

Keys to Profitability in Raising Rabbits

By Carla Carter

I want to talk to you all about being profitable. That means how fast your rabbits are getting to 5# is the key. If it takes longer than 8 weeks for your rabbits to get to 5#, then you are taking too long and as a commercial operation, that is costing you money. There are many variables for you to look at to consider what could be the problem.

- 1) **Feed:** I feed an 18% protein, 18% fiber (minimum) and a low fat feed, actually 1.5% fat. You NEED that high of protein and fiber to get the BEST out of your meat production rabbits.
- 2) **Stock:** Garbage in Garbage out so to speak. How do you evaluate your stock? First key is to weigh your does and bucks. If they only weigh 8 pounds, chances are you are wasting your time. They are small stock and will have small offspring. You need a minimum of an 10# doe and 9-10# buck. Larger is not always better in terms of wanting a Flemish Giant though because those spend time building bone instead of meat. Stick with the meat breeds, basics of Californian or New Zealand for basics and starters (for optimum profitability).
- 3) **Husbandry:** I put feed and water down in feeders on the cage in small low bowls as soon as their eyes are open. I don't wait until they are big enough to get to the j-feeders even if the feeders are low. The sooner you have them on pellets, the faster they will grow.

I wean them at 4 weeks. The faster they are weaned, the faster they will grow.

Keeping them in large enough cages that they have plenty of room to move around, like 4-6 to a 30X36 cage gives them ample room. Make sure that they have FULL ACCESS to water 24/7 and feeders ALWAYS full.

Following these basics should help you produce a 5# rabbit in 8 weeks. If not, then you definitely have some issues in your barn. If your stock is adequate, your feed is good and your husbandry practices are on the mark then look for signs of coccidiosis or other issues. Slow growth rates or losses in your kits can be signs of other problems. Let's talk. I want you to be productive and profitable!