**FEEDING & MANAGING MARKET RABBITS**

**WHAT DO I NEED TO PURCHASE TO GET STARTED?**

**CAGES**

**WATER BOWLS**

**FEEDERS**

**FEED**

**1 SPRAY BOTTLE**

**SCALES**

**\*\*\*IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU PURCHASE A GOOD SET OF SCALES THAT WEIGH IN OUNCES, UP TO AT LEAST 10 LBS. THE WEIGHT LIMIT FOR MEAT PENS IS 3 LBS MINIMUM; 5 LBS MAXIMUM PER BUNNY. (Check your official show rules for weight limits)**

**BREEDS**

THE BEST BREEDS FOR MARKET RABBITS ARE CALIFORNIANS OR NEW ZEALANDS. IF YOU LOOK AT MOST SHOWS, THE WINNING PENS ARE USUALLY CALIFORNIANS.

BUY YOUR STOCK FROM A REPUTABLE BREEDER. WATCH OUT FOR JUNK.

IF YOU BUY FROM A COMPETITOR, YOU CAN BET THAT YOU’RE NOT

GETTING QUALITY BREEDING STOCK. DO NOT BUY RABBITS FROM FEED STORES; THEY ARE OFTEN SOME RABBIT BREEDER’S CULLS.

**Collin County Rabbit Requirements:**

Age/Weight requirements for meat pens: ( Per the 2016-2020 ARBA Stand of Perfection)

* The age limit for meat pens is 10 weeks with a minimum weight of 3 and a half lbs each and a maximum weight of 5 and a half lbs each

**CAGES**

**\*\*\*\*\*NO HAY IN THE CAGES\*\*\*\*\*\*ONLY IN NEST BOXES WHEN KINDLING\*\*\*NO SALT OR MINERAL WHEELS \*\*\*\*\*\*\*ALL THIS DOES IS RUST YOUR CAGES. \*\*\*\*\*\*\*THE COMMERCIAL FEED HAS ALL THE MINERALS AND VITAMINS THE RABBIT NEEDS.**

**\*\*\*IT IS BEST TO HAVE EXTRA CAGES TO SEPARATE BUNNIES CLOSER TO SHOW DATE. \*\*\***

CAGES ARE BEST KEPT IN A BARN, HANGING FROM THE RAFTERS, OR TIED TO STEEL POSTS TO GET THEM UP OFF OF THE GROUND. IF YOU USE STEEL POSTS AND HAVE DOES KINDLE IN YOUR CAGES, YOU NEED TO PUT GREASE AROUND THE STEEL POSTS. ANTS LIKE SMALL BUNNIES, AFTERBIRTH & BLOOD. THE STACK CAGES WORK GREAT FOR EXHIBITORS WHO ARE PURCHASING BUNNIES ONLY.

PLACING CAGES ON BARRELS CREATES A URINE & FECAL MESS. PLACING CAGES ON SAW HORSES LEAVE CAGES TOO LOW TO GROUND.

VENTILATION IS IMPORTANT IN THE SUMMER. KEEP THE BUNNIES WARM IN WINTER, BUT BE CAREFUL NOT TO PLACE HEAT LAMPS TOO CLOSE TO CAGES.

**IT IS ALSO IMPERRATIVE THAT THE** **CAGES NOT BE ACCESSIBLE BY DOGS.** DOGS WILL GET UNDER THE CAGES, GET THE RABBITS EXCITED AND POSSIBLY CAUSING ONE TO BREAK IT’S NECK. ALSO, DOGS WILL PULL THE LEGS OFF OF BUNNIES IF THEY GO THROUGH THE CAGE BOTTOM WHEN THEY ARE SMALL. CATTLE PANELS PLACED AROUND THE BARN WILL SOLVE THIS PROBLEM.

**NEST BOXES (ONLY IF YOU ARE BUYING BRED DOES OR RAISING YOUR RABBITS FROM BREEDING STOCK)**

NEST BOXES NEED TO BE APPROX. 14” LONG; 10” WIDE, WITH SIDES ARE 7” TALL. NEST BOXES MADE COMPLETELY OF WIRE ALLOW FOR EASY CLEANING & GOOD VENTILATION. I BUILT MY NEST BOXES OUT OF ½” X 1” WIRE & PLACED SMALLER SCREEN WIRE IN THE BOTTOM TO KEEP THE BUNNIES FEET FROM FALLING THROUGH THE WIRE & CRIPPLING A BUNNY. YOU’LL FILL THIS WITH A SOFT HAY FOR BEDDING AND PLACE THE BOXES IN THE CAGE ABOUT 2-3 DAYS BEFORE KINDLING. THIS GIVES THE DOE TIME TO BUILD A NEST.

WHEN BUNNIES START APPEARING OUT OF NEST BOX, PUT THEM BACK IN.

WHEN THE MAJORITY OF THEM ARE OUT DAILY, REMOVE THE BOXES. THIS SHOULD BE AT ABOUT 18-21 DAYS OLD.

**WATERERS**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU USE **WATER BOWLS** INSTEAD OF BOTTLES OR AN AUTOMATIC SYSTEM. AUTOMATIC SYSTEMS AND BOTTLES ARE A PAIN TO KEEP CLEAN AND HARDER TO CHECK FOR WATER LEVELS. WATER BOTTLES WILL LEAK, CREATING A MESS, AND COULD LEAVE RABBITS WITHOUT WATER. NIPPLES ON AUTOMATIC SYSTEMS OFTEN CLOG WITH ALGAE, LEAVING RABBITS WITHOUT WATER.

**FEEDERS**

METAL FEEDERS THAT HANG ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE CAGE WORK VERY WELL, BUT SOMETIMES LIMITS ALL BUNNIES ACCESS TO FEED. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A RABBIT THAT WILL PUSH OTHERS OFF OF FEED. USE METAL FEEDERS, AND ALSO PLACE A CROCK IN THE CAGE WITH EXTRA FEED. YOU WILL HAVE PROBLEMS WITH BUNNIES URINATING IN THE BOWL, MAKING THE FEED BAD. IT HAPPENS.

**FEED**

USE GOOD QUALITY, FRESH FEED, 15-18%. THERE ARE MANY BRANDS OF RABBIT FEED AVAIALBE. HERE IS A PARTIAL LIST: MANNA PRO GRO., PURINA, ACCO, PETRUS, BLUEBONNET AND MOORMANS. MAKE SURE THAT YOUR FEED IS FRESH & OF THE CORRECT PROTEIN.

***BUNNIES FOR SHOW SHOULD HAVE FRESH FEED IN FRONT OF THEM AT ALL TIMES*.**

***NO LETTUCE OR CARROTS. GREEN PELLETED FEED ONLY.***

DRY DOES WITHOUT BUNNIES SHOULD ONLY GET ABOUT ½ VIENNA SAUSAGE CAN OF FEED, TWICE DAILY. DO NOT OVER FEED DRY DOES, THEY GET FAT & WON’T BREED.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING**

ABOUT THREE WEEKS BEFORE SHOW, START ADDING TOP DRESSING TO THE FEED IN THE FEED BOWL. THIS IS A TREAT TO THE RABBITS & ENCOURAGES THEM TO EAT MORE. JUST PUT ABOUT ONE OUNCE ON TOP OF THE FEED, IN THE BOWL, ONCE A DAY PER BUNNY. (A NYQUIL MEDICINE CUP WORKS WELL FOR THIS) THE RABBITS WILL GO STRAIGHT TO IT. DON’T MIX IT IN THE FEED, AS THE BUNNIES WILL DIG IT OUT, WASTING GREEN PELLETED FEED.

**HERE’S THE MIXTURE FOR THE “GRAIN SUPPLEMENT”:**

**1 LB. BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS 1 LB. BARLEY**

**1 LB. CHEAP OAT MEAL 1 LB. CRIMPED OATS**

**2 LBS. SHOWBLOOM**

**WORKING THE HAIR**

ABOUT THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE SHOW, YOU NEED TO BE WORKING HAIR AND WEIGHING THE BUNNIES EVERY OTHER DAY. THIS HELPS GET THE BUNNIES ACCUSTOMED TO BEING HANDLED AND LETS YOU KEEP UP WITH THEIR PROGRESS. THE WEEK OF THE SHOW, YOU NEED TO WORK RABBIT HAIR DAILY AND WEIGH BUNNIES DAILY. IF RABBITS ARE NOT CLOSE IN WEIGHT, YOU MAY HAVE TO SEPARATE THE LARGER ONES FROM THE OTHERS. \*\*YOU REALLY NEED MORE THAN ONE CAGE FOR THIS REASON\*\*

**HOW TO WORK RABBIT HAIR:**

YOU NEED TO PLACE THE RABBIT ON A PIECE OF CARPET TO PREVENT THE BUNNY FROM SLIDING AROUND. PLACE YOUR HAND OVER THE RABBIT’S HEAD & TUCK THE REAR LEGS UNDER THE BUNNY. DON’T BUNCH HIM UP, BUT MAKE HIS REAR ROUND, LIKE A BALL. THIS IS HOW YOU SET UP A BUNNY. MAKE SURE THAT THE FRONT LEGS ARE UP UNDER HIM & HE IS RELATIVELY SQUARE. WITH A SPRAY BOTTLE, SPRAY A LIGHT COAT OF TAP WATER ON THE HAIR, DAMP, NOT WET. RUN YOUR FREE HAND BACK & FORTH ACROSS THE HAIR ABOUT 100 STROKES. THIS HELPS TO CONDITION THE HAIR & REMOVE DEAD HAIR. 3-4 DAYS BEFORE SHOW, USE CORN STARCH INSTEAD OF WATER. THIS HELPS MAKE THE HAIR SHINE & SLICK. WHEN YOU WORK THE HAIR AGAINST THE GRAIN, IT SHOULD POP RIGHT BACK INTO PLACE & LOOK GOOD. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRAND AND RESERVE MAY JUST COME DOWN TO THE QUALITY OF THE HAIR.

**SELECTING BUNNIES**

AGAIN, YOU MUST HAVE A SCALE THAT WEIGHS UP TO 10 LBS IN OUNCES. IF YOU KEPT UP WITH YOUR BUNNY WEIGHTS, YOU’LL HAVE A MUCH EASIER TIME PICKING OUT YOUR PEN. YOUR BUNNIES MUST BE VERY CLOSE IN WEIGHT AND FEEL THE SAME. WHEN THE BUNNY IS SET UP, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO RUN YOUR FREE HAND OVER THE BUNNIES SHOULDERS AND ACROSS THE LOIN TO DETERMINE IF THEY ARE THE SAME WIDTH ACROSS THE SHOULDERS AND THE LOIN IS THE SAME WIDTH.

YOU MUST CHECK YOUR BUNNIES TO SEE THAT THEY HAVE ALL OF THEIR TOE NAILS. THE BUNNY SHOULD HAVE 5 TOE NAILS ON EACH FRONT FOOT, AND 4 TOE NAILS ON EACH REAR FOOT. 1 MISSING TOE NAIL WILL GET YOU SIFTED. THE TOP TEETH SHOULD BE STRAIGHT AND OVER LAP THE BOTTOM SET. IF BOTTOM SET OVER LAP TOP SET, YOU WILL GET SIFTED.

CHECK EARS FOR EAR CANKER. EAR CANKER IS CAUSED BY MITES IN THE EARS. THEY EAT THE SKIN DOWN IN THE EAR AND CAUSE SORES. THIS WILL ALSO GET YOU SIFTED. CHECK RABBIT EARS EACH TIME YOU WORK HAIR. CAT MITICIDES WORK WELL ON RABBIT EARS IF YOU GET MITES.

AS LONG AS YOUR CAGES ARE CLEAN, MITES SHOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM.

**HAVE FUN!!**

**Good Luck!**