



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Immediate Release

Supplementing the suggestion made a few days ago by Food Administrator Wickard to "raise rabbits in your back yard" to add to the total supply of food, The Fish and Wildlife Service points out that with meat rationing soon to begin, rabbits can help to provide the answer for the city dweller who wishes to grow a few meals at home. For the time, labor and expense involved, rabbits pay a handsome dividend in good eating, since they require little space and just ordinary care, it maintains.

The U.S. Rabbit Experiment Station at Fontana, Calif., operated by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, is developing and recommending simple and inexpensive equipment for the rabbitry to be built with available materials, oftentimes scrap, thereby eliminating the use of strategic materials. George S. Templeton, director of the Station, says that "three or four does and a buck of the medium-weight or heavier breeds will furnish the average family with all the rabbit meat that it will use."

A new pamphlet recently issued by the Service, "Domestic Rabbits in the Food for Freedom Program", is primarily for use by persons desiring to establish small back yard rabbitries to supplement the family meat supply. This pamphlet, Leaflet No. 218, gives complete instructions for selecting breeding stock and building hutches. It is available free of charge from either the U.S. Rabbit Experiment Station, Fontana, Calif., or the Fish and Wildlife Service, Merchandise Mart, Chicago.

According to Service officials, rabbits are now being raised by the millions in every State and in every climate from California to Maine. Wherever poultry raising is permitted, rabbits may be kept. In fact, many cities and towns throughout the West are removing restrictions on back yard raising of chickens and rabbits in order to give impetus to meat production at home, wherever practicable. Meat produced at home also has the advantage of alleviating transportation difficulties.

In the Los Angeles trade territory the number of rabbits raised has increased tremendously during the last 3 or 4 years. It is estimated that between 6-1/2 and 7 million pounds of rabbit meat were consumed in Los Angeles during 1942. In the western States where the production of domestic rabbits has become an extensive and valuable industry, and where single large rabbitries keep several thousand animals, the meat is served regularly in hotels and restaurants as well as in homes.

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All the meat on the animal is white and delicately flavored throughout. In food value it is in the class with poultry and other meats as a source of efficient protein. In color and flavor of meat, domestic rabbit is so superior to wild as to seem an entirely different article of food. In addition, hutch-raised domestic rabbits have been free also from the disease tularemia, which has been contracted in some cases by persons handling wild rabbits.

"Back yard rabbit hutches can be constructed of scrap lumber, used poultry wire, crates and like material that can be obtained at little or no cost," states Leaflet 218. "Clean table scraps, vegetable trimmings from grocery stores, garden waste, lawn clippings, palatable weeds, and small limbs trimmed from fruit trees may be utilized to supplement their regular rations." For example, at a prison camp in California rabbits are being raised by utilizing waste from trimmings of vegetable supplies from the country gardens.

The production of fryer rabbits, which are ready for market at 8 weeks--one month quicker than poultry fryers--can be conducted on any scale, from small units of 3 or 4 does for family use to large commercial rabbitries involving 300 to 500 or more animals. Individuals who raise rabbits for commercial purposes can, with care, dress the rabbits so that the fur also can be sold. White rabbits are most desirable because their skins usually bring higher prices. The fur is used extensively in the hat trade and for making fur garments. As for meat, it is estimated that the rabbit industry is capable of supplying weekly millions of pounds.

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