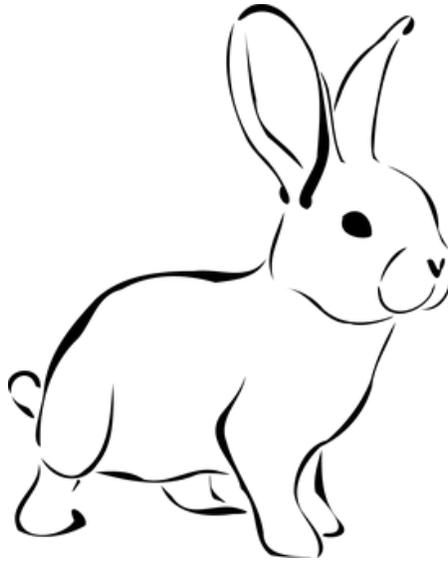


# Ingham County Rabbit Meat Project

Meat Pens

Roaster

Single Fryers



Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Years in Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Superintendent to Indicate Attendance at Tattoo Clinic:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Getting Started

Welcome to the Ingham County Rabbit Meat Project! This is an amazing opportunity for you to expand your knowledge about the species and broaden your animal related skill set. Before you get started, take a minute to think about what you want to get out of your meat project for the year.

Is your goal to see how much money you can earn? Do you want to watch a litter develop and grow? Do you want to supply your family with another source of meat? By pinpointing what you want to get out of this project, you can decide what specific steps to take in order to achieve these goals; this practice will improve your experience tremendously, and hopefully produce a better overall project for fair!

Plan to fill out this document as you complete the project. When your project has been completed, you will turn this book in, and it will be reviewed by the Rabbit Superintendents. If you have any questions in the process, consult your project leader, or a Superintendent! Questions help facilitate learning, and that's what this project is all about.

### ***“What do I need for my project?”***

We all know that sometimes situations get out of hand; with that in mind, it's suggested you purchase or start with a **trio of rabbits**. *A trio consists of 2 does and 1 buck*. It's recommended that each of these rabbits be of the same breed, and same variety. Keep in mind, when you do a meat pen project, the rabbits you use are not required to be from the same litter. In other words, if you have 2 does who produce multiple babies per litter, that would give you a nice and varied selection to choose from. This allows you to be a little pickier when selecting your final project.

If you need to purchase your animals, find a reputable breeder who will spend time to help you learn about the strengths and faults of the breed. It's important to know about the breed you're working with so you can house and feed them appropriately.

The breed you select is very important, as some are known to grow faster than others. Breeds recommended for Meat Projects include: Californians, New Zealands, American Sables, Satins, Palominos, American Chinchillas, and Silver Fox.

In our county *pedigrees* are not necessary, but if you want to do a Protégé project to go along with your meat pen project then *yes, pedigrees are needed!* Don't know what a pedigree is? Do a little research or ask your leader/superintendent about it! Don't know what the Protégé project is? Read the fair book to find out!

If you used animals from your own stock, then list their ear # here:

Buck \_\_\_\_\_ Doe \_\_\_\_\_ Doe \_\_\_\_\_

If you needed to purchase animals list your purchase price here: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Bucks ear #: \_\_\_\_\_ Doe #1 ear #: \_\_\_\_\_ Doe #2 ear #: \_\_\_\_\_

## Starting Equipment

Feeder/Crocks	For water and food; it's important to provide an adequate amount of both to facilitate growth. Water is one of the most important nutrients for your animals!
Feed	Pick a top feed to help put condition on your animals; this improves quality!
Shavings	For the nest box (don't use Cedar as this can cause respiratory issues). You can also use newspaper, hay, straw, or bunny saver.
Cage	Make sure the cage is big enough for your doe to move around freely, but also big enough to fit a nest box, and big enough for her to raise a litter.
Nest box	The nest box should be a <i>little</i> bigger than the size of the doe, so she has room to turn around.

Do you need to purchase any of this equipment? If so, then please list below what you had to purchase and what the purchase price was:

Cage: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Feed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ How many bags for the whole project: \_\_\_\_\_  
Feeders/Crocks \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Nest Box \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Shavings \$ \_\_\_\_\_ How many bags for the whole project: \_\_\_\_\_

Total cost of project: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

What do you want to get out of your project? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you purchase a trio of rabbits? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what did you pay for them: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Did you previously own a doe and buck to use in your project? \_\_\_\_\_

What breed of rabbits are you using for your meat project? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you choose this breed? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Types of Meat Projects**

Our county offers three different type of Meat Projects: Meat Pens, Single Fryers, and Roasters

- Meat Pen= 3 rabbits, same breed, variety; weight to be between 3.08 and 5.08lbs; age to be not over 70 days
- Single Fryer= 1 rabbit; weight to be between 3.08 to 5.08 lbs; age to not be over 70 days (yes, the single fryer and meat pen can be out of the same litter)
- Roaster= 1 rabbit; weight to be between 5.08 to 8.0 lbs; age to be not over 6 months

## Breeding

The best way to figure out the date that you need to breed your rabbits is to find out when the rabbit check in date for your fair is. Take that date and count 100 days back. It's recommended to do this because the rabbit needs 30 days for gestation and then the project animals need to be just about 70 days old.

When the time comes to breed your animals, it's recommended that the doe is put in the buck's cage. This is because does tend to be territorial, and may cause harm to the buck or you.

What is a rabbit's "gestation period"? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of Meat Project will you be exhibiting this year? \_\_\_\_\_

When should the nest box be put into the doe's cage? \_\_\_\_\_

## Kindling

Around the 28<sup>th</sup> day after breeding, the nest box should be placed in the doe's cage. Make sure she has some type of nesting material in the box; this will ensure the kits are delivered into a warm and comfortable environment. Often, the doe will build a nest for her kits before they are born. This often means a doe will pull fur before the kits are born; sometimes they will not. Sometimes they wait until the kits are born and then will pull fur or arrange the nesting material to cover the babies up.

After the litter is born make sure you check the kits. Look in the nest and make sure they are alive and moving around. If any dead kits are in the nest, remove those as soon as possible. It's your responsibility as the breeder to check on the kits each day. Make sure the kits are receiving enough milk and are generally being cared for by the doe. There is a possibility that you may never see a doe in the nest box feeding the kits;

It's Okay! As they tend to only nurse 2 times a day. When you check on the kits make sure their bellies are full and round. If their bellies are thin or there looks to be lots of excess skin on the kits, then you may want to think about a foster mom. If you have questions on how to do this ask your leader!

What was your breeding date for your meat project? \_\_\_\_\_

What day did your doe/doe's kindle? \_\_\_\_\_

How many kits were in the litter: Doe #1: \_\_\_\_\_ Doe #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Total live kits: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Dead kits: \_\_\_\_\_

Continue monitoring the kits for weeks 1-3. Around 10 days old they will begin to open their eyes. They will start jumping out of the box around week 3-4. Around week 4 is when you should start monitoring the kits weight. Record their weight each week or so, to make sure they are gaining the appropriate weight. If they are still not gaining weight, then try using supplements (i.e. Calf Manna, Oatmeal, Sunflower seeds). Feel free to play around with these supplements for week 6-8. This will help add body and fur condition and help fill out your animals.

## **Picking Your Animals**

This is an important moment in the project: it's time to decide what animals to take to fair. As part of the project, are required to bring any of the meat project animals that you *think* you may use for fair to a special tattoo clinic; the specific date will be announced as fair gets closer. This clinic will allow your animals to be tattooed with the required symbol for the project, which will be placed in the right ear of each animal (this means your animals can already be tattooed when you attend the clinic). It will be held at the fairgrounds around the end of June, so expect to attend! You will be required to bring your Meat Project Book so one of the superintendents can document that you were there. Make sure the front page of your book is filled out before you attend.

**If you are not able to attend the scheduled clinic it is up to the member's family to contact the superintendent to arrange another time BEFORE the date of the scheduled clinic. NO tattoos will be given after the clinic date if not previously arranged.**

Before picking your meat pen/fryer/roaster, review the point schedule for the corresponding category. Take this schedule into consideration while choosing the animals you will exhibit. The animals that you choose will want to be as uniform as you can get them. Look at their meat type and compare this to others in the litter to decide which three are the most consistent.

<u>Meat Pen:</u>		<u>Single Fryer/Roasters</u>	
<i>Meat Type:</i>	<i>40 points</i>	<i>Meat Type:</i>	<i>50 points</i>
<i>Condition of Flesh:</i>	<i>30 points</i>	<i>Condition of flesh:</i>	<i>40 points</i>
<i>Uniformity of body and weight:</i>	<i>20 points</i>	<i>Fur:</i>	<i>10 points</i>
<i>Fur:</i>	<i>10 points</i>		
<i>Total points:</i>	<i>100 points</i>	<i>Total points:</i>	<i>100 points</i>

Use the chart above to judge your own animals. Give points to each animal then group 3 animals for a meat pen and give that group points.

Rabbit #1: \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbit #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rabbit #3: \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbit #4: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rabbit #5: \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbit #6: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rabbit #7: \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbit #8: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rabbit #9: \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbit #10: \_\_\_\_\_  
Meat Pen: \_\_\_\_\_

What's worth more in a meat pen: Condition of animal or Uniformity? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you able to make a meat pen out of the animals that you raised? \_\_\_\_\_

Were there any animals in any of the litters that had a disqualification? \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered yes, then describe the disqualification: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Record Weight Chart**

Starting at age 4 weeks, weigh each kit weekly to track their growth:

Week 4

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Week 5

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Week 6

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Week 7

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Week 8

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## **Last Minute Tips and Tricks**

- Before taking your rabbits to fair, make sure they have been cleaned up if needed (no urine stains, no poop on them, tattoos in the correct ears, etc.).
- Make sure toenails are clipped and uniform.
- Discuss with your leader what to expect at fair. They should be able to answer any questions you may have about show day, or fair week in general.
- Decide before coming to fair if you are going to keep your animals or be selling them in the Small Animal Auction.
- Fill out the appropriate cards when you get to fair for your meat project/auction. Make sure you turn in your Meat Project Book no later than 5 pm on Sunday of check in day. No late books will be accepted. If you fail to turn in the book you will not be eligible for Grand or Reserve Meat Pen/Single Fryer/Roaster. Make a copy of the Meat Project Book and submit it for Record Keeping also! This way you get to complete two projects!

## **Congratulations!**

If you've completed the book up until this point, that means you've just about finished the project! The only thing left to do is take a step back and reflect on all that you've done to get to this point. You've more than likely had ups and downs, but you've managed to get this far, and that's something to be incredibly proud of. By choosing to do a Rabbit Meat Project, you've taken the extra step to really learn about the species and that comes with valuable knowledge. We hope you continue to do this project in the coming years! Before you turn in your completed book, take some time to write down a few of the important things you've learned.

Remember this book is due by 5pm on the Sunday of Fair Check-In in the rabbit barn.

What are the top three things you learned?

1). \_\_\_\_\_

2). \_\_\_\_\_

3). \_\_\_\_\_

What are three things that surprised you?

1). \_\_\_\_\_

2). \_\_\_\_\_

3). \_\_\_\_\_

What are three things you would've done differently?

1). \_\_\_\_\_

2). \_\_\_\_\_

3). \_\_\_\_\_