

# Market Pen of 3 Rabbits and Chickens

## Why raise a market pen?

To learn about feed and growth of the species.

To help finance your 4-H project through the Auction.

Just for the fun of it.

## When to Start?

Check with your 4-H leader.

Review last year's 4-H/FFA Fair book for dates.

Rabbits less than 82 days old.

Chickens less than 6 weeks old.

## Where to Start?

Contact feed stores for resources

Check with other people raising chickens or rabbits.

Check with your leader or other leaders.

Breed and raise your own.

Hatch eggs from your own herd.

Start now by checking your fair book as to age limits. Count it out on the calendar. This is very important! They are different for each species.

Make sure you have the proper space and supplies. Be prepared to raise them, keep records of how much feed they eat, and how much money you spend.

When you locate a supply source, make arrangements with them **NOW** on payment method, availability and delivery. Make sure you get a paid receipt with a date of **June 1** of the **current year** or earlier. This shouldn't be a problem with chickens, but rabbits are a different story. You will need to pay for your rabbit pen **PRIOR** to them even being old enough to leave their mom. Keep all your records in one place. You will need to pick your rabbits up as soon as they are 6 weeks old. This will give you only 3½ weeks to bring them up to weight.

If you are breeding or hatching your own, keep accurate records as to when the doe was bred or the eggs were laid, when the rabbits were born or when the eggs hatched. Also indicate whether you bought fertilized eggs to hatch at home. If you only have the buck and are receiving 3 fryers for payment of the service of your buck, then you must also keep accurate records on your buck production form.

# CHICKENS

3.5 to 6 pounds

According to the Nutrition Expert at Kroft Feed in Harrisburg, and the Murray McMurray Hatchery catalog, the following information was gathered to pass onto you.

Cornish X Rocks are **THE** fryers to get. They are a commercial breed, are the fastest to mature with the expected meat and weight expectations in today's market. Again, your chickens can be no older than 6 weeks by Fair. With enough planning you can have your chicks delivered to a local feed store or even to your house within just a couple of days of the 6 week time frame.

The important thing to remember is that you must have a warm, dry place for your chicks. You will need a light for warmth with wood shavings, rice hulls or ground cobs on the floor. **Do not use cedar chips, sawdust** (it is too small and the birds may eat it instead of their food), **or treated wood chips**. You should be ready to supply electrolytes in the water for the first 1-5 days and be prepared to keep the area **CLEAN**. Your chicks should start out on Chick or Broiler Starter for the first 30 days. Then switch to a Grower feed for the next 15 days and then use a Finisher for the remaining days. Your chickens should have feed in front of them at all times. You will need to supply at least 18 hours of light each day with plenty of clean water at all times.

It is recommended that **NO SCRATCH** be fed at anytime during the 6 weeks. What this does is reduces the amount of broiler feed the chicken eats, thus reducing the amount of Riboflavin in the feed required for strong bones and proper growth, causing Magnesium deficiencies. The Cornish X Rocks have higher nutritional requirements to support their rapid growth. They should gain .1 pound per day over 50 days to get to 5 pounds within your 6 weeks or 42 days. **WEIGH YOUR CHICKENS 1-2 TIMES A WEEK TO KEEP TRACK OF WHERE THEY ARE.**

Keeping the living area as clean as possible will allow you to keep feather mites under control and keep your animals clean and healthy. Should you find feather mites, treat the birds and the living area with Sevin Dust. Sprinkle the Sevin Dust liberally; don't forget under the wings.

# RABBITS

3 to 5 pounds

The following information is gathered from my experience as a breeder and helping my own kids raise a successful market pen of rabbits. A pen of rabbits consists of 3 animals. It is a good idea to have your own litter to choose out of or purchase 4 rabbits if possible. They should all be the same breed and color/variety. It is better to breed your own pen than to have to purchase one. Your choices are experience and choices are better that way.

Any Commercial breed of rabbit or even a crossbreed of a commercial type is **THE** rabbit to get. These do the best at obtaining the appropriate weight in the given time, provided you follow a few “tips”. Your kits (baby rabbits) can be no older than 70 days by Fair. Unless you breed your own doe, you will need to find a breeder who can provide you with at least 3 animals of the proper age. You will need to pay for your kits prior to them being weaned from the doe. You must have a receipt with a date of June 1 or earlier indicating the purchase date as well as the date of birth. You will be required to show your receipt at check in at the Youth Fair. **KEEP IT IN A SAFE PLACE.**

All three or four of your rabbits can be housed together, provided you have a large enough cage. A 24x24 is **NOT** big enough. A 24x36 is best suited for their numbers and exercise room. You must be ready to keep their living area as clean as possible and to keep track of everything you feed them. All feed should be noted in ounces not by the container you feed them from (like 1 tuna can). Alfalfa can be indicated by handfuls. Your feed store can help you with weighing out the feed. They will need plenty of fresh water; remember that 3-4 rabbits will drink **A LOT** more water than just one. Make sure your water container is large enough to get through a full day.

Your rabbits will be about 6 weeks old when you pick them up or wean them from their mother. Remember to get their individual weights the **FIRST** day. Rabbit feed is bought by the amount of protein it contains. Your market rabbits will need an 18% protein feed. They have to have pellets in front of them at all times. This doesn't mean to fill the feeder up to the top, as this will cause the food to get damp and stale. You can slowly introduce unsalted sunflower seeds, calf manna and alfalfa droppings in a **SEPARATE** feeder than your rabbit pellets. A good amount to start with might be 1 Tbsp. per head of calf manna, ¼ cup sunflower seeds and a small handful of alfalfa. This is a total amount for all 3 rabbits. You can mix these items together, but keep them separate from the pellets, as they will kick out the pellets to get to the “goodies”, thus wasting a lot of food/money. Make sure that the bulk of what they eat are the rabbit pellets, as this contains the nutrients and protein they really need to grow properly. Think of the “goodies” as additives.