

Breeding Techniques

There are different ways of breeding rabbits. It isn't always as simple as taking the buck to the doe's cage and letting nature take its course. While that is by far the easiest, there are different theories of the best way to breed rabbits to get the highest number of conceptions and larger litters. Also, whoever started the "breed like rabbits" cliché never tried to raise them!

One way is to take the doe to the buck's cage, and, if they aren't hurting each other, just leaving them together. Watch first and make sure the buck does get a good mount (he'll grunt and fall off to the side). Then just let them be for a few days-checking of course to make sure they're getting along. It's a simple and easy way to breed, but it can be dangerous to just leave them together unsupervised. Often though, it does increase litter size because the buck gets more good mounts. If the doe is unreceptive, this is a good way of coaxing her to be interested.

Another way that I find quite good is to take the doe to the buck, let him get one good mount, then separate them. In one hour, take the doe to the buck again, let him get a good mount, separate them. Repeat again in twelve hours, and then twelve hours after that. (So a total of four times, hour zero, one, twelve, and 24). I have good luck with this technique, and my average Holland litter size is 4-5.

Sometimes the bucks are just too comfortable in their cage and don't want to breed. In this case it helps to get them in a new environment-namely the table. A grooming table or some other table with a carpet square on it works well. Put the buck on the table first, let him get a bit accustomed to it, then bring him the doe. Let him mount once or twice, and put them both back. Follow the same thing as above - doing four or so breedings - just put them on the table instead of the buck's cage.

If the bucks are uncooperative, they may be lazy or fat. Usually this can be solved by just not feeding them right before they are bred. Wait until evening to breed, then after he services the doe feed him. Usually, it's the does that are not very cooperative. Although contrary to popular belief, a doe does have a cycle of approximately 12 days where she is receptive and a few days when she isn't. Her genitals should be a nice deep pink (but not dark pink or purple) for best receptiveness. If it's pale pink, wait a day or two and check again.

If all else fails, the doe should be receptive, the buck is a happy guy, but she's just not lifting for him, you can try and help. Place one hand on her head holding it down and the other hand under her rear, lifting it up. Make sure her tail is not tucked under. Usually the buck doesn't mind the help, and I've done this successfully many times. Sometimes just lifting her rear up a bit gives her the idea, and as the buck tries to mount she does it herself and the mating is successful.

Good luck! Don't forget to write down who was bred, the date to palpate, and the date they are due! Palpating is a technique easier shown than explained, so ask a breeder friend to show you if you don't know how.