

# Farmer Skill and Knowledge Checklist for Rabbits

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This checklist is a guide to the types of skills and knowledge useful to a rabbit producer in Maine. Increasing your levels of knowledge and skill can help you

- improve your farm management skills,
- increase your chances of having a profitable rabbit enterprise, or
- gain employment in a successful rabbit

If you are just starting out, don't be intimidated by this list; just use it to prioritize your learning. If you are experienced, remember that you can always improve and learn more, whatever your skill level.

**Circle your current and desired (target) competence using this scale:**

1=No knowledge/skill

2=Some knowledge/skill

3=Well-informed/experienced

Recommended knowledge	My current level			My target level		
<b>Breeding and Reproduction</b>						
Be able to identify common purebred rabbit breeds.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to select a replacement doe.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to select a buck for a certain trait.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be familiar with the benefits and drawbacks of crossbreeding, line-breeding, and other forms of inbreeding.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand how to use the heritability of various traits to improve your herd.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand hybrid vigor.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to evaluate individual animals through body condition scoring.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the implications of body condition for reproductive health.	1	2	3	1	2	3

Be able to calculate the time of kindling from the breeding date.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the reproductive tract of a doe.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to keep production records.	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Kindling</b>						
Know how to prepare a doe for kindling and what is necessary for nesting materials.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to recognize when a doe is about to give birth.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know the stages of kindling and be able to recognize normal births.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to recognize and treat a retained placenta.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to recognize and treat pregnancy toxemia.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to develop and follow a newborn checklist/protocol for your farm.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to assemble materials for a kindling kit.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to safely handle a newborn kit.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to determine the difference between male and female rabbits (especially kits by 5 weeks of age).	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Rabbit Health</b>						
Establish a working relationship with a veterinarian for conducting advanced diagnosis and consult on the proper use of antibiotics.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the importance of sanitation and biosecurity on your farm – and when visiting other farms and at rabbit shows.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to develop a biosecurity plan for everyday practices and for a biosecurity emergency.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know the components of a rabbit health program.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be familiar with common rabbit diseases such as coccidiosis and pasteurella.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be familiar with common external parasites of rabbits such as fur/wool mites and ear mites.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to recognize a sick individual by signs and symptoms such as a runny nose, scabby ears, and weight loss.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know proper parasite treatment measures and dosages.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to manage a safe and proper storage facility for sharps (used needles) and medications.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Select the proper types and sizes of needles for use on kits and adults.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to properly draw injectables from a vial into a syringe.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to give an intramuscular (IM) injection.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to give a subcutaneous (sub-Q) injection.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to properly dispose of a used needle and syringe.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to recognize signs of internal parasites such as off feed, diarrhea, and poor body condition.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to take a fecal sample for the diagnosis of internal parasites.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to prevent, recognize, and treat sore hocks.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to properly trim rabbit nails.	1	2	3	1	2	3

<b>Rabbit Nutrition</b>						
Be familiar with elements of feed management, such as sanitation, feed quantity, feeding frequency, and feeder structural materials.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to use Pearson's square to balance a feed ration.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to properly feed the buck.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be familiar with elements of feed management, such as sanitation, feed quantity, feeding frequency, and feeder structural materials.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to balance a feed ration for a pregnant doe.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to balance a feed ration for a meat rabbit.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be familiar with types of rabbit feeds and their nutrient values.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to read and interpret a feed bag label.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to recognize common nutritional disorders.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to take a feed sample.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to calculate yearly or seasonal feed needs.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the importance of providing a constant source of clean water.	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>General Management</b>						
Be familiar with rabbit terms.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to identify and express the goals of your rabbit operation.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand how rabbits (both does and bucks) behave in different situations.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know and use the safety guidelines for handling rabbits.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to transport one or more rabbits safely & humanely.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to safely load rabbits into a crate.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to weigh a rabbit at any age.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to implement and maintain a rabbit ID (tattoo) system.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to track the performance of individual animals.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to set criteria for culling individual breeding stock from your herd.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to humanely euthanize or dispatch individual rabbits.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Develop an emergency plan for your rabbits should the need arise (loss of power, loss of water, manager incapacitated, etc.).	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to attract and keep effective farmworkers.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be familiar with agencies and resources (public and private) for rabbit producers in the U.S. and Maine.*	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Facilities</b>						
Be able to calculate adequate space for rabbits.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand space requirements for rabbits at different ages/growth stages.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to fabricate/repair rabbit cages and hutches.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to select proper nesting materials for rabbits.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be familiar with ways to properly store feed.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to design a basic manure management system.	1	2	3	1	2	3

Know how to effectively control flies.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know the principles, design, and components of a rabbit handling unit for holding, quarantining, and treating individual animals.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the need for proper barn ventilation in different seasons and conditions.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the needs of animals for protection from the elements.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to select or build and use a windbreak.	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Fencing, Forages, and Pastures</b>						
Understand the basics of pasturing rabbits.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to design a pasture for flexible usage.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Recognize common pasture forages.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Recognize plants poisonous to rabbits in Maine.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to evaluate a pasture for forage quantity and quality.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Identify forage stages of maturity and their implications for quality.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to take a soil sample (from a field or pasture), and be able to interpret the results.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be familiar with different watering systems for rabbits at pasture.	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Selling Your Product</b>						
Be familiar with the U.S. rabbit industry infrastructure.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know the food safety and food-related regulations in Maine and the U.S.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know the grades of rabbits (both quality grades and yield grades).	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know the cuts of meat and from what part of the rabbit carcass they come.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the value of an animal at different growth stages and conditions. Be familiar with and know how to find annual price cycles and trends for different ages of rabbits.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to determine when a meat rabbit is ready for market.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to develop a marketing plan for your own operation.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to identify marketing options (such as rabbit sales, private treaty, cooperative marketing, and direct marketing) and choose the right ones for your operation.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand preconditioning requirements for specific auctions and sales.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know the retail yield of a carcass.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Understand the importance of value-added rabbit products.	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Economics</b>						
Be familiar with different rabbit enterprise types (such as laboratory, fiber, purebred, or meat).	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to determine herd size to produce to your targeted market.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to use rabbit-based enterprise budgets.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to determine the break-even point for your enterprise.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Know how to interpret market reports – and know when to sell.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to keep accurate financial records (on a computer or on paper).	1	2	3	1	2	3

Be able to analyze financial records to make wise decisions.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to identify and implement money-saving or labor-saving practices.	1	2	3	1	2	3
Be able to correctly complete income tax Schedule F, "Profit or Loss From Farming."	1	2	3	1	2	3

## Resources:

- Bulletin #1044, Backyard Production of Meat Rabbits in Maine: [extension.umaine.edu/publications/1044e/](http://extension.umaine.edu/publications/1044e/)
- American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA): [arba.net/](http://arba.net/)
- ARBA Standard of Perfection
- ARBA Guidebook to Raising Better Rabbits and Cavies
- Eastern Maine Rabbit Producers Association: [emrba.org](http://emrba.org)
- Western Maine Rabbit Producers Association: [facebook.com/groups/WMRBA/](https://facebook.com/groups/WMRBA/)
- Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry: [maine.gov/dacf/](http://maine.gov/dacf/)
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): [nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/](http://nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/) (help with manure management plans and other water-related issues)
- "Rabbit" Breeds: [arba.net/recognized-breeds/](http://arba.net/recognized-breeds/)

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