



Roy Inson, market rabbit producer, moves two six week old New Zealand rabbits to a new pen away from their mother.



Disinfecting new pens in his barely completed rabbitry, Roy Inson, well-known Quarterhorse man and now commercial rabbit breeder, plans for more than six thousand New Zealand rabbits to occupy his Acton farm.

Roy Inson

From Quarter horses to Easter rabbits

by Jennifer Barr
Easter and rabbits go together and one Acton area resident who has more than his share of Easter symbols is Roy Inson.

Formerly of Georgetown, Inson, a well-known Quarter horse breeder and show judge, is now in the market rabbit business.

At the moment he has roughly 1,600 New Zealand whites and is heading for 6,000.

Why did Roy Inson go into rabbits after a lifetime with horses? Call it "How to make a living on 50 acres," Roy chuckles.

There's still horses on the Inson farm, the famous Quarter horse stallion Sugar Joe Reed and approximately 16 mares and youngsters.

Roy feels his 50 acres Maple Meadows Farm is easier to maintain than the 100 acres Wynfield farm he had in Georgetown. He and wife Joan are delighted with their new establishment just north of Acton.

However, with lesser acreage and an overall slowdown in the horse market, Roy looked to rabbits to help him earn a living.

"Rabbits put me through college," Roy explains, referring to the years he raised and showed the finest New Zealand Reds in the country.

With consumer interest in rabbits rising, it's possible to make a comfortable living out of five to six hundred does.

Rabbits reach marketable weight, five pounds, in eight to 12 weeks. Does have five litters a year (Roy's are having more) with an average of eight rabbits per litter. Gestation is a month long.

Add up those mathematics and it's easy to see how a producer can make a comfortable living even though he receives a mere 75 cents a pound live weight compared to \$2.85 per pound in retail stores.

Large rabbitry nearing completion it takes investment of time and dollars to set up a rabbit business and Roy has spent the last year doing just this.

He now has a large 42

foot by 140 foot rabbitry building nearing completion behind his horse barn. The new building is ventilated, heated, has an automatic manure handling system, an automatic watering system and is environmentally controlled. "It's spring all year round."

A thousand rabbits are living in temporary pens in the new building and will be joined by the remaining rabbits lining the walls of extra box stalls in the horse barn as soon as Roy has his pens completed.

Assisted by the Inson youngsters, Bruce, Judi, and Lee, Roy and Joan have been building the brood stock from a nucleus of excellent stock Roy was able to buy from a Quebec breeder. "I got lucky," Roy says.

His rabbits are now some of the best producers in the province. Standard for New Zealand bucks is 10 pounds; Roy's are 11 to 11½ pounds. His does reach 12 pounds at maturity.

His young New Zealand

rabbits are going to market at eight weeks, fully up to weight and are dressing out at 60 per cent when the average is much lower (from 47 to 63 per cent).

Breeding for improvement

Most market producers don't get into selling breeding stock but Roy wants to combine both and has already done well at the shows where he's entered market classes. His breeding stock is in considerable demand, proving it's possible to combine breed improvement with market production.

His improved breed gives him one headache—his does are large enough to breed at four months of age (eight pounds) but there are too young to become mothers!

A doe is usually in production for three years. Bucks are used "till they quit".

Inson goes through nearly a ton of rabbit pellets a week, also feeding hay for bulk. When his

rabbitry is up to capacity he'll be using three times the feed.

Rabbits are watched carefully for common health problems such as ear mites, sore hocks or scours. Medicated water is fed periodically through the automatic watering system. Market rabbits are on a separate water line and so receive no medication, as per meat regulations.

Inson ships all his rabbits through one of the eight provincial government packing houses. Over 400,000 rabbits were processed last year as rabbit becomes a more

popular dish.

Restaurants feature rabbit as gourmet fare now. Even with rabbits becoming more popular and marketable the

producer has market problems.

apprehensive, but in fairness to business, settled on the 6 a.m. time. He explained there would be strict supervision of the hours by town staff who would report on any abuses. He said the police will be asked to increase their level of enforcement of the bylaw.

Pomeroy said reports would go to Indusmin if trucks start earlier, and pointed out the company has the power to cut off any truckers who abuse the time.

Miller said residents are afraid the truck traffic will be on the roads before six, and said

the town and police have to make every effort to ensure that does not happen.

Last week Indusmin, truckers and union representatives said the 7 a.m. starting time would create a hardship since most jobs want the material on site by seven, and warned it could make Indusmin less competitive.

The mayor doubted if the residents would be satisfied, but stated

Trucks back to 6 a.m. start

Trucks can again run on 17 Sideroad and the Fourth Line starting at six in the morning.

Monday night Halton Hills council, bowing to pressure from Indusmin, the independent truckers and the union, voted to amend the bylaw which set 7 a.m. as the starting time for truck traffic.

Mayor Pete Pomeroy reporting on a meeting with the company truckers, representatives of residents in the area, and Councillors Russ Miller and George Maltby, said the truckers wanted no bylaw at all, and the residents were

found a small orange shell, similar to a shotgun shell, to turn it over to police. The shells, explosives belonging to Canadian National Railways, are activated if struck a sharp blow.

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morning was valuable since there is less traffic on the road. They also pointed out the 7 a.m. start put trucks on the roads at the same time as school buses.

Councillor Harry Levy asked if council could assume the residents would not be back complaining.

The residents would be satisfied, but stated

"Somewhere a decision has to be made. The 7 a.m. start could put local businesses in jeopardy. The trucking industry has been in operation in Halton Hills a long time, before the people on the road. That's as clear as I can be and as fair as I can be to both sides."

Maltby claimed if the trucking industry did not help police itself he would support a move to block the road off completely.

Police seek explosives

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