

ZOOLOGY

Rabbits For Meat

You can raise your own ration-free meat at little expense provided you have backyard space such as that needed for chickens.

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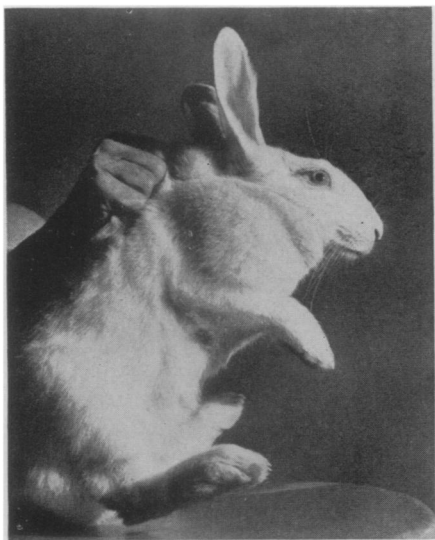
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► THE EASTER BUNNY won't get by with just laying eggs this year. He may be caught and served in a delicious stew for dinner. This spring, unrationed rabbit meat will be served for the first time on many tables, and you should begin to raise a few rabbits to keep the wolf from the door.

Some people consider white rabbit meat as great a delicacy as frog's legs. Certainly it deserves to be more popularly used than hitherto. It closely resembles chicken in flavor and, like it, is equally delicious whether fried or fricasseed.

Just because rabbit meat isn't sold at the local butcher's doesn't mean that rabbits can't be raised in your locality. They thrive wherever that United States ration book has to be produced when purchasing meat.

You don't have to live on a farm in order to raise rabbits. Any backyard where chickens are permitted will do. All the equipment you need is a little feed,



CORRECT—This is the right way to pick up your rabbit. Don't carry her by the ears.

table scraps, and several packing boxes which you can easily remodel.

Incidentally, there are some Americans right now who are raising rabbits in real earnest. American prisoners of war in Japanese hands, the Red Cross has learned, are permitted to supply themselves with meat in this way. Breeding stock was obtained for them by American civilians who for some reason were not interned immediately after the Japanese rush of conquest.

If you are considering raising rabbits for eating, you would probably choose a New Zealand, Chinchilla, or one of the other better-known breeds. The lovely albino rabbits are the most popular, and consequently are often hard to buy.

You might begin your venture with a doe mated at the dealer's rabbitry. If you have plenty of space, three or four does and a buck will furnish you with all the rabbit meat your family will use.

Rabbits cost from \$4 to \$6 each, which might seem high until you stop to think that your family of one rabbit will have increased to 16 or more within six months. Rabbits should always be bought from a reliable breeder.

Plenty of fresh water must be kept in the hutch. Be careful that the pan isn't too small—they consume an amazing amount of water.

Wide Choice of Feed

You have a pretty wide choice of what to feed your rabbits. They should be fed whole grains such as oats, wheat, barley and rye, but the kind you select would depend largely on what you have on hand, or the cost in your locality.

Dry bread and clean table waste, except meat and greasy foods, may be used to vary the food and keep costs to a minimum. Potato peels, lawn clippings, pea vines, and even small branches from fruit trees may be given them. Tender weeds from your Victory garden would be most welcome. Rabbits that are unaccustomed to greens should be given only a small handful at first, but the quantity may be increased as they become used to them. Carrots, turn-

ips and sweet potatoes may be fed them during the summer or stored for use next winter when green feeds are scarce.

A quantity of hay should be placed where the rabbits can get it whenever they wish. Salt should be sprinkled on the food every week or so, or a small block of salt should be nailed up in the hutch where the rabbits may get at it conveniently. Rabbits, like cows, don't receive enough salt from the feed we humans provide for them to keep healthy.

Stick to Schedule

How often you feed your rabbits each day is largely a matter of personal preference, but once having decided on a schedule, you should stick to it. A doe and her litter should receive all they will eat; but the other rabbits are inclined to overstuff. Two handfuls of oats per day is a good average quantity to feed. You might experiment with how much grain, or grain and household scraps, they will eat within a half hour, and this will be about the right amount.

It is customary to mate the doe as soon as the litter is weaned. In this manner it is possible to produce four litters a year. A litter of seven or eight is considered the best size. When there are more, the weaker ones should be destroyed.

A box with straw to be used in making a nest should be placed in the hutch 27 days after mating. The doe will line the nest with fur from her own body to make a cozy place for her young. Like most pets, they are born naked and blind, but begin to grow hair after two weeks. It's best to leave them with their mother until they are eight weeks old, and within another month they will be ready for frying.

When you start to lift a rabbit, you will be surprised to find that they sometimes weigh as much as 16 or 18 pounds. Never lift them by their ears or legs. To lift them without injury, you should grasp the fold of skin over the shoulders with your right hand, keeping the back of the animal toward your body. Place your left hand under the rump to support the rabbit's weight.

In mild climates little protection is required, other than a good roof. The sides of the hutches may be wholly or in part of wire netting. The standard hutch is four feet long, two and a half

feet wide and two feet high.

The hutch can be constructed of scrap lumber, used chicken wire, and old crates. If it is to be left in the open, the roof should be covered with tarpaper which overhangs the wire below. For convenience, a wooden frame should be made for the wire door in front.

The hay can be kept in a Y-shaped manger made by nailing a few slats between one side and the roof. An empty tin for water should be nailed to another side. Very professional looking containers for the food can be made out of a five-gallon oil can if you have one handy. The hutch should be placed where it is protected from the wind, such as by the side of the house or garage.

Keep Hutch Clean

The hutch should be kept clean. If the floor is solid, a scraper can be made by nailing a flat piece of tin to a wooden stick. With this hay, which has fallen on the floor, unused feed and droppings may be easily removed. Floors which will be less trouble to clean, can be made by placing inch slats a half inch apart. These spaces let the soiled hay and other refuse drop through. Trays should be placed underneath and cleaned periodically.

Inexpensive nest boxes for the young rabbits may be made of nail kegs with ventilation holes added, or from apple boxes.

Proper feeding and cleanliness are the most important precautions to take against disease. If you keep the hutch clean, and change the water and feed regularly, the chances are that you won't be bothered by sickness in your rabbitry.

One final word of warning. Don't treat your rabbits too much as pets. They are very interesting creatures, and children are likely to become particularly fond of the white ones. But if you are planning to use them to supplement your meat supply, you don't want to become too attached to them. It might be a good idea to buy a white rabbit for the kids to center their affections on, and a breeding stock of colored ones, for straight-out eating purposes.

Directions for preparing the meat are given in a free booklet distributed by the U. S. Rabbit Experiment Station at Fontana, Calif. This booklet also answers other questions which may arise concerning rabbit raising.

Science News Letter, April 24, 1943

Fish, it is claimed, has better flavor if killed and bled immediately after being caught.



AT HOME—These rabbits are in a very fine set of hutches; the beginning rabbit raiser can start out more modestly with an old packing box.

MEDICINE

Yellow Fever Shots Safe

More than 600,000 doses of new type vaccine are released with no unfavorable reactions reported. Must pass four rigid tests.

➤ MORE THAN 600,000 doses of the new, aqueous type yellow fever vaccine, which the Army has adopted for protection of troops going into yellow fever regions, have now been released without jaundice or any other unfavorable reactions having been reported, the U. S. Public Health Service announced.

This type of vaccine, which the Public Health Service has been making at its Rocky Mountain Laboratory since 1941, is a distilled water extract of 10- to 11-day-old chick embryos which have been infected with a suitable strain of yellow fever virus, Dr. M. V. Hargett, Dr. Anthony Donovan and H. W. Burruss explain in Public Health Reports.

Previous widely used yellow fever vaccine was made from an extract of the infected chick embryos in non-immune human serum.

Each lot of vaccine must pass four rigid control tests before being released for human use, the Public Health Service scientists state.

There must be no sign of contaminating germs. There must be a minimum of 66,000 minimum lethal mouse doses of virus per milliliter of vaccine. None of a series of three guinea pigs inoculated with the virus may show illness or more than a very slight rise in temperature during two weeks following injection. Finally, a test monkey must show lack of neutralizing bodies for yellow fever virus in his blood before vaccination and presence of such neutralizing bodies after vaccination. The lot of vaccine is discarded if it fails to pass any of these tests or if the test monkey develops paralysis or dies after vaccination, regardless of the cause of his death.

Science News Letter, April 24, 1943

Some 50,000 foreign *patents*, many of which are of interest to chemical, mining, and engineering industries, are available to American manufacturers from the Alien Property Custodian, Washington, D. C.