

Below is a copy of info from Barbi Brown's website for the frustrated breeder which I have found is very helpful information for the new or experienced breeder. Good luck getting those show winners! Patty

Breeding for Dummies
By Patty Percy

IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR WAY TO BREED OR DO YOU JUST PUT THEM TOGETHER AND WAIT FOR BABIES?

Before breeding check the genitals of both rabbits to be sure they have no evidence of disease and that they are both clean.

ALWAYS put the doe in the buck's cage! Does are very protective about their cage and may harm the buck if he enters her territory.

It's best to breed early in the morning or late at night when the weather is cool in order to assure maximum sperm motility. Re-breed about 12 hours later. Even if the doe allows the buck to mount her the first time, she may not have actually released an egg yet so the second attempt should be successful. If she refuses the buck the second time, she may already be bred.

NEVER leave the buck in with the doe unattended. An aggressive doe can seriously injure a buck. Many breeders will leave a known non-aggressive doe in with the buck for 3 days to assure conception but it is not recommended unless you are experienced. Most does won't accept service again after being bred, but there are about 20 percent who will and can become impregnated again carrying MULTIPLE PREGNANCIES! Female rabbits have two horns of the uterus, which allows her to carry one pregnancy on one side and another on the other. If the breedings are more than three days apart; she will likely lose all the babies because they won't develop at the same rate or may be malnourished.

Many people think you have to take the buck out because he will kill the babies, but the reality is that the doe may hurt the buck when he continues to try to mount her after she's bred.

OBESITY

The most common reason I find is obesity. If you can't grab a loose handful of skin on her back, she's probably too fat and if she conceives may likely develop toxemia from the obesity. Fat builds up around the ovaries and chokes off the horn of the uterus.

A diet may improve her chances but it's not always easy (as people know) to change metabolism to make it burn fat. Begin by decreasing her normal feed ration by a couple of tablespoon's a day for two or three days. If she has been on free feed, continue until she is down to one ounce per pound of body weight. Then mix the pelleted feed with whole oats (not to exceed one ounce per pound). The oats will help burn calories without adding fat. Get fatso out in the house or yard for some exercise. If that's not possible, try putting a large block of wood or box in her cage between her food and water so she has to jump on or over the obstacle to get to her food.

CONDITION

The second likelihood is lack of condition caused by illness or improper nutrition. A doe with parasite infestation, pin worms, coccidiosis, fur mites or ear mites will be either thin, scruffy looking or listless. The same may be true from poor quality feed. She can't be expected to stay sleek and healthy on table scraps and occasional pellets. When in doubt about her condition,

check with your vet. He can worm her and treat for mites. The diet is up to you. Have you changed feed? Maybe she doesn't like the new feed or maybe it's just not as good as the old one.

SCENT (Preening) GLANDS

The third possibility is that the scent glands on either side of the vent opening have become encrusted with dried oil. The buck is generally less interested in a doe without functioning scent glands and the doe may actually have developed a staph infection from the oil irritating the delicate skin.

Clean the vent area with peroxide or soap and water. If it's red but not infected, a little Benadryl creme or Hemorrhoid creme will relieve the inflammation.

AGE

Maybe she's just too old! A two or three year old doe that has never been bred is a real challenge. It's likely she has been fat at some point in her life and the ovaries are choked off with fat accumulations. Unless it's important to keep the bloodline going with an old doe, you might want to reconsider the risks.

PLAYING "HARD-TO-GET"

Then there are those does that are picky about their choice of mates! Don't laugh! Many does will mate for life and when her chosen mate is gone, she's through producing! I have seen does who were willingly bred with one or two bucks but several others were a waste of time. There are some who seem to like the fourth or fifth buck tried in a morning or perhaps are just tired of saying no! In any event, don't give up if she doesn't like **your** first choice. She may just have different taste in men than you!

RETAINED FETUS

If you know the doe has been bred before or aren't sure, ask your vet or local breeder to palpate the doe for any retained fetus. Fetal resorption is nature's way of controlling the rabbit population. Rabbits have the ability to reabsorb the soft tissue of an unborn fetus during periods of inadequate nutrition or stress. The retained fetus is seldom toxic to the doe but may leave her unable to conceive again. I have seen does conceive and pass the mummified fetus along with a live litter.

If you have ruled out all of the above, check the color of the vaginal opening. If it is pale pink, all you can expect is that the buck will stimulate her to release an egg. She simply isn't going to cooperate right now. Wait 8 to 12 hours and check the color again. If it is bright pink or dark purple, she should be receptive. Her body is anyway, she just may not know it yet!

CIDER VINEGAR

If she is still unwilling, try putting a tablespoon of cider vinegar in a gallon of drinking water and use it as the sole source of water for a few days. Then try again.

RELOCATE

If there is more than one buck available, try moving her to a cage between the bucks for added stimulation. If you only have two rabbits, try changing their cages. Sometimes the different scent in the other's cage will help put them both in the mood.

GRAPE VINE TENDRILS

The tendrils from grape vines also seem to have a stimulating affect on quirk some does. Wheat germ added to the feed also seems to increase fertility in both bucks and does. There may be a possibility of a silent infection (one you just can't readily see) that's bothering her so if all else fails, try a course of water soluble Terramycin in her drinking water for a week or consider injectable antibiotics.

OH GREAT, NOW SHE'S WILLING AND HE'S NOT! NOW WHAT?

Bucks are not often unwilling but heat can certainly have a detrimental effect. The relocation technique is very effective especially on older bucks. Sometimes I put two bucks next to each other with the doe next to the buck that is unwilling. He is soon feeling compelled to protect her from the other potential suitor!

Wheat germ and vinegar are also helpful.

With old bucks I offer him two does at a time to spark his interest. It usually results in a mounting circle with buck on doe, doe on doe and doe on buck. Quite comical but effective. Checked his genitals to be sure he doesn't have a vent disease. If you see signs of inflammation or pustules on the penis or scrotum, treat with antibiotics and retry when you are **sure he is no longer infected**. Remember that vent disease is sexually transmitted and can leave some rabbits sterile.

HOW LONG ARE THEY PREGNANT?

Thirty to thirty-two days is the normal gestation period for a rabbit although first time does may hold out until thirty-four.