

RABBIT PRODUCTION IN DENMARK

J.Fris Jensen

National Institute of Animal Science, Rolighedsvej 25,
1958 Frederiksberg C., DENMARK

In Denmark the rabbit production has in the last decades been characterised by a rather great fluctuation in the quantity of the meat and the wool produced. Regarding the two productions the maximum amounts were until now about 1950, due to good possibilities of export.

PRESENT SITUATION

With regard to production, it includes both meat and wool whereas the fur production is not of any significance. The two first categories are to a great extent dependent on the situation at the export market. The production is situated in small units, and the producers perform it mostly as a "side-line".

As to the meat production, Danish White Landrace is the dominant one. In some cases it is used in crosses with other breeds like CALIFORNIAN and FLEMISH GIANT or it act as part of a line breeding programme. The production units are usually not big enough to utilize an organized breeding programme. The preferred weight at slaughter is 2.75 kg live weight.

Wool production is based on White Angora the males of which participate in an official performance test carried out with the capacity of about 230 pieces per year.

SPORTS BREEDING

The sport breeding is well organized within the "Danish Rabbit Breeder's Organisation" that as a main responsibility has to arrange exhibitions both on a local basis and a national basis and furthermore it was the organizer of the European exhibition. For the evaluation of the rabbits the organization arranges courses with regard to official referees and participate also in publishing Scandinavian Standard for rabbits.

RABBIT AS "MODEL ANIMAL"

At the experimental station for rabbits, especially the Danish White Landrace lines are used as model animals; in some experiments in cooperation with departments for pigs and cattle. It should also be mentioned that rabbits are used in the pharmaceutical industry and in research work in human medicine.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The research activities are situated at research station SKOVVANG being a part of the National Institute of Animal Science. The breeding populations consists of 50 does of the Danish White Landrace, 30 does of the White Angora, and a small group of Castor Rex, i.e. in total 1,800 animals are slaughtered each year.

In general it has been the purpose of the nutrition experiments to investigate the possibilities of utilizing Danish produced foodstuffs such as rape seed meal and peas. Another important area is the investigations concerning Round-Up, Cerone, and Reglone, all products used by plant breeders, to enlighten if those products exert any influence on the quality of the foodstuffs used in compound feed for animals. The project is a part of a cooperation project including pigs and cattle, and the rabbits are used as the model animals with regard to reproduction especially.

Some experimental work has been carried out in cooperation with the research department for roughage production to test

the effects of various methods to ensile crops, testing of the effect of nitrogen on the nutritional quality of rape seed leaves harvested from winter rape fields in the autumn, when hares and other animals are dependent on feed from such fields.

CONNECTION BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Connection and interaction between practice and research is very important to the activities at the station, and a committee is working as advisory group. The members of the committee are e.g. from "Danish Rabbit Breeder's Organisation", "Committee for Improvements of Rabbit Production", and "National Institute of Animal Science". The two first mentioned organisations contribute economical support to the running of the station.

The advisory group is also including a representative from the extension service for rabbit production to secure that the results obtained will be utilized in practice.

PUBLICATIONS

The "Danish Rabbit Breeder's Organisation" publishes a monthly journal, and the reports of the research station are issued in the publication series of the "National Institute of Animal Science".

