

Raising And Marketing Exotic Animals For Profit

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Raising And Marketing Exotic Animals For Profit

This business of raising and selling rare or unusual animals, where both expenses and profits are much bigger than normal. Llamas, angora rabbits, mink, pheasant, snakes, bullfrogs, spiders and miniature horses are but a few of the possibilities in this large category.

Which animals you raise will of course be influenced by your own preferences, the facilities you can provide, where you live, and of course the market in your area. You can go into this business from a hobby or just go out and buy a pair of whatever animals you would like to raise.

The primary advantage to "exotic" rather than regular animals is income potential. Raising ordinary rabbits requires far less investment in breeding stock, facilities, care and time than expensive, pedigreed angoras.

However, when its time to market ordinary rabbits, they are worth perhaps two to five dollars each. Pedigreed angoras would be worth many times that, especially if they had a blue ribbon winner in their ancestry.

With a \$100 animal, you have an incentive to provide the best care and living conditions and call that \$25 per hour veterinarian at the first hint of trouble.

A litter of ordinary rabbits would represent about \$50; angoras, say \$500. Needless to say, you have an incentive to invest more in care of the more valuable investment.

The first step after deciding upon an animal that would fit your situation is to learn all you can about that animal. Study its habits, feed and shelter requirements and learn something about diseases or genetic problems that might affect your ability to properly care for them.

Although there is a good profit potential expensive animals require more care and closer attention than ordinary farm stock or pets... It would be very good idea to discuss your plans with a veterinarian before going too far. Find out about normal health problems, which ones you can treat, the cost of preventive care (and the cost of veterinary treatment).

If you are not already equipped (facilities and experience), it would be a good idea to begin with "ordinary" animals of the type you plan to raise. Raise these until you are ready to progress to more expensive, exotic breeds.

In other words, learn and make any mistakes with \$5 animals, not \$50-\$100! But be very careful when you change over. It is imperative to keep pedigreed and ordinary animals apart to prevent inter-breeding. It is just as important to prevent the spread of diseases borne by ordinary species, which are unusually much more disease resistant.

Before placing your expensive, exotic breeds in quarters formerly occupied by ordinary animals, take special precautions. Clean and treat the areas thoroughly so your prized exotics can get started in clean, disease and pest free living conditions.

Study potential diseases of the animals you select. Learn how to prevent and even treat as many problems as you can. You don't want to pay expensive veterinarian fees for things you can take care of (or prevent) yourself.

Consider the weather in your area -- will you need heaters or cooling for the animals you plan to raise?

How about feed or bedding materials? Check with feed stores on the various types of feed (some have added vitamins and/are medically treated).

Can you raise any of these things yourself or make a deal with a nearby farmer to at least augment feeding costs?

When you have decided upon the animals you plan to raise, and have learned of their care and habits, it is time to start building pens, sheds and feeding areas.

Pay particular attention to safety of your charges (as well as neighbors, if applicable) Birds, for example, not only need wire cages to keep them in; they need strong wire to keep any predators out.

This may include snakes that only 1/4 inch wire mesh about three feet can repel. Also, take special care to arrange your pens or cages so the animals will not be frightened or excited by their surroundings, which could interfere with their development or well-being. In some cases, it will be necessary to fence off a buffer zone, build a solid fence or plant a hedge to make sure your animals feel secure.

The exotic animal business will probably take time to build, but can be especially rewarding for someone who is fond of animals.

Subscribe to a good trade journal and look into joining an association of people interested in the same or similar animals.

Attend shows and fairs and enter your prize animals --not only for the prize money, but for the recognition and prestige it will

afford your business. A blue ribbon will change a \$20 rabbit into a \$200 rabbit instantly! Even the descendants of the the prize rabbit will be worth more; especially if they are registered.

Exotic animals are raised for many different reasons -- as pets, for their fur, wool, or feathers or food, as oddities for special purposes or many combinations thereof.

Some of the businesses are quite unique: a man in California raises tarantulae and "rents" them to jewelry stores. He delivers them at closing time, places a large warning sign in the window and picks them up each weekday morning. It seems break-ins have dropped drastically in stores with "guard-tarantuals"!

Spiders are also raised for their webs (science labs use them); snakes for their venom (used to make snake bite serum). The business of raising laboratory mice is also very lucrative -- thousands are purchased by science centers every year.

For more ideas on exotic animals you might want to raise, check out some books in the library and do some research; check with discount book stores; exotic animal magazines, and spend some time with a good encyclopedia. If you decide to get into the exotic animal business, pick an animal you like and respect -- then treat it as something special. Not only is this right, it a sound business principle.

If you want to get exotic prices for you exotic animals (or products), "showcase" them as something special! Keep them and their area in top condition. Let everyone see that your animals are special (and valuable).

BUSINESS SOURCES

ALLEN PUBLISHING CO.,1338 Allen Park Dr.,Salt Lake City, UT. 81405. Publishes PHEASANT FANCIERS AGRICULTURAL GAZETTE for bird raisers.

KREMMERS PRESS, Box 22, Fair Lawn, NJ 07140. Publishes AMERICAN SMALL STOCK FARMER for breeders of rabbits and other small animals.

JOLLY-G RABBITRY, 13202 Cozzens, Chino, CA 91790. Wholesale rabbits, supplies.

R/C MODLEERS CORP. 144 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.,Sierra Madre, CA 91024. Publishes FRESHWATER MARINE AQUARIUM for the fish raising trade.

STROMBERG'S Pine River 59, MN 56474. Poultry, chicks, swans,

peacocks, etc.

AMERICAN PIGEON JOURNAL, 220 E. Main St., Warranton, MO 63383,,
314/456/2122. Publication for pigeon raisers and dealers.

H.H. BACKER ASSOCIATES, 207 Wabash Ave., Chicago, IL 60606,
312/663-4040. Publishes GROOM & BOARD and PET AGE, trade
magazines for pet groomers and dealers.

DADANT & SONS, INC., Hamilton, IL 62341. Publishes AMERICAN BEE
JOURNAL for bee keepers.

JACK SHERCK & ASSOCIATES, 210 NW 10th St., Abilene, KS 67410,
800/645-0028. Information on raising racing greyhounds in 14
states, investors and partners.

HARCOURT BRACE JOBANOVICH PUBLICATIONS, 1 E 1st St., Duluth, MN
55802, 218/723-9303. Publishes monthly PETS/SUPPLIES/MARKETING
for livestock and pet suppliers, pet retailers and pet food
manufacturers. World's largest textbook company. Publishes many
other trade journals.

SHOW RING MAGAZINE, Box 1399, Albany, TX 76430, 915/762-2242.
Monthly magazine about animal shows, farm livestock sales and the
purebred industry.

LLAMAS, Box 325, Herald, CA 95638. Bimonthly magazine on raising
and breeding of llamas. Has classified ad section. Sample \$4.

QUILL CORPORATION, 100 Schelter Rd., Lincolnshire, IL 60917-4700,
312/634-4800.

IVEY PRINTING, Box 761, Meridan, TX 76665. Low priced letterhead
and envelopes.

ZPS, Box 581, Libertyville, IL 60048-2556. Raised print business
cards and letterhead. Will print your copy ready logo or design,
even whole card.

WALTER DRAKE, 4119 Drake Bldg., Colorado Springs, CO 80940. Short
run business cards, stationery. Good quality, but no choice of
ink.