

RABBIT PRODUCTION IN CHINA

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The history of rabbit rearing in China could be traced back to as early as to 1,200 years ago. Because it is thought that the rabbit is the symbol of peace, good and lucky, people like to keep it as pet animal.

Early in 20's a number of Angora rabbits were imported from England, France and Japan. The first rabbitry was founded in Shanghai in 1932. It was owned by professor Huan Wen Feng, former president of Jiangsu Agricultural College. Since 1970 the majority of Angora rabbits were imported from Germany.

The rabbit wool was exported since 1954. About 3000-5000 tons of rabbit wool were exported annually subsequently and more than 7000 tons of rabbit wool were delivered to the international market in some years.

Most Chinese people, except in Sichuan (Szechuan) province, have no custom to eat rabbit meat, so the rabbit meat produced is mainly for export. The exportation of rabbit meat began from 30 years ago. The amount of rabbit meat exported is about 40,000 tons annually. The districts where produce the rabbit meat are well-equipped with facilities for meat processing and freezing.

In general, the total number of different breeds of rabbit kept in China is as many as thousand millions. They are unevenly distributed in 26-27 provinces. The wool rabbits are mostly spread in the provinces along the southeast coast and the meat-type breeds are largely raised in northern, north-western provinces and Shandong (Shantung) province.

A Chinese Angora strain was developed early in 1950's. It can grow well under a poor feeding condition and has a fairly well reproductive performance. However the average wool yield is about 300g. It was discovered recently in our laboratory that the wool fiber of Chinese Angora has more crimps than that of all European breeds. A new strain, called Tanghang Wool Rabbit, was formed in the suburb of Shanghai several years ago. It was a hybrid of Chinese Angora crossed with German Angora. It possesses both advantages of Chinese and German Angora rabbits. The wool yield is nearly 1,000g.

The diets used for rabbits in most districts are mixed mash. The pellets are also used in a small area. In addition, a lot of local agricultural by-products are utilized as feedstuff in different provinces.

AI is widely used in rabbit reproduction. The conception rate of frozen semen is about 70% or more. The embryo transfer in rabbits is also practiced successfully. The "summer infertility" in Angora rabbits is a problem in some areas where the temperature is above 30 degrees C in hot summer weather. *

In addition to the regular medical treatment it is also successfully to cure common diseases with Chinese traditional medicine and acupuncture.

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