

**COSTS AND GUIDES IN  
RABBIT MANAGEMENT**

1954



**University of California  
Agricultural Extension Service  
Los Angeles County**

UC Cooperative Extension

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March, 1955

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### Importance of the Industry

The annual production of rabbit meat and pelts in Los Angeles County was reported at approximately \$7,000,000. More than one thousand growers used this industry as part-time employment and a few made it a full-time job. Both the number of people in the business and the total production of many rabbitries have declined.

### Advantages

Much of this labor could not be marketed at an outside job but must be used at home. The rabbit industry is well adapted to the use of this kind of labor and to zoned areas near the city where agricultural activity is limited. The space required in many cases need not be purchased, but consists of making use of the backyard. This does not mean that the business cannot be expanded to a size requiring the time of several operators and that has been done successfully.

The rabbit is a very efficient animal in converting feed into meat. These records show that on an average 4.7 pounds of feed produced one pound of meat. That is a good conversion considering that approximately 40% of rabbit feed is alfalfa hay. In several cases a feed conversion of slightly less than 4 pounds of feed per pound of meat has been reached with feed containing 40% alfalfa.

In addition to this efficient conversion of feed into meat, the rabbit meat is very high quality and frequently the supply is not equal to demand.

1954 RABBIT MANAGEMENT STUDY  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

ITEMS	10 Year Average 1930-39	8 Year Average 1945-52	1953 Average	1954 Average	Your Record
<b>GENERAL</b>					
No. of records	9	12	4	6	
Ave. no. of does	67	124	128.2	93.2	
Ave. no. of kindlings	3.2	4.0	4.1	3.7	
No. raised per doe	16.7	24.4	26.7	23.2	
Ave. selling weight	3.9	4.4	4.0	4.1	
<b>EFFICIENCY</b>					
Lbs. produced per doe	65.0	108.3	116.1	101.3	
Lbs. feed per doe	403.0	510.0	519.6	478.2	
Lbs. feed per lb. prod.	6.2	4.8	4.5	4.7	
Hrs. labor per doe	16.2	12.2	7.6	9.1	
<b>COSTS PER DOE</b>					
Feed	\$ 5.83	\$18.90	\$19.29	\$17.86	
Labor (Hired and Operator)	4.49	10.14	7.62	9.33	
Miscellaneous	.47	.90	1.69	1.48	
Total cash	\$10.79	\$29.94	\$28.60	\$28.67	
Depreciation	.51	1.21	1.47	1.36	
Interest	.79	1.22	1.35	1.42	
Total all costs	\$12.09	\$32.37	\$31.42	\$31.45	
<b>COSTS PER POUND</b>					
Feed	8.8¢	17.5¢	16.7¢	17.6¢	
Labor	6.9	9.4	6.5	9.2	
Miscellaneous	.7	.8	1.5	1.5	
Total cash	16.4	27.7	24.7	28.3	
Depreciation	.8	1.1	1.2	1.3	
Interest	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4	
Total all costs	18.4¢	30.0¢	27.1¢	31.0¢	
<b>INCOME</b>					
Total per doe	\$ 9.06	\$30.23	\$31.71	\$25.76	
Price per lb. prod.	14.0¢	27.3¢	26.4¢	23.6¢	
Ave. price fryers	12.7¢	27.5¢	24.7¢	21.8¢	
<b>INCOME PER DOE</b>					
Management	\$-2.51	\$-1.70	\$ .29	\$-5.69	
Farm income*	2.72	8.93	9.00	4.80	
Above cash costs**	3.23	10.02	10.47	6.16	
<b>INCOME PER POUND</b>					
Management	-4.0¢	-1.5¢	.2¢	-5.6¢	
Farm income	4.2	8.2	8.1	4.7	
Above cash costs	5.0¢	9.3¢	9.3¢	6.0¢	
<b>MORTALITY</b>					
% older stock	19.1%	39.1%	21.8%	34.0%	
% young stock	23.0	24.9	21.4	19.0	
Investment per doe	-	-	\$26.94	\$28.33	

\* Plus operator's labor and interest

\*\* Plus depreciation

## Problems

Regardless of the efficiency of the rabbit in converting feed into meat and the high quality of the meat, some operators at the present time find the business unprofitable and in no case are the returns entirely satisfactory. It was estimated not many years ago that 80% of the rabbits in this country were produced in southern California, but that not more than 50% are produced here now. The past season has seen a very unfavorable feed to meat price ratio. This condition usually reverses itself in time, but the industry faces many problems which only good management and a progressive advertising program can solve. A very important problem of the rabbit industry is the need for market expansion. No consumer resistance has been met where efforts to expand markets have been made.

The scientific breeding program should be greatly expanded. Every grower can refer to a few exceptional does which bring up his herd average. Not all of these will produce similar offspring, but a percentage of them will do so if a good selection program is followed consistently. Developing the herd to approach the average production of the top half of a herd is not only possible but the very rapid production of rabbits makes it possible to make more rapid progress than has been possible with the larger animals.

Disease control is one of the most important problems of the industry. Much is being accomplished by the use of vitamins in the feed. This area is fortunate to have the services of public laboratories which will give advice on such problems. The herd management must include getting the sick animals away from the

others and follow with the proper treatment. Proper feeding, good stock, and strict sanitation must be the basis on which to build a profitable herd.

The use of labor has always been a limiting factor in the income from rabbit ranches. This study shows that 9.1 hours of labor per doe were required on the average. This compares favorably with the 16.2 hours required during the 1930-39 period; however large rabbitries have handled between 900 and 1,000 does per man, which would mean less than half the hours labor per doe shown by this study. This appears to be one management factor which should be given careful consideration.

We want to acknowledge the fact that this study was conducted for more than half of the past year by Wayne F. Ehlers who was farm advisor in this county at that time. We want to express appreciation for excellent work done by Miss Ruth Lang, office manager, and Mrs. Mary Combs, statistician, in the office of the Agricultural Extension Service in Los Angeles County.

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