

Breeding by the Zodiac

By Patty Percy

Are your does kindling too many buck litters? Do your champion rabbits produce offspring that just doesn't measure up to your expectations? Are your rabbits placing lower on the show table than you anticipated? If you are working with fine healthy breeding stock and not getting the results that you are aiming for, maybe you need to look for the right sign – the right sign of the zodiac!

With over six thousand years of study and progressive findings to back them up, astrologers feel safe in claiming that the zodiac does have a direct affect on the happenings of the Universe and our lives, including breeding animals. These wise men are telling us that we do have an extent of control over the outcome of our litters in the rabbitry. It's believed that regular occurrences of certain factors (such as those found in litters of rabbits) are more than coincidental happenings.

In addition to astrological observations supporting the theory, reference to the idea is found in the Holy Bible.

Genesis 1:14 "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years."

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted."

To better understand the relationship between the zodiac and breeding, to improve you're herd of rabbits, some knowledge of how the zodiac was set up and how it works for us is most beneficial to the breeder considering the theory.

Ancient astronomers, studying the constellations, revealed that 12 of these groups of stars had formed an imaginary belt along the yearly path of the sun. Each constellation was referred to as a "sign" and named according to the star formation within it. With the exception of the sign of Libra, all the signs were named after living things, thus the belt became known as the zodiac or "zone of animals". Because it was believed that a close relationship existed between the zodiac and mankind, the 12 signs were named to correspond with the various parts of the human body.

Astrologers from all around adopted the findings of the astronomers and made use of the zodiac as a guide for their predictions. Everything from horoscopes to planting guides to fishing tables derived from studies of the zodiac.

Most folks are familiar with the zodiac associated with the months of the year, but actually, every day of the year is dominated by one of the signs of the zodiac. Each sign appears at least once a month, lasting for a two or three day interval. The dominating sign corresponds to the constellation that is foremost in the sky at the time. The signs always appear in a sequence that begins with Aries, the head sign and ends with Pisces, the feet sign. When the sequence reaches Pisces, it starts all over again with Aries.

Each sign carries with it certain characteristics. It is either masculine or feminine, airy, dry, barren, fiery, earthy, moist, watery, productive, or very productive (fruitful). The following chart lists the characteristics that pertain to each of the 12 signs. These characteristics will be the basis for designing a breeding program that relates to the zodiac's revelations.

Aries: head sign – fiery, dry, barren, masculine
-mostly bucks, not the best quality

Taurus: neck sign – earthy, moist, productive, feminine
-mostly does, good quality

Gemini: arms sign – airy, dry, barren, masculine
-mostly bucks, not the best quality

Cancer: breast sign – watery, very productive, feminine
-mostly does, best quality

Leo: heart sign – fiery, dry, barren, masculine
-mostly bucks, not the best quality

Virgo: bowels sign – earthy, dry, barren, feminine
-mostly does, not the best quality

Libra: veins sign – airy, moist, semi-productive, masculine
-mostly bucks, best quality

Scorpio: loins sign – watery, very productive, feminine
-mostly does, best quality

Sagittarius: thighs sign – fiery, dry, barren, masculine
-mostly bucks, not the best quality

Capricorn: knees sign – earthy, moist, productive, feminine
-mostly does, good quality

Aquarius: legs sign – airy, dry, barren, masculine
-mostly bucks, not the best quality

Pisces: feet sign – watery, very productive, feminine
-mostly does, best quality

To put the zodiac theory to work, it is essential to start with good foundation stock that is free from disease. This is true for any breeding program. Next, you will have to locate a calendar or chart that lists the dominating zodiac signs for each day. Many feed companies and farm stores put out calendars that have this information on them. *The Old Farmer's Almanac* contains a planting guide that I use. Only a calendar that corresponds to the current year may be used successfully. Each year the days are dominated by different signs.

Read back through the chart and familiarize yourself with each sign noting which are productive or very productive and either masculine or feminine. Signs that are very productive will give you the best litters. A feminine sign that is dry and barren will give you a litter primarily of does; however they won't be of the best quality. The gender of the sign indicates the gender that most of the offspring in the litter will be. The idea is to determine what type of litter you are breeding for and then find a sign that corresponds to your desires. Once you have the sign chosen, check the calendar or chart to determine which day that particular sign will dominate. If you want a mostly buck litter of good quality bucks you will need to breed your doe in the sign of Libra (the only masculine sign that is semi-productive; all other masculine signs are barren). When locating a day that is dominated by Libra, you will notice that the sign has a two or three day interval.

It's true that no method is ever fool proof and every rule has its exceptions. Nevertheless, if you follow the signs and breed your does accordingly, you will notice the pattern mentioned in the previous list evolve around your breeding program. Breeders across the country have indicated success with breeding by the zodiac signs. Many have reported significant results that breeding by the signs has enhanced the quality of their rabbits and has contributed to overall herd improvement.

If your does are kindling too many buck litters; if your offspring doesn't measure up to your expectations; if your show rabbits aren't placing as high as you would like them, maybe all you need to do is look for the right "sign".