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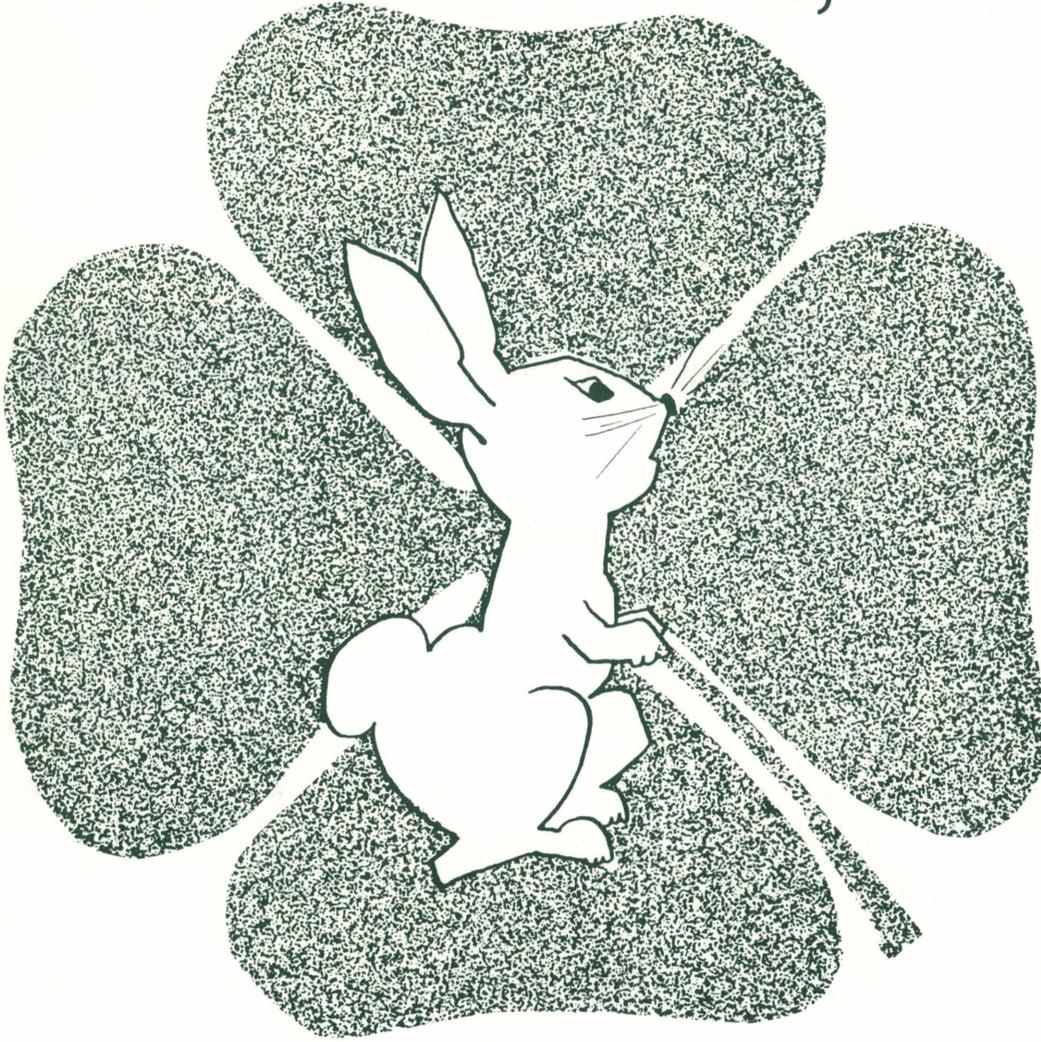
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# 4-H Club Record Book for the Rabbit Project

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BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA



*“To Make The Best Better”*

NAME OF CLUB MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR \_\_\_\_\_ PROJECT \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_ CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

## 4-H RABBIT PRODUCTION PROJECT

### PURPOSE

The Virginia 4-H Rabbit Project has two primary purposes. The first is to assist and strengthen the Cooperative Extension Service's total efforts to provide boys and girls of club age with useful learning experiences and opportunities to continue to develop desirable leadership talents, character and citizenship traits. The second is to construct a program that will teach them skills needed in the production and marketing of rabbits and other small animals for meat or research.

### PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

1. Purchase or secure rabbits from a reputable breeder.
2. Keep Rabbit Project Record Book.
3. Keep only purebred animals.
4. Start the project with at least two rabbits.
5. Keep record of each breeding rabbit on hutch cards.

### PROJECT GOALS

1. Have 1 buck and 6 does by the end of the first year to carry over as breeding stock.
2. Secure all necessary hutches, nest boxes, and other equipment during the year; these may be homemade and constructed of wood or wire except for nest boxes which should be wood or metal.
3. Sell at least 3 litters per breeding doe during the year.
4. Sell as many of the offspring for meat or research as practical.
5. Sell all pelts for furs of rabbits sold for meat.
6. Kill and process market rabbits yourself.

### SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

1. Two or more self-cleaning rabbit hutches (cages) for breeding rabbits. These hutches should be of standard size, 4' long, 30" deep, and 24" high, inside measurements. It is better to construct a hutch 6' long for the Flemish breed of rabbits. Hutches enclosed on three sides or all wire hutches may be used.
2. A hay rack, earthen drinking dish, and earthen feed dish or metal feeder for each hutch. Select equipment that will not waste feed and is easy to clean.
3. One hutch card for individual records for each hutch.
4. For details see USDA Agricultural Handbook (AH) 309, pages 8-21.

### HUTCH LOCATION

1. Locate hutches so they are protected from the hot summer sun. Remember, more rabbits are lost from overheating than from freezing.
2. If hutches (such as an all wire hutch) are placed in a building, make sure the building is adequately ventilated.
3. Arrange the hutches so they are easy to clean and convenient to care for the rabbits.
4. Place hutches where dogs, cats, or predatory animals will not disturb the rabbits.

### FEEDING RABBITS

1. Most 4-H members will find that feeding a complete pelleted ration will give them the best results and, therefore, be cheaper in the long run. Legume hays of good quality, green leafy plants, and suitable root crops are not always available and they require a great deal

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of knowledge and skill to use them in a feeding program successfully. However, they are good feeds and, if properly managed, will lower the feed cost.

2. Rations containing the proper amounts of crude protein, fat, fiber, and minerals should be supplied in proper proportions for does, bucks, and growing rabbits. Dry does and bucks can be fed the same ration. Pregnant does and does with litters should receive rations that are higher in protein and lower in fiber than dry does or bucks. See AH 309 Pages 21-28.

#### MANAGING THE BREEDING STOCK

1. The buck is one-half of the herd. Use only superior bucks.
2. Breeding ages are: small breeds, 4 to 5 months; medium weight breeds, 5 to 6 months, large breeds, 8 to 10 months.
3. Always take the does to the buck's hutch for breeding.
4. The gestation period (from date bred until does kindle) is 31 to 32 days.
5. Place a disinfected nest box with clean straw in the hutch on the 27th days after the doe is bred. This allows the does time to prepare the nest for kindling.
6. Rabbits know only one master, therefore, the person who takes care of the rabbits should examine the nest after kindling to remove any dead offspring and to determine litter size for recording on the hutch card. Otherwise strange odors of another person may cause her to disown her young.

#### CARE OF LITTER

1. Watch doe and litter carefully for signs of abnormal conduct on the part of the doe. Do not permit the doe to be unnecessarily disturbed. Note AH 309, Pages 36-39.
2. Wean the litter at 8 weeks of age and determine the sex at this time. Note AH 309 Pages 39-40.
3. Constantly work to secure satisfactory markets for your rabbits. Make your project pay! Many institutions engaged in research buy choice rabbits. Generally the member will have to work up his own meat market.

#### SANITATION

1. Protect the rabbit's health by keeping hutch and equipment clean.
2. Clean hutch at least twice each week and more often if necessary.
3. Keep the feeders and waterers clean by removing contaminated feed daily and washing and disinfecting waterers and feeders frequently. AH 309 Pages 43-44.

#### DISEASE AND COMMON AILMENTS

1. Be familiar with the more common diseases and other ailments of rabbits AH 309 Pages 44-48.
2. If you have a disease outbreak, get professional help quickly.
3. Isolate newly purchased stock until health status is proved.
4. Isolate all animals that become sick. Destroy those which cannot be cured.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Every 4-H member that has rabbits as a project should have the following references (see your Extension Agent):
  - a. USDA Agricultural Handbook 309--Commercial Rabbit Raising
  - b. USDA Farmers Bulletin 2131--Rabbit Raising
  - c. VPI Bulletin 165--Home Production of Rabbits
2. 4-H members should attend a few rabbit shows each year to observe the qualities and characteristics judges look for when selecting superior rabbits. Your State Fair at Richmond is an excellent place to start.

INVENTORY OF ANIMALS ON HAND AT BEGINNING OF PROJECT YEAR

Sex	Breed	Start of Project		End of Project	
		Number	Value	Number	Value
Buck					
Doe					
Young					

COST OF ANIMALS PURCHASED DURING PROJECT YEAR

Sex	Breed	Age	Weight	Cost

INVENTORY OF EQUIPMENT

Kind	Start of Project		End of Project	
	Number	Value	Number	Value
Hutches				
Nest boxes				
Feeders				
Water fountains				
Pens				







