

Raising Rabbits for Meat

Introduction to Commercial Rabbit Production

By Carla Carter, Owner of [Rabbits4U](#)

10/28/14

Are you considering raising rabbits for meat commercially?

Great! But, before you begin this journey, there are some important rabbitry issues that you need to consider first.

First and foremost, raising rabbits is by no means a get-rich-quick scheme. You aren't going to jump in today and be making money tomorrow. It will take time to build this business into a revenue producing stream for you.

BUT I do believe it is possible, AND I believe that HOW MUCH is possible is up to YOU.

Raising Rabbits for Meat Commercially: A 4-Step Plan

Here is a **4-step plan** to consider and prepare BEFORE jumping into commercial rabbit production.

First Step:

Do you know how to raise rabbits for meat?

If not, start small and learn HOW, first.

Don't go out as a beginner and immediately purchase twenty (20) does. Sure, it's how I started, BUT I wouldn't recommend it unless you are a driven go-getter and you have an excellent mentor close by.

Don't gloss over this, this step is HUGE. Knowing ahead of time how to raise rabbits for meat and keep them healthy, etc., is paramount to your success. Understanding how to react when there is illness is vital to preventing a pandemic from wiping out your herd.

If you know me, you know that I am passionate about HOW to raise rabbits for meat. There's a reason for that passion: It is because rabbit raising is black and white in my book. There are no cutting corners in a commercial rabbitry. No taking risks. You can't afford to if you intend to make your efforts pay.

Second Step:

Have a plan.

You now know how to raise rabbits, you have that solid groundwork under your belt and you are ready to expand. You have twenty does and they are ALL bred. But what happens next? Let's look at that scenario.

- 1) You were smart, bought great stock. They all had ten kits each, and all are thriving (good for you). At four weeks they are weaned and moved into the appropriate grow out cages and you start feeding them, and feeding them. Using our feeding ratios, do the math and figure the numbers. It is going to cost you \$1,000 over the next four weeks to get them raised. DID YOU COUNT ON THAT?
- 2) You now have 200 fryer rabbits weighing five pounds each. Yippee skippy. NOW WHAT? You've been SO busy getting to this place that here you are and you have nowhere to go with them, yet you are continuing to feed them and their voracious appetites at that same exorbitant rate for how long?

Oh, and no matter what you do, you don't even have enough freezer space to hold them.

- 3) AND they are too big now to keep in the same cages and they are fighting (which starts to happen at ten weeks) TO THE DEATH. Now you are experiencing losses, BECAUSE you didn't think it all through.

Without a plan, you have mayhem.

So make a plan before you start.

What is realistic? What are the markets for your area? What can you do? Develop your plan, do your research and let's talk this through. Look at the marketing list (available to Rabbits4U breeders) and determine what is feasible in your area.

Create and develop a marketing plan for your rabbits. How much can you sell? What are the markets available? How many rabbits will you need? ONLY THEN WILL YOU KNOW HOW MANY you need to be able to grow for your rabbitry.

FIRST DO THIS AND THEN BACK UP FROM THERE. First get a handle on HOW MANY rabbits you will end up needing, and then work your way back from that. Here is what you need:

Time - Money - Materials - PLANS

- a. A physical plan of your facility

- b. A numbers plan of your rabbits
- c. A facilities plan of your cages, watering system, feeders, etc.
- d. Budgets (available to Rabbits4U breeders)
- e. Work plan for labor, time involved, chores allocation, your time and more

Third Step:

Operations Planning

Develop a plan for the actual operating of your rabbitry once it is in place. It cannot be something that just happens. Without operations planned out, essential chores can be forgotten. The BIGGEST money-costing MISTAKE I have seen in commercial rabbitries is to not keep does bred (mine included).

In order to avoid this oversight, figure out a workable doe-breeding reminder solution and stick to it. Keep them bred; keep that production line moving.

In order to plan the demand for your rabbit products, here are some questions to ask:

How many litters a year do you want to have?

1. Do you want/need to breed all summer long?
2. Are any of your markets seasonal?
3. How do you adjust?
4. Can you overlap?

Based on the answers to these questions, you can make your monthly operational schedules:

- a. Breeding plan and schedule, based on how many rabbits you will need per month (and whether the monthly required number of fryers will fluctuate or remain steady)
- b. Kindling schedules
- c. Weaning schedules
- d. Dispatching schedules
- e. DO NOT HAVE IDLE RABBITS FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME; IT COSTS YOU MONEY

Fourth Step:

Marketing and Production Growth

Once you are in operation and the business is running smoothly, THEN you can expand. As you see your enterprise is functioning at a well-oiled pace and you notice the opportunities that your rabbit production presents, THEN expand. Build your markets. Expand into new markets. Never stop looking for NEW markets.

Are you utilizing EVERY OPPORTUNITY in your area? Do you have an outlet for every product that you are producing? Are you throwing anything away?

The 80/20 rule states that 20% of your customers will purchase 80% of your products. Therefore:

- a. Cross-sell and upsell your products to your market
- b. Find new customers by duplicating the ones that you have already.

Preparing yourself ahead of time with these four steps will help to eliminate the vast majority of the pitfalls with raising rabbits for meat, and will set you up for success.