (2 males + 8 females) and the cages, small rabbit houses and other utensils which would cost about Rs. 5 to thousand.

Usually each rabbit unit would annually require 1 quintal balance feed, 500 kg. Greens. These contingent expenses and medicines etc. would cost about 4-5 thousand rupees.

Each unit would give about 180-190 kits and by the time they are ready for sale at 3 to 4 months approximately 130 – 140 rabbits would be available after allowing some 30% mortality.

The receipts would have to be worked out on existing market rates and one can expect a reasonable profit Rs. 1500 – 2000 per unit in 3-4 months' time.

One can calculate his earnings as per his investing and managing capacity. It is

always better to being from a small scale so that one can get good experience.

Rabbit Feed

Balance feed can be prepared as under:

Barseem or Lucern (dried)	40 parts
Maize (crushed)	20 parts
Wheat bran	20 parts
Groundnut cake / soyaben	20 parts

To these ingredients 2% mineral and vitamins (like Vimeral) must be added.

When dried grass (Lucern or Barssem) is not available we have to increase proportion of other ingredients

The feed requirements are as under

1 st month	@20-30 gm. Per head
2 nd month	@50-60 gm. Per head
3 rd month	@80-90 gm. Per head

Above 3 months they should be given feed @100 gms. Per day. Green grass / kitchen waste vegetable whenever available should be given over and above the concentrate mixture. Adult rabbits require 150 gms. Feed to 50 gm. per day.

Rabbits like green grasses very much and hence we must try to give lucern or beseem as far as available and grow these grasses if you have a piece of land and irrigation, or else buy green vegetables in season when they are available in plenty and use kitchen waste of vegetables in other seasons. Rabbit do well if each one gets about 30 – 40 grams of greens per day.

The concentrate mixture be mixed with greens so that wastage is avoided, because rabbits usually make lots of wastage while browsing with feed. It is better to use pelleted feeds if available.

Diseases and Health Problems

Rabbits lose appetite when sick and become dull and drowsy and sit in corners. Body temperature also increases which we can feel when we handle them. In respiratory diseases laboured and accelerated breathing, sneezing and nasal discharge are seen. Digestive upsets are usually diarrhea; dysentery and loss of body weight are the usual symptoms. Diseases can be classified as Bacterial, Viral, Parasitic, Toxic and other.

Parasitic Diseases

The common diseases are Ear mange caused by *Psoroptes* and *Sarcoptesuniculis* mites. The mange spreads around the ears on face and eyes. These are purulent discharge from ears, due to bacterial infection. This causes uneasiness and loss of body weight and ugly appearance. Infection of internal ear can lead to stiff neck and death.

Coccidiosis – Cause diarrhoea with presence of blood and mucus resulting in dehydration and anemia. The parasites also affect the liver (Eimeriastidae infection). Treatment is possible with coccidiostats like **Codrinol** and **Sulpha drugs**. Spread should be prevented by isolating sick animals and hygiene otherwise there can be some mortality. Cleanliness is very important.

Bacterial Diseases

1) **Pasteurellosis** – A very common disease for which rabbit is highly susceptible. This is characterised by snuffles (nasal

discharge, sneezing and fever), Pneumonia (respiratory distress and high fever) conjunctivitis (swelling around the eyes and severe congestion). Torticollis (The bent neck with stiffness).

The treatment of pasteurellosis is immediate use of broad spectrum antibiotics and commonly effective antibiotics are Tetracyclines which could be given as a injectable (Inj. Terramycin 1-2 ml.) or in drinking water (Hostacycline W.S. powder) on large scale in a herd. The feed utensils be sterilized by boiling water and there should be proper ventilation and freedom from dust and fungus in the house.

2) **Tuberculosis** – Rarely occurs, but, if present, can be a health hazard for man.

3) **Abscesses** – Are common in unhygienic premises and if rabbit cages are dirty and not cleaned properly.

Viral diseases are not very common.