

# BUYING RABBITS: FOR THE (VERY) NEWBIE RABBIT OWNER

*Provided by Blue Ribbon Rabbitry*

Everyone enters the world of rabbit ownership with a completely different idea of what it means to own a rabbit. Some may have family or friends who have raised rabbits. Others may be animal lovers, but new to rabbits. Others have had little to no experience with animals at all.

First, we will discuss what someone should do if they are in the process of considering rabbit ownership. If you already own a rabbit, the information here will still be valuable. We will then discuss what you need to know after purchasing your first animal.

## **Where should I buy my rabbit?**

To an extent, the answer to this question may vary depending upon why you want a rabbit (pet, show, meat, etc.). We will discuss the only two good options (shelter or reputable breeder) and expand upon the pros and cons. We will discuss the two options which should be avoided at all costs (pet store or backyard breeder).

### 1. Animal Shelter:

If you are very sure you want a rabbit as a *pet only*, adopting a rabbit is a good option. The bad (and good) news is that rabbits are not abandoned as often as dogs and cats. Therefore, finding a rabbit to adopt may be a challenge depending upon where you live. While adopting is a great thing, you need to realize you will not know the background and history of your animal.

If there is any chance (even remotely) you may want to show your rabbit (even if it would just be in 4-H), adopting is not a good option. Show animals must be purebred and pedigreed, which you will not find at a shelter. Show rabbits need to be purchased from a reputable breeder.

### 2. Reputable breeder:

Purchasing rabbits from a breeder is a great option for anyone regardless of why you want a rabbit in your life. Whether you want a pet, 4-H animal, meat animal or a rabbit that will win big nationally – a breeder is a great option for finding a healthy, wonderful animal that will fit your needs.

Raising rabbits the correct way is not a money making hobby (far from it). A reputable breeder is concerned with furthering their breed, not making a profit. Good breeders are people that love animals. They want to raise healthy, happy, high quality animals.

A reputable breeder will want their animals to go to the right people. They will not try to make a "quick sale." A responsible breeder will have knowledge about their animals (and rabbits in general) that others will not and will be happy to share that knowledge with you. In the next section we will discuss how to find a reputable breeder.

### 3. Pet store:

This is *never* a good option. Pet stores are a business and are concerned primarily with making a profit. Pet stores get their supply of rabbits from various sources. Some may come from good breeders, but most come from people interested in selling cute baby rabbits for a quick profit. Some unethical individuals have been known to sell animals that are ill or have other issues to pet stores. The individuals working at these stores are not experts. They notoriously are bad at accurately determining the sex of rabbits. They also often tightly house animals of various genders together, which may mean you end up with a pregnant animal.

One important note: pet store rabbits are rarely worth the price. Often, you can find a good show rabbit for the same price (or lower) from a breeder. Why may more money for an animal with a questionable background?

### 4. Backyard breeder:

Again, this is *never* a good option. Essentially a backyard breeder is a pet owner that breeds their animals. They likely do not keep pedigrees. They very likely are not members of professional organizations such as the American Rabbit Breeders Association. Many times these are people who just want to breed their pets "for fun" or perhaps to try to make some extra money. Below we will discuss how to find a reputable breeder and how to avoid backyard breeders.

## **How do I find a reputable breeder?**

There are several different ways to find breeders. For those with internet access, the search is especially easy. You can visit the American Rabbit Breeders Association website at: <http://www.arba.net>. The website has a list of all recognized breeds and the link to the speciality club for those breeds. You can browse the breeds that interest you. Many of the breed specific clubs have websites with breeder directories. If they do not, you can contact the club secretary directly for breeder recommendations in your area.

Using the ARBA website, you can also search for shows in your area. Anyone is more than welcome to come by any rabbit show. This is a great opportunity to see breeders of

many different breeds in their element. Most breeders are wonderful and are more than happy to help people who approach them. Shows are a great learning opportunity.

If you do not have internet access, the American Rabbit Breeders Association can be contacted via phone at: 309-664-7500. They can help direct you to local clubs or breeders in your area. You may also find it helpful to search in your phonebook for your local 4-H extension office. The 4-H leader of the local rabbit club should be able to help direct people to local breeders as well.

Once you have located a breeder, it is important to decide if that breeder is reputable.

Things to look for or ask the breeder:

1. Is the rabbitry registered with the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA)?
2. Is the breeder a member of the ARBA?
3. Do they belong to other rabbit related clubs (local, state or breed specific)?
4. How long has the breeder raised rabbits?
5. What records does the breeder keep? Pedigrees are a must, but the breeder should keep other data as well (litter records, show results, etc.).
6. Does the breeder show? If the breeder has a website, are the results available online?
7. Does the breeder register their animals with the ARBA? Pedigrees prove the rabbit's ancestry, not quality. Registration is a sign of quality.
8. Does the breeder seem willing to help you determine if their rabbits are a good fit for you? Is the breeder happy to answer questions?
9. If you visit the rabbitry – are the cages clean? Are the animals well taken care of? The set up does not need to be "fancy" or "pretty," as long as the animals are living in clean conditions.
10. Does the breeder act professionally? Is the website professional (if applicable)? Although raising rabbits is not a business for most breeders, it is still important that breeders act as professionals.

This is by no means all the possible questions you may wish to ask the breeder. These are only a few.

### **Contact us:**

Kelly & Peter Flynn

e-mail: [blueribbonrabbitry@gmail.com](mailto:blueribbonrabbitry@gmail.com)

website: <http://www.blueribbonrabbitry.com>