

ALL ABOUT RABBITS

Rabbits are a very versatile animal. On the farm they have many uses. Many folks like to have a vegetable garden, and rabbit manure is a natural fertilizer.

Rabbits are a good meat source. They don't take much room and produce some of the highest protein and lowest cholesterol meat. They are quiet, so they don't disturb the neighbors. Although any breed could be used for meat, there are ideal breeds such as the Californian, New Zealand, Silver Fox, Satin, and other medium size breeds that are best for this purpose.

Rabbits are a good project for children. Many kids join 4H, and even young ones can do a rabbit project. At the fair on Friday we have a 4H showmanship show. (A child doesn't have to be a 4H member to do this, but does have to have insurance). The child learns how to check the rabbit for health and what is correct for his or her breed.

Another valuable use of a rabbit is the angora. If you have ever owned an angora sweater or scarf, you know how warm it can be. Angora rabbits grow out their wool and they shed, so it must be removed every 3 months for the rabbit's well being. It does not hurt the rabbit to take off its coat. If the coat is left on too long it can become matted and become unhealthy for the rabbit. Spinners love the beautiful angora fiber which is sometimes blended with wool and spun up to make a wonderful yarn.

Many of our exhibitors show their rabbits in American Rabbit Breeders Association sanctioned shows which are held throughout the year, put on by various rabbit clubs. It is usually a fun way to meet other people who are interested in rabbits, and to learn more about them.

Rabbits are also a popular animal for a pet. If handled regularly, they can be friendly and make a wonderful companion. Many places that don't allow dogs or cats, will allow a rabbit. It should be kept in its cage when you cannot supervise, for its own safety.

A rabbit can also be a therapy animal. I had a soldier purchase one to help with his PTSD. Where he lived they didn't allow most animals, but his landlord approved a rabbit.

At the fair we have on display at least 118 rabbits at all times (often more). We have many breeds including: 5 angora breeds, Californian, New Zealand, French Lop, American Chin, Silver Fox, Satin, Rex, Dutch, Dwarf Hotot, Holland Lop, Jersey Woolly, Lionhead, Mini Lop, Mini Rex, Netherland Dwarf, Mini Satin, Tans, and sometimes several other breeds, and we often have a Flemish Giant (the largest breed) on display. We usually have a doe and her litter on display also. We have knowledgeable breeders and volunteers on hand to talk to the public and answer any questions they might have.

Our people who exhibit in the rabbit barn are some of the top breeders in the state. Some have been coming to Fryeburg for 25 years or more!

During the week we have talks and presentations including: angora spinning, what the best breeds are for meat rabbits, how to choose a pet rabbit, how to care for your rabbit, the items you would need for your rabbit (such as cage, feeder, water dish, etc.), what to look for in a show rabbit, and many other topics. We post topics and times on our white board outside the barn. We have a youth breeder that usually speaks every day on rabbit care, and she is very good at answering questions.

If anyone has any questions about rabbits, and wants to learn more, or just wants to see a great display of many breeds of rabbits, this is the place to come to.

Marie Bishop, Rabbit Barn Superintendent