



Raising Backyard Meat Rabbits

Transcript – Module 7

Thank you for joining me for module seven and this is the module that we're going to step you through harvesting that rabbit. All that hard work will have paid off and we're gonna first show you how to most humanely dispatch a rabbit. And then step by step we're going to show you how to butcher one and I will leave a note in the resources outlining each step that we go through. So, you can just print that out and you can take it out with you when you're harvesting your first rabbit and you can just follow the instructions step by step. I wish I had had that when I harvested my first rabbits. Having said all this, if it's going to bother you to see a video where we're going to be harvesting an animal for human consumption, then you need to not watch this video. So well, let's dive back into the adventure of raising backyard rabbits.

What you're going to want to do before you harvest is set up a little harvesting station here and what you want to have here is just ... I just did a board so I could lay things on close to where I was going to harvest. And the first thing you're going to want to have your hose on and have the spray nozzle so you can just shut that off whenever you want; you need to, and then you're going to need, of course, a sharp knife. I asked for this for Christmas. I don't know many women that ask for one of these for Christmas, but I'm so glad I got it. And then you're going to need something that's gonna cut through bone. So, you're going to need some good loppers. Anything that'll cut through bone. And then you're going to need just a towel to wipe your hands with and just a bowl to put your innards in, to put your organ meat in.

Alright, and then you're going to want to fill your ice chest with ice and water because this is where you're going to put your meat once you've harvested. Alright, and then you're going to want to set up a station on some sort of hanging, you know, you want to get 'em on a hang rope somehow to hang your rabbit. So, this is ... I've chosen an old clothesline pole for mine and we will, in just a minute, we'll show you how to set this up and how to tie these knots to slip around the rabbit's legs. Alright, and the last thing; you're going to want a bucket for everything else to go in that you don't want and for the blood to go in. So. Alright, let me show you how to tie these knots.

Alright, we're going to put our ropes up. I use an old clothesline pole like I told you and you just want them spread apart about this much, about a hand width. And then my boys, my Eagle Scout son is gonna walk me through these knots cause he usually does this part for me. Alright, what do I do? Alright, so you're gonna take the snake and make a tree. That's a nice tree. That's a real nice tree. I like that. Alright, get more snake on the end of the tree. Okay. There you go, there you go. Alright, now you're gonna run the snake through the loop. Okay. Right. Yeah, beautiful. Do it again one more time. Yeah. Through the loops two times. Now you're going to take that extra snake. You're gonna take it on the end side of the loop and you're gonna put the head of the snake, you're gonna stick it in the hole. Okay. That's right, like that. Beautiful. Yeah, so we tie the little beast to the clothes lines. So, then it goes ... I'm trying to do one.

There we go. Okay, it goes up and down. There we go. Okay. [inaudible] Alright, so it goes up and down so we can slip the rabbits, foot in there and then just cinch it down and we'll be ready. Okay, let me do the other side. See if I can do this. Okay. So, I'm gonna make a tree. Get more snake on the end of the tree. Okay. Alright. And then I'm gonna go keep it in the loop. Go around once, go round twice. There you go. Then I'm going to take it on the out ... take it on the outside of the loop and see I made that little hole there. I'm going to stick it through the hole. Stick the snake in the hole.

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Stick the snake in the hole. That's right and then I'm going to tighten it up a little bit and then it's going to go up and down. Alright, and there we have it. Now we're ready for a rabbit and here comes the hard part.

Okay, so I've got my rabbit, and this is just hard. It's just always hard for me; very hard. So, and I guess that's good that it continues to bother me, but you know, this rabbit's had a good life and been treated humanely and my kid's full tummies are so important to me, so just got to put on my big girl pants and get this done. So, what you're gonna do is you want to use a stone and some sort of stick, like a broomstick would do, you want to use this stone, so the rabbit just doesn't press down into the soft earth. You want this to be quick and as quick as possible. Alright, so we're gonna put the rabbit down on the stone right there. Oh, just put it, put this on either side of its ... just on the back of its head there, back of its neck there. And then I'm going to stand on the stick and just pull up hard as I can, and I hear the neck break. So, the rabbit's already dead now. It is going to move around some, this is what happens when an animal dies.

So, I'm just going to hold it here until the death throes are over. Trust me that it is dead and my kids have actually helped me harvest before because you know what, I would never force a child to do anything like that, but I did want them to know where their meat came from; I want them to know that an animal was sacrificed so that they could eat. That is important to me. So, and how was that animal treated and how much work and care goes into that animal that they're going to have on their plate later. So, it is important. So, and all my kids have witnessed it and they wanted to, I would never make somebody do that that, you know, wasn't willing. So, I think it was important. It was a good lesson for everyone in the family. Alright, so let's go hang this rabbit up in the knots that we just made.

So, we're going to put the rabbit's feet in there and just tighten our knot just right under the ankle bone there so it's good and secure. And then we're going to cut the neck to bleed it out. And I'm just going to pinch the back here. Pinch the skin on the back here and just cut the neck on either side right here. And then you want to take your hose and you want to wet the pelt down because the fur just sticks if you don't everywhere. So, you want to get that for a nice and wet. Ooh, Ooh, my bucket. You want to get that for a nice and wet all over.

The next cut we're gonna make is right here, just below the rope. I'm just going to pinch a little skin and I'm going to barely cut, I'm gonna make a very shallow cut all the way around that, cut right there. I'm just basically trying to cut the skin. I don't want to cut any muscle or ligament or anything; all the way around. I'm just going to pinch and cut shallow cuts. Here we go and then I'm gonna kinda cut down the skin right here to give myself some slack. I'm gonna pull down on that leg, the skin off of that leg. The skin back there it's still hanging on. Here we go. Alright, just uncover that whole leg and then I'm going to do the same thing on the other side. Just going to pull down and I didn't quite get it wet enough so that hair's getting everywhere. Okay. I'm going to rinse off in just a minute. Rinse that hair off.

Okay, and then I'm gonna just pinch right here. I'm gonna kinda just cut right there so I can get ahold of this area. There we go. I'm going to cut, just cut up there. Oh, trouble. Alright, I'm just going to take everything back to the back here; the tail to the back and I'm just gonna cut it right off. Alright, now I'm gonna stop. Sometimes the meat kind of quivers so that's never fun, but just keep going. Alright, now I'm going to stop and cut off the head. Cut off the whole head here and this is when my cutters are gonna come in handy to cut that bone. Make sure that bone is cut and then I can cut it off, I think. There we go and in the bucket it goes. Alright, now I'm just going to pull down on the pelt. It's kind of sticking here. Alright, and you have to pull hard and it's just gonna come right off. There you go. You want to pull it down all the way to the end of the legs. Then I'm just going to cut these legs.

At this point, if you want to save the pelt for tanning, you can freeze it, but just be warned; the pelt of young rabbits is very thin. It really doesn't make a very good pelt. I didn't know that before I got rabbits, but if you wanted to save one of your adult rabbit pelts, then that would be better for tanning. Alright, I'm going to just rinse it off again. So, I just made a slit right here and then just separated with my fingers and then I'm just going to zip it right down, holding it away from the organs because I don't want to cut into those organs. Here we go. Okay, and then we're gonna come up here and

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the first thing you're going to see is the bladder sack. See the full bladder and we're just gonna pinch that and cut it off. And then I'm going to take ... I'm just going to find the intestine, the end of the intestine right here. I'm just going to pinch it. Oh, get all this out of the way. Okay, so you guys can see, I'm just going to pinch it somewhere here and I'm just going to cut it. Let's see. I can see it's got some feces in there. So, let me just pull it down. Okay, here we go, and I am just gonna let the organs just come out and here are your kidneys. This rabbit has quite a bit of fat on it, man. Alright, there's one kidney; a lot of fat and there's the other kidney. I'm going to put them in my bowl for the dog and then here your livers right here. Cut that ... cut that a little ways, but here's your liver; one part of your liver. Here is the other lobe of the liver. I'm just gonna get that liver off. I'm gonna pull it off. Here we go and I'm gonna show you something on the liver. This is called the bile sack and the easiest way to do that is you're gonna set it down here, over here on the cutting board. And I'm just going to pinch it and just going to remove it without cutting it into it.

I'm just going to cut it off that liver cause I did not want that. Alright, and then I'm going to take a look at the liver cause this is how you tell your rabbit is healthy and doesn't have any Coccidiosis. So, no ... if you saw white like white pussy things, that would be indication that your rabbit had Coccidiosis. You can still eat the meat, it's fine, but it's just good to see a healthy liver there. I'm going to put that in my organ meat bowl too and then back to the rabbit. Here is just the diaphragm. You can see that. So, you're just going to punch through the diaphragm and just kind of pull down. Sometimes you have to cut it. Here we go and that's going to uncover the lungs. So here your lungs, those are going to need to come out. What I'm gonna do now is just break this rib cage. So, I'm going to pull this up and let it go into the bucket. Yeah. Alright, I'm just going to cut down on break this rib cage right here. Oops. Alright, just open this up and get the all the lungs out and the heart. There's the heart and I'm just going to save that for the dog too. I'll put it in my organ bowl. You could cook the heart and the liver if you want to.

Alright, just totally opened that up. Just going to cut some flesh off here. Okay, I'm going ... we're going to come up here and I'm just going to crack this open. Open that up. Okay, I'm just gonna cut this open here. There we go. There we go. That's better and I'm just gonna cut on either side here to get that ... the last of that rectum out. Okay. I have a little bit left there. Needs to be cleaned out so I'm just going to cut on either side. Try not to [inaudible] in the meat. There we go. Right. The first rabbit of the season usually goes pretty slowly and then you pick up speed as you go, so they all don't take so long. Okay comes the final rinse off.

Alright, and then you're just gonna cut the ankles right here. This is when you, I'll leave that attached a little bit so I can get this one. This is when you need another pair of hands. If you can get somebody to do the butchering with you, especially somebody who's done it before your first time. That is really nice. I definitely didn't, did not do it alone my first time. My boys helped me. Alright, and there you've got it. You'll be proud of all your hard work caring for that animal. Alright, it's all cleaned out and we're gonna put it in the ice chest full of water and ice and rigor mortis sets in. So, we're going to leave it in there for about eight hours and then put it, you can put it in bags in the fridge. Just let the meat rest and the stiffness will come out.

Alright, well that is all about how to harvest a rabbit. One thing about the unsavory stuff in the bowl and left in the bucket. You don't want your daughter to look in the bucket. Let's just say that right now. She might not ever eat rabbit meat again. Just speaking from personal experience, but your dog really can have most of that. Even the pelt, believe it or not. So, you can feed your that to your dog. What I do with it is I put it in my black soldier fly bin and that's a whole nother video, but they eat it right up and then the black soldier fly larvae come out for my chickens right into the mouths of my chickens so, it cuts down on my chicken feed. So that's what I do with it.

Thank you for joining me for module seven. I hope now that you're more confident about that harvest day and now try to get help, especially if it's your first time, if not for moral support, just another pair of hands is nice but if you can find somebody who's done something like that before, that is really the best thing. But if not, don't worry, you've got this. Just print out the step by step instructions I left for you in the resources and just follow each step. You can do this. And

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then we went over how to set up your station and you want that ice chest full of icy water, cold water. And then of course a sharp knife, some sort of tool to cut that bone and then a bucket is good for catching everything that you don't want. And then your hose with that sprayer to rinse off whenever you need to and went down that pelt.

I hope you enjoyed our knot tying demonstration with my great Eagle Scouts when we taught you how to do the taut line hitch to get that rabbit secured so that you can have an easy harvesting. We went over how to dispatch the rabbit. I showed that to you the most humane way. There are other ways, but I didn't even go over them because that's the only method I use because I feel like it's the quickest and most humane way. And you can also do it yourself if you need to. You don't need anyone else there to help you with that.

So, dispatching a rabbit is always hard. It just is. It gets easier. But I, I always kind of dread it coming up. It's always hard for me, but there are so many lessons to be learned. I feel like as a family we feel a lot differently now about the meat on our plate. We realize the care that went into that animal and then the life sacrificed. And I think if we would've asked our kids before we started raising animals, where does your food come from? They would have said the grocery store. And we would've said, well, where does it come from before that? And they would have said the back of the grocery store. I just think they didn't have that connection between the meat on their plate and that animal that was sacrificed and the care that went into it. So, that is a good lesson.

It's a good lesson for everyone and especially for kids. And then I think as a family we eat a lot less meat because of it. Now we're just eating those small meat portions and it's just to flavor the many vegetables that we have. So, join me again for module eight and we're going to learn how to cut up and portion that meat that you've got and what I use the meat for and then you're going to join me as I cook some of my favorite recipes. Well, let's get back together for module eight to learn more about raising backyard rabbits.