

## Rabbit Farming Entrepreneurship

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### Abstract

Rabbit farming is increasing day by day because of easy handling, short gestation cycle and fast growth and multiplication like broiler chicken. Apart farm meat purpose rabbit can be reared as laboratory animals. A proper housing including ventilation, humidity, water nutritionally balanced diet is important both for the better growth, production and clean animal production.

### Introduction:

A rabbit is a burrowing animal which has long ears and a short tail. They are usually reared for their wool, fur, meat and even urine/manure. Their meat is considered as white meat and better than other types of meat. The rabbit meat is in high demand because: of less cholesterol and fat level in rabbit meat as compared to chicken, turkey, beef, and pork. For this reason rabbit meat has been used and is suitable for special diets, such as those for heart disease patients, diets for the aged, low sodium diets, weight reduction diets, etc. Rabbit meat has the highest in protein percentage.

They are usually disease free animals but negligence is the only factor that causes complications. Rabbits will produce 6 pounds of meat on the same feed and water thus high returns are expected. The space required to build a rabbitry is quite small thus lower costs and since they reproduce very fast, there is always room for expansion.

The starting stock of rabbits can be bought from local breeders. Rabbits start to breed at the age of between six and seven months and give birth after a gestation period of one month. A female rabbit can produce up to 50 live rabbits per year at the average rate of 9 kits per birth.

A male rabbit is called a buck, a female rabbit is called a doe and the children are known as kits. Rabbits mature at the age of between 4 to 6 months depending on the breed at which they can start to reproduce. To tell the difference between a male and a female rabbit,

hold the rabbit in a cradling position on its back – they will usually relax into a hypnotic state. Go to the genital area and separate the fur to reveal the vent area under his tail where his genitals are located. Press down lightly just above the anus to make the area protrude. If you see a vertical slit with pink folds of skin on either side, it is a female. On the male, you will see a tiny pink or white tube-like organ without pink sides. The younger the rabbit, the harder it is to tell the sex.

**Advantage of Rabbit farming:**

1. With available small investment and in a small place rabbit farming gives more income.
2. Rabbits eat ordinary feed and convert them into a protein rich high quality meat.
3. Apart from meat production they can also be reared for hide and fur.
4. Short gestation period of rabbit (30-32 days) and 4-6 kits as compared to other livestock species.
5. Availability of various breeds of rabbits.
6. Quick, assured and better returns compared to other livestock species.
7. Higher market potential.
8. Disease resistance and few diseases in rabbits.
9. Farmer or children can manage

**Marketing:**

- Rabbit meat is preferred by all.
- Direct marketing is highly profitable.
- Involvement of middle man can reduce the price of animals.
- Broiler rabbit meat is soft and high in demand.
- Marketing should be done at the attainment of 1.5-2.0 kg or at the age of 3-4 months whichever is earlier.
- Broiler Rabbit meat fetching higher prices in market live weight Rs. 400- 600/kg and rabbit broiler meat Rs.200-300/kg.

The initial capital requirements are minimal because once you have a good structure in place, you can start with a few mature rabbits which will reproduce fast and increase your stock. The initial capital budget can be less than Rs.20,000/- depending on the number of mature rabbits the farmer starts with. Food for the rabbits is relatively cheap since vegetables

can be acquired from local grocery stores while Pellets go for about Rs.2000/- for a 50 kg bag which will last the farmer for a whole cycle and a bale of 50 kg hay and green is Rs.100. The cost of acquiring a mature rabbit of any breed that is ready for breeding is between Rs.1000-2000/-. The price of mature rabbits is largely dependent on its weight and size. One hatch which can house either pregnant mother & kits, one male or kits from one mother costs Rs.2000-3000/- to build.

The market for rabbits and its meat is mainly in large hotels and restaurants. We must appreciate that during the early stages of production, we cannot meet the demand of hotels as individuals. They purchase the rabbits in terms of kilograms and a kilogram goes for Rs. 400-600. The financial aspect of this venture is favorable since there is a higher return on investment since expansion/growth is fast and the payback period is short. Cash flows will start to be realized after the first lot of kits mature which will be about six months. Expenses are minimal once the initial structure is properly established. Proper care should be practiced thus less funds on treating the bunnies white more on their feeding. The market for rabbit meat is relatively large but the supply is low which gives rise to a deficit meaning higher profits can be realized. There is still growth in the market which means that demand is increasing making it a profitable venture.

**Breed:**

The common breeds of rabbits kept in India are Soviet Chinchilla white, California, New Zealand white and English giant. They have their own unique features as shown below;

**Soviet Chinchilla**

- Have brown to grey fur.
- Upstanding ears and brown eyes.
- The buck and the doe attain weight of 6-7 kgs at 5 months.
- Meat yield is 4-5 kgs.

**California White**

- Have a dense white fur.
- Upstanding black ears and black nose.
- The buck and the doe attain weight of 3.0-3.5 kgs at 4-6 months.
- Meat yield is 2.0-2.3 kgs.



### Different Breeds of Rabbit

#### New Zealand White

- Have dense white fur. Upstanding ears and red/pink eyes.
- The buck and doe attain weight of 4.5 and 4.5-5.5 kgs respectively at 4 months.
- Meat yield is 2.1-2.3 kgs.

#### English Giant

- Have brown fur.
- Upstanding brown white ears brown eyes.
- The buck and the doe attain weight of 5.0-5.5 kgs in 4-6 months.
- Meat yield is 2.5-3.0 kgs.
- English giant may have various colours. Black, blue fawn, light grey, sandy steel, grey and white.

Rabbits can be kept in any part of the country as long as they are housed properly and protected from predators. There are various ways one can construct the housing for rabbits depending on the size of the stock, location of the project as well as materials available. A farmer can start with a rabbit pen with the dimensions of 3ft on each side which is sufficient to house a doe and its kits or a single male. It is usually constructed using locally available materials supplemented with others from the local store. More pens can be constructed with the increase in stock because rabbits reproduce fast.

Some farmers use the deep litter system. Deep litter is an animal housing system, based on the repeated spreading of straw or sawdust material in indoor booths. An initial layer of litter is spread for the animals to use for bedding material and to defecate in, and as the litter is soiled, new layers of litter are continuously added by the farmer. In this fashion, deep litter bedding can build up to depths of 1-2 meters.

**Feeding:-**

Rabbit are voracious eaters and foragers. Apart from green forages, kitchen waste and vegetables, compound feeds in mesh or pellet form, form a part of their diet to reduce the feed cost. Under intensive system of rearing along with green legume forages and grasses, dry mesh, pellets or crumbs should be given free choice necessarily at frequent intervals. Concentrate feed consumption of an adult rabbit is 100-150 gram per day depending on forage availability. Concentration feed includes : mixture of maize, ground nut, barley, wheat bran, mineral mixture, salt. Green fodder: Leafy vegetables, Carrot, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Moringa, Barseem, Subabul, Lucern, Ber, Mulberry leaves, Spinach, Dinanath, doob grasses are liked by rabbit. Rabbit farming should not be profitable if purchasing green fodder outside the farm.

**Housing:-**

The broiler rabbit can be reared by free range system, semi-intensive or intensive system either in cages or deep litter system. Under intensive system 1 to 2 square feet per rabbit for 1-2 kg body weight and 2-4 square feet for more than 2 kg body weight rabbit is sufficient.

**Breeding:-**

Mating ratio of 1 male to 4-5 female in meat strain gives satisfactory fertility. Rabbit gestation period is 30-32 days and 4-6 kids in one cycle. In breeding should be avoided so frequent changes of males are required.

**Diseases:-**

Common rabbit diseases are Coccidiosis and Aflatoxicosis which is threat to entire flock. Rabbit are highly prolific, therefore, unlike in chicken it is not necessary to raise the replacement stock every year. It may be raised every alternate year or half of the stock replaced every year. Before starting rabbit farming it is very important that you should have good knowledge of the same. Visit other rabbit farm and get training before starting yours, do survey the housing system, fodder management, handling rabbit, etc, please survey the land location, road access, water facility and other useful things. To make the additional income in rabbit farm- Sale out extra kits or young rabbits as ornamental or domestic rearing purpose in local market which are high demand in city are.



**Rabbit reared in Deep Litter system**



**Rabbit reared in Cage System**

