

Lovin feeling

I have talked to several breeders the last few weeks that are experiencing problems with getting does to breed. It is not unusual to have breeding issues during the winter months. The shorter days and colder temperatures trigger this dormancy period in rabbits. It's just not normal for rabbits to have babies in the winter. It is not in Mother Natures plan to allow babies to arrive in weather that is not fit for man nor beast! Well, having said this we as humans are always looking for ways to fool Mother Nature and at times we can be successful. So if you want to have those winter litters, here are a few tricks.

We know that rabbits require at least 12 to 14 hours of light combined with temperatures above 50 degrees to get that lovin feeling. When using artificial lighting, you must use light that gives off 800 to 900 lumens of light. Heat lamp bulbs and grow lights should be the bulbs of choice. Once you have the right bulbs, then you will need a timer to turn your lights on and off in the rabbitry providing the 12 to 14 hours of light. Remember in addition to lighting it is critical to have a warm environment of at least 50 degrees. Light and temperature are important ingredients for this love potion to work. Some breeders have built special breeding rooms for the winter months that will house a buck and a few does at a time for out of season breeding. One other important ingredient is putting the doe and buck in adjoining pens with a wire divider allowing the two intending love birds to see each other and jump start those hormones.

A mistake commonly made is to offer continuous light, 24 hours a day. This practice will hurt that lovin feeling as well as not enough light. We want to increase daylight hours not go to total daylight. My best success has come from using heat lamps on a timer in a room set up to offer a warm environment with the buck and doe in close proximity to each other. In two to three days after increasing light and temperature that, be my valentine look will begin to appear and the does will become receptive to the buck. This recipe of light, temperature and sight is as critical for the bucks as well as the does. Steve Shafer one of our well known philosophers said "offering a little wine and soft music never hurts". Hey Steve, is that red or white wine? I hope these tips add success to your winter time breeding. I look forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming shows.

Be sure to mark the following dates on your calendar:

Spring New Zealand Show – Canton, Ohio – May 20, 2006

Fall New Zealand Show – Piketon, Ohio – November 18, 2006

Dave Mangione