

## THE PUZZLE

If you think about it, putting together a breeding program is like building a puzzle. Always trying to find the right pieces which fit together to give you that perfect match. I believe it was Donnie Hornback who said “ IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT RABBIT “. Each of us as rabbit breeders are in search of the perfect rabbit. In our quest for this animal we are trying to find those pieces which will produce this elusive creature.

Your breeding program must start with a picture of the ideal New Zealand in your mind, this is very important as you begin to work this puzzle. To begin, you should breed animals which compliment each other, good points offsetting bad points. For example, if your does are weak shouldered, breed them to a buck with strong shoulders. Don't try to fix everything at one time, patience and discipline are the keys to success. Work on a couple of traits in each breeding and you will eventually get closer to your goal. There is not any doubt, that starting with quality animals will give you a quicker start on this puzzling task.

As your breeding program develops and you have erased major faults, you are ready for the next step. Like a puzzle, you will need to start your breeding program with a solid foundation or framework. You will hear the term line breeding and how this strategy of breeding closely related individuals will yield more uniformity and likeness in your offspring. This is true, but what a young breeder must understand is line breeding will enhance and express both good and bad traits. So having the right pieces in place at the start is very important before initiating this strategy. Even the best breeders continue to search for the right pieces, in hopes of finding that perfect rabbit. As breeding programs progress, the pieces to finish the puzzle become fewer and ironically tougher to find. Mother nature keeps things interesting, just when you think you have the puzzle figured out you find there are other pieces waiting to be discovered and the quest continues for the right piece to complete the puzzle.

I hope everyone is gearing up for the upcoming nationals at Greenville, Ohio. I know there will be many awesome rabbits. Stay warm and I look forward to seeing everyone in May.

Dave Mangione