

Additional Information

The American Rabbit Breeders Association, Inc. recognizes the need for information about rabbits, and offers many sources to the experienced breeder as well as the novice.

Membership in the ARBA includes the Official Guidebook to Raising Better Rabbits and Cavies. Over 190 pages of helpful articles written by knowledgeable breeders from their experiences, as well as tips passed down from the pioneers in the rabbit industry. Read about the rabbits value commercially, for exhibition, and as pets.

Learn techniques on breeding, general care, determining pregnancy, and much more.

Also learn about the cavy (guinea pig). This book is absolutely free with your membership.

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Worms & Waste In The Rabbitry

WORM FARMING



WASTE DISPOSAL



COMPOSTING



WORM FARMING AND RABBITS

Many rabbit breeders in the past years have found that by putting earthworms under their rabbit hutches, they can increase the profits from their rabbitry. They can sell the worms to fisherman for bait, to gardeners for soil improvement, and many other uses. Many breeders keep earthworms under their rabbit hutches to do away with the job of cleaning droppings and waste from under the cages. Rabbit manure plus the wasted feed from the hutches is one of the finest of all earthworm feeds.

The earthworm is an eating and composting machine. It eats its own weight in earth, minerals, and organic matter each day. Worms that have been placed under rabbit hutches in pits or in bins will consume and compost the droppings as they fall, converting them into a finely pulverized odorless humus. All the worms need to survive is manure, urine, and wasted food. Having worms under hutches also eliminates the problems of odor and flies plus the cleanup of manure, increasing profits of operations.

Bins or pits under rabbit hutches can be constructed of cement blocks, sheet metal or used lumber. The pit should be at least a foot deep and a few inches larger than the hutches in area to catch all droppings, urine, and feed waste. Bedding is the most important part of making your bins. Peat moss or AGED sawdust work well. Place bedding at a depth of six to eight inches in your pit or bin. Sprinkle the bedding with water. DON'T DROWN IT. Then, top off with some rabbit manure. Now you're ready for your worms. The Red Worm, which needs decaying organic matter, works well. Approximately 1,000 to 1,500 worms should be placed under each hutch.

The only work involved in maintaining the worms is to keep the pits moist, and every two to three weeks the pits should be turned and

leveled to keep the bedding loose, and to pulverize any encrusted manure deposits. Eventually, the bins will get overcrowded with worms. When this happens, they should be separated and transferred to other bins or marketed to bait dealers or other rabbitries for breeding stock.

The humus that the worms have composted is now one of the finest organic fertilizers available. No richer plant food can be found anywhere, and there is a lively demand for it. From the standpoint of improved conditions, time and labor savings, and dual income possibilities, the rabbit-earthworm combination is a natural and near perfect combination.

DISPOSAL OF RABBIT MANURE

If earthworms are not under the cages in a rabbitry, extra income can still be realized out of the rabbit droppings by their use in organic fertilizer. Rabbit droppings are a 'cold' manure because they have a high nitrogen content when the rabbits are fed a well-balanced diet. It is satisfactory on gardens, lawns, and around flowering plants, shrubbery, and trees. There is no danger in using it for fertilizing soil in which crops are to be raised for consumption.

The value of rabbit manure depends on how it is cared for and used. There will be a loss of fertilizing elements if the material is immediately incorporated into the soil. When manure is stored in piles and exposed to the weather, chemicals are lost through heat and leaching.

To prevent this, place pegboard or wire mesh platforms a few inches off the ground in a dry, well ventilated place. Allow the droppings to completely dry on these platforms. Then they can be pulverized through a fine screen in a hammermill. After the droppings are finely

ground in powder form, they can be packed and sold through hardware stores, florist shops, etc.

For the rabbit breeder who does not want to go to the expense of a hammermill or a dehydrator, the manure can be placed in barrels or boxes. The containers should have wire mesh bottoms and be elevated a few inches to permit air circulation to allow drying of the droppings. This method takes 80 to 90 days to sufficiently dry the material.

For those rabbit breeders who have a small herd and small waste problems, a compost pile may be the solution.

Locate your compost pile in a shaded, out of the way spot. A well drained location near a water source is best. Don't worry about odors, because they seldom occur in a properly made compost pile. Start your pile with a six inch layer of plant material. Use waste that will not rot quickly. Avoid twigs and woody material. Spread a cup of lime per square yard and a thin layer of rabbit manure over the plant material. Next add a thin layer of soil and wet down thoroughly. Then you start all over again...plant material, lime, rabbit manure, and soil.

Check the pile occasionally to be sure it is moist. Composition slows if the material becomes too dry. Keep the top of your pile hollowed slightly so it will catch rainwater and let it soak in. After about a month, turn or stir the compost so the outside and top material ends up in the center. This causes more even decay of all matter. In warm weather, your compost will be ready for use in a few weeks, but if you keep adding to the pile it is best to wait until spring to use the compost.

As rabbit droppings are the most potent fertilizer of all animal manures, whatever price received for it makes this plant food a great bargain.

