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The Place Where Animal Lovers Come Together | Spring 2009

Featured Story

“Growth rate and overall conditioning is what we get when we purchase Purina® feeds.”
- Jana Camp, Purina® feeder

THIS QUARTER'S rabbit tips:



Breeding and Raising Rabbits This Spring



Product Spotlight

Featured Story | What it Takes to Raise Winners



“When looking for a feed, we look for all the right nutrients it takes to raise and breed winning livestock, and the growth rate and overall conditioning is what we get when we purchase Purina® feeds,” says Jana Camp from the small town of Laotto, Indiana. Jana, her husband Doug and their 5 boys Derek, Jacob, Nick, Joshua and Jordan share their small farm with 7 rabbits, about 20 chickens, a dog and a few cats! In addition, they also raise pigs and beef cattle in the summer months for showing in the fall of the year. Sons Jacob (17) and Joshua (14) have inherited their mother’s love of animals and enjoy showing them through their local 4-H club, of which Jana herself was a member for 10 years. “We have been very fortunate to have received a lot of awards with our animals over the years, about 30 or so trophies total!” she says. [> click to read more!](#)

Spring is in the Air!

With the warm spring breezes and the long awaited appearance of spring flowers come thoughts of what else but...bunnies! Many factors come into play when breeding and raising rabbits. Here are some tips to help you establish a successful breeding program whether you are breeding rabbits for the first time for a single litter or are a veteran breeder.



- Age and weight are two primary factors to consider when determining breeding readiness in rabbits. The average age for first time breeding in does is 5 months. Does should be healthy and of the ideal weight for her breed. Bucks usually are mature enough for breeding at 6 months of age. Smaller breeds will usually become sexually mature earlier than larger breeds. Breeding problems are most commonly due to bucks and does that are either underweight or overweight. When underweight, rabbits may be physically unable to breed successfully. Overweight rabbits on the other hand may not be interested in mating, and if they do mate, often have more difficulty becoming pregnant.
- A doe that is ready to be bred will exhibit a deep-red vulva. The doe should then be taken to the buck’s cage for breeding, which usually takes 5 minutes or less. The doe will normally ovulate 8-10 hours after breeding. Doe’s can be palpated 10-14 days after breeding to determine if pregnant. If not pregnant, the doe can be rebred.
- The normal gestation period for rabbits is 31 days. It is important to monitor the doe’s weight during this time so that she does not put on excess weight. Overweight does can have problems at kindling and problems rebreeding. A medium sized doe normally eats 3-5 oz per day. During gestation, this can be increased to 3-6 oz per day, adjusting the amount to maintain the desired weight.
- A clean nest box should be put in the cage at 28 days of gestation after cleaning and disinfecting the cage floor. Fill the box 2/3 full with bedding material such as straw, shavings, or hay and put in the cage to allow the doe time to build her nest. In warm weather, material that can be burrowed in should not be used.
- At kindling time, keep cage in a quiet area to reduce stress on the doe. Avoid handling nervous does and keep strangers and other animals away from cages. Once the doe kindles, keep a record of births and remove any mortalities from the nest. In big litters, extra kits (more than 8) can be fostered to other litters if available. Do this by first rubbing them with fur from the foster mother’s nest so she will accept and care for the kit as her own.
- Just after kindling, does should be fed less than their normal amount the first day (only 2-4 oz for a medium sized doe) to prevent caked udders while milk is coming in. This can be increased by ½ -1oz daily until she is eating free-choice by the end of the first week.
- During lactation, the doe has a much higher energy requirement in order to maintain good milk production. A doe that has problems producing enough milk may neglect nursing her kits or may even kill them. The amount she eats will depend on the size of her litter and her success at milk production. It is not unusual for does with large litters to eat up to 16-24 oz per day. Always remember to increase or reduce the amount fed gradually to prevent diarrhea.
- Nest boxes can be removed from the cages between 21-25 days of age, when all the bunnies have left it.
- To reduce milk production and prevent caked udders at weaning, feed should be removed for 24 hours and then gradually increased over the next few days. Newly weaned bunnies can be fed free-choice up to 3 months of age.

Breeding and raising rabbits can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. We hope that these tips will start you out on the right foot when breeding your rabbit and make you aware of important factors for a successful breeding program. So hop to it, let’s get started!

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Get to Know Purina Mills® Rabbit Chow® Complete Blend

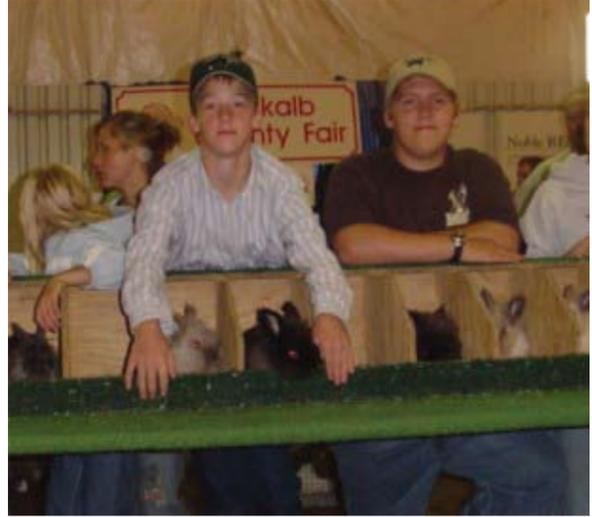


- Complete and balanced to meet all the nutritional requirements for growth, maintenance and reproduction
- Easy to feed pellets reduce waste and save you money
- Highly palatable formula encourages proper intake for your peace of mind
- 16% protein, high fiber diet designed for all types of rabbits
- Extra screening process reduces fines to minimize waste
- Contains high levels of long stem fiber for normal digestive health

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[Featured Story continued]

They started raising rabbits about 5 years ago and breed both Netherland Dwarfs and Dwarf Hotwits which they show at the DeKalb County Fall Fair. The rabbits are all fed Purina Mills® Rabbit Chow®, and they are very pleased with the results they get. “Our rabbits all gain well, have good conditioning and the small compact pelleted feed helps their teeth,” claims Jana. She also adds that “we noticed a big difference in their urine and pellets while feeding Purina® Rabbit Chow®, it doesn’t smell as bad as it did with other products we used in the past.” They discovered Purina® Rabbit Chow® though their local Purina Mills Feed Dealer, Ag Plus Inc., in Churubusco, IN where they were already buying livestock feed for their other animals.



Some of the rabbits that they raise are sold, and they always recommend that the new owners continue to feed Purina® Rabbit Chow®. “We tell them to feed it because it works best for our rabbits,” says Jana. In hopes that they will continue to feed it, they send each rabbit to its new home with a small bag of Purina® Rabbit Chow® along with instructions on how to care for their new pet.

Jana continues to buy Purina® Rabbit products because she says “there are some things that you just can’t do without, and we have found that Purina® Rabbit feed is the very best feed for our animals!” You can bet there will be many more trophies added to their collection in the future as they continue to feed Purina® products to their prize-winning animals.



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