

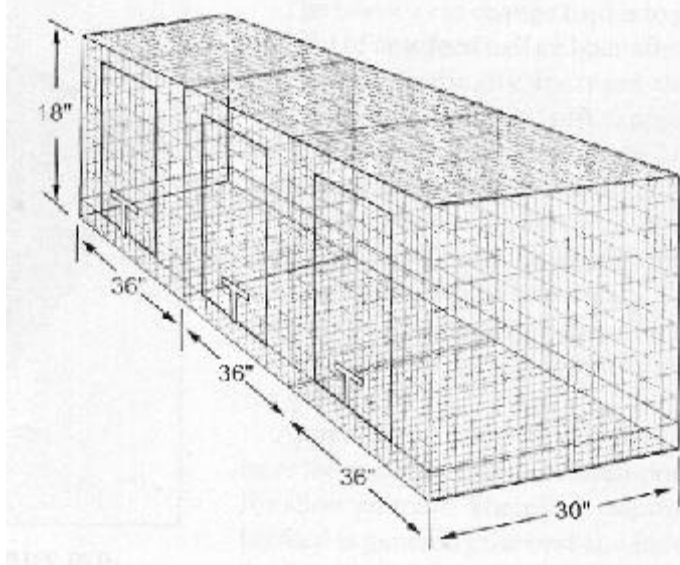
Rabbit Handbook

Equipment

Proper housing and good equipment are important for successful rabbit raising. In making plans, consider first the rabbits' comfort and your ease of handling. You don't need a lot of equipment, but feeding, watering and nesting equipment must be adequate and sanitary.

The Hutch

Rabbit pens, called hutches, should be convenient and sanitary, allowing plenty of fresh air and some sunlight. Each hutch should protect the rabbits from bad weather, dogs and other animals, and provide enough room for growth and exercise. The most important point in building a hutch is sanitation. An open-air, self-cleaning hutch is recommended.



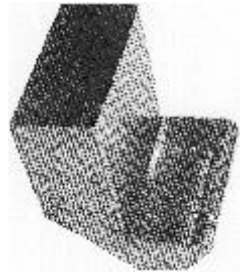
Modern rabbit hutch construction uses welded wire. The floor is made with 1/2-inch by 1-inch welded wire. Sides and tops are built with 1-by-2-inch welded wire. All-wire hutches are more sanitary and durable than wood and wire hutches. They can be hung in an existing building with adequate ventilation, or the breeder can build a new roof for the wire pens. This rabbitry is more attractive and efficient than outside hutches, especially when equipped with outside feeders and automatic water systems.

Pelleted rations have eliminated the need for hay mangers in rabbit hutches. The size of the hutch depends on the size of the breed. Hutches may be purchased pre-built.

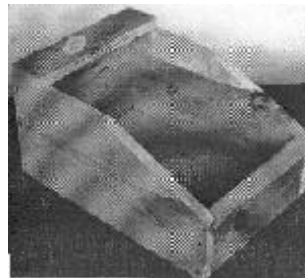
Remember, it's easier to care for rabbits in well-built hutches than in poorly built, temporary ones. Open-air, self-cleaning hutches help rabbits keep cool. These hutches can be kept cleaner and diseases can be controlled more easily. To keep your rabbits from overheating, do not place the hutches in direct sunlight. Put them in partial or complete shade with good circulation.

Feeders

Use a feed crock, trough or hopper to prevent feed waste and to keep the feed clean. Because rabbits are fed daily or more often, crocks should hold at least a day's feed supply. Larger crocks or troughs may be wasteful, because rabbits contaminate the feed. Feed and livestock equipment stores sell crocks especially designed for rabbit feeding. These do not tip easily and have a lipped edge that prevents the animals from wasting feed. The main objection to crock feeders is that young rabbits get into them, soiling the feed. The outside-mounted, all-metal self-feeder is most efficient when it is put onto all-wire pens. Outside feeders are unsuitable on outside open-air hutches, where rain can spoil the feed.



Nest Box



A rabbit is born hairless, blind and deaf; it is your job to protect it. A good nest box keeps the babies warm, allows for ventilation and moisture drainage, and keeps the young in the box until they are big enough to climb in and out by themselves. The nest box must

also be large enough to keep the doe comfortable. Never use a cardboard box for a nest box. Do not use built-in nest boxes unless you can remove them easily for cleaning and sterilizing.

Many rabbit breeders use an open box for nesting, particularly in the summer and in hutches protected from the elements. The box should be 16 by 10 inches, and 8 inches tall. In warm weather, provide fresh, clean straw nesting material for the does. If the doe reacts normally to her newborn litter, she will pull enough wool from her body to make a warm nest for her young. However, in winter, you may have to furnish extra nesting material. In this case, fill the nest box so completely with new, clean straw that the doe must burrow into it to form a cavity for a nest.

Remember, keep all equipment clean and sanitary, and always provide plenty of clean, fresh feed, water and nesting material.