Developing Countries Farm Radio Network

Pack 12, Item 6

Type: Script

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**A good home for your rabbit**

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Information on this topic was requested by DCFRN participants in Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Lesotho, Malta, Nigeria, Paraguay, St. Lucia,Tanzania, and Thailand.

Presenter: Barbara Peacock

**Special note**

Before using the information in this item, please read the notes at the end concerning related DCFRN items.

**Suggested introduction**

We at this radio station are part of a world-wide information network that gathers farming information from developing countries all over the world. It's the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, Massey Ferguson, and the University of Guelph.

Through this Network, we bring you information on ways to increase food supplies for your family, or to sell—ways that other farmers have used successfully.

If you raise rabbits, or would like to start raising rabbits, we have some important information for you. Here's Barbara Peacock.

**PEACOCK:** I'd like to talk to you about making a good homefor your rabbit—at little or no cost. Now even if you already have a home for your rabbit, you might hear some ideas that will be useful to you.

To be healthy and productive, a rabbit needs a home that's clean and dry. It must be protected from the weather and also from animals such as dogs and rats that might attack or frighten it.

Generally, the safest and most convenient way to keep rabbits is in individual cages raised up above the ground on posts, so the bottom of the cage is about a metre (2 or 3 feet) above the ground, a convenient height for you and your family to work with your rabbits.

The cage should be big enough so that a rabbit and its young can move around comfortably. The floor could be up to 1 metre (3 feet) long and perhaps 2/3 of a metre (2 feet) wide, and the walls about 2/3 of a metre (2 feet) high.

*Protection from rain, wind and sun*

Put the cage in a place that's protected from rain, wind, and hot sun—for instance, it could be in the shade of a tree or under the eaves (overhanging roof) of your house.

If you keep more than one rabbit, you could even build a simple roof shelter over all the cages—a thatch (grass) roof on posts, high enough that you can easily walk under to tend the rabbits in their cages.

If your cages are not under a waterproof shelter like that, each cage should have a good overhanging roof to keep off rain and sun. Some people use metal for the roofs of their rabbit cages. If you do this, put palm leaves or plywood under the metal to keep the cage cooler. You must remember that if your rabbits get too hot they may die.

*A self-cleaning floor*

Now it's very important to keep the rabbit cage clean. Dirt and manure (droppings) from the rabbits may contain germs that will make your rabbits sick. And a dirty cage will attract flies that will bother the rabbits. So you should keep the cage clean, and also the area around it.

It's a lot easier to keep a rabbit cage clean if the floor of the cage has holes or spaces, so that manure and urine will fall through. If the cage is up on poles, the manure will fall through, onto the ground below. You can then sweep up the manure, and use it as fertilizer for your garden.

There are several ways to make this special floor. I'll tell you about three of them.

To begin with, you might buy a good wire mesh. Don't use old rusty or broken wire mesh; and don't use chicken wire for flooring, as this kind of wire is too thin and hurts the rabbits' feet. It's best to use good thick wire, with mesh about 1 to 1-1/2 centimetres (half an inch) square.

Now for a floor you can make that will cost little or no money, you could simply lay down strips of split bamboo, with the hard round side up; or you could use strong smooth strips of wood. Just nail them down side by side with about 1 or 1-1/2 centimetres (half an inch) of space between them for the manure to drop through.

There's another kind of floor that would be even better for the rabbits' feet. You can make a bamboo mesh floor out of narrow pieces of split bamboo. Weave them together loosely with the smooth side up. This will make a good floor with square spaces between the strips.

With any of these types of floor for your cage, the spaces should be just large enough for the manure to fall through easily. If the spaces are too large, it's uncomfortable for the rabbit's feet, and also baby rabbits' feet may slip through the holes and their legs may be injured.

*Walls and doorway*

You can use the same kinds of materials for the walls of the cage: bamboo or hard wood strips, or wire mesh. The walls should let plenty of fresh air into the cage, to keep it from getting too hot, or too damp. The wall can have larger spaces in it than the floor, but not too large right near the bottom—you wouldn't want the little baby rabbits to fall out.

Finally, let's think about the door of the cage. Make it big enough so you can easily reach in to feed the rabbit and to clean all parts of the cage. You'll find it so much easier to care for the rabbit if the doorway is big enough that you can fit your head and shoulders right into the cage if you need to. Usually the door is on the front or side of the cage, but some people make a removable top for their cage, so they can reach in that way.

*And finally*

Remember to think of yourself and your family when you're building cages for your rabbits. Make them safe and comfortable for your rabbits, easy to reach into—and easy to clean, because for your rabbits to stay healthy, their cages must be thoroughly cleaned out regularly.

Serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is Barbara Peacock.

**Notes**

1. Before using this item, you may wish to re-use information from previous DCFRN items:

If You Eat Meat, Rabbit Meat May Save You Money - DCFRN Package 1, Item 2

Keeping Farm Animals Healthy and Productive - DCFRN Package 10, Item 1

After using this item, please use the following item:

A Nest Box for Your Baby Rabbits - DCFRN Package 12 (this Package), Item 7

**Information sources**

Backyard Rabbit Farming in the Tropics - Agrodok 20 (68 pages), published by Agromisa, Wageningen, The Netherlands. <http://www.agromisa.org/wp-content/uploads/Agrodok-20-Back-yard-rabbit-keeping-in-the-tropics-1.pdf>