

Rabbit Handbook

Marketing

Processing for Market and Home Use

4-H members may dispose of their rabbits in four ways:

- , Sell live rabbits to a processor for slaughtering;
- , Process them for direct sale;
- , Process them for home use; or
- , Sell them as pets or breeders.

Each 4-H member should begin the project with the goal to sell rabbits for meat and fur, rather than to keep them as pets or for breeding. Make arrangements to sell meat rabbits to a processor before fryers are ready for market.

Crating and Transporting Live Rabbits

Most rabbits will probably be sent to market live. Properly crated rabbits in good condition can be transported safely, but do not expose them to extreme heat or cold. Good ventilation is important. Avoid overcrowding. Although having individual shipping compartments is better, 4-H members transporting rabbits for relatively short distances can probably use shipping crates made from packing boxes. As the scope of the project grows, obtain permanent shipping crates.

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To make your rabbit enterprise financially successful, you must have a way to sell your animals. Your marketing methods and the price you receive may determine your ability to pay your expenses and make a profit.

By the time a litter is partly grown, you must know how you will market the animals. Select outstanding animals from a strong bloodline (desirable strain) to keep as replacements for older animals or as new additions to the colony. Sell other animals that meet breed or production standards whenever possible to 4-H members or other people wishing to raise rabbits.

You might sell fryers live to commercial rabbit processors or to laboratory animal suppliers. Or, dress and sell the fryers to friends, relatives, neighbors, stores or restaurants. Each of these markets requires a clean, healthy, well-fleshed animal. Be sure to find out the county and state regulations governing the sale of dressed fryers.

Fryers can be sold either as a whole carcass or cut up and ready for meal preparation. It is probably best to use poorer fleshed animals at home. You can sell older animals as roasters or stewers, either live or dressed. Be sure your customers know the kind of animal they are buying and the best way to prepare the meat.

The smaller rabbit breeds are often popular on the pet market. Eye appeal, ability to adapt and a good temperament are needed for this type of sale.

Rabbit manure is often in demand. An important part of your enterprise is the worm bed, where fishing worms and a garden mulch can be produced. This practice is recommended because it allows you to use the manure in a way that minimizes odor and fly problems.

Sometimes you can sell rabbit manure to home gardeners or to people who raise worms commercially.