

# Double 'D' Ranch

716-672-5678

www.Double-D-Ranch.org





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## PREPARING FOR THE COOLER WEATHER


Debra Olon-West


In many parts of the U.S., it is starting to cool off after Indian Summer. It is time to address the needs of outdoor rabbits for the upcoming Winter Season.


Rabbits need to be protected against:


-  Temperatures below 50 degrees
-  Wind or drafts
-  Lack of drinkable water
-  Inaccessibility to their food.


### BASEMENT OR GARAGE HABITATION

 Make certain that you monitor the temperature in the basement by having a thermometer in a place where it can be easily seen. Keep a vent open on your furnace to allow some heat to get through to your rabbit and place his hutch close to it. Otherwise, you may wish to consider a preset electric heater that will turn itself off automatically when it reaches a certain temperature.

 It is very easy to forget to adequately care for your bunny, so a daily chart is suggested to keep on your refrigerator.

 Put storm windows up on the windows or cover them with plastic to contain drafts; also plug up any holes that may allow cold air in.


 Add extra hay to the hutch for insulation.


 Keep the hutch away from doors that stay open for any length of time, including garage doors. You could cover the side of the hutch-facing the door if necessary.


### BARN OR SHED HABITATION


 Make certain that all holes are filled in to keep the cold and predators out.

 Put up a thermometer where it can be easily seen.

 If you have access to electricity, you may wish to consider a heat lamp placed in the center of the space or an electric heater. Keep safety in mind and place anything flammable away from the source of heat.

 If electricity is inaccessible, cover the hutches in plastic (staple the sides in place) with a flap covering the front of the hutch. Plastic Sheeting (polyethylene) or a vinyl shower curtain is recommended.

 Keep your hutches off the floor or ground; add legs if necessary to the cage or place on a table.

 Watch for frozen water bottle or crocks. One breeder I know will drop her crocks in a bucket of hot water so that they are available for use when needed.

 Do not use glass feeders or water bottles.

 Use wood for resting boards in the bottom of the hutches.

 Add extra hay in the hutches for further insulation.


 Keep your feed and other sources in metal containers to avoid mice, etc. getting into them.

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 If you have pregnant does, I recommend keeping them and the kits in the house. The does can stay in the barn until close to kindling time, but should be in a warmer place when they give birth. Remember that rabbit kits are born with no hair and can easily be chilled. I have heard of plenty of breeders losing the kits during the winter because they were kept in the barn or shed.


## OUTDOOR HUTCHES

 Hutch design is the key to winter protection. A wooden hutch with legs is the best option with an outer and inner room. The outer room is where crocks for food, hay, and water can be placed. The inner room needs to be well stocked with extra hay for insulation, as well as a nice, cozy place where the rabbit stay secure. The inner room needs to also have a solid wooden floor as well.

 If for some reason, you can not accommodate the above, you can place the hutch on legs or a picnic table; cover the top and sides with heavy plastic sheeting (polyethylene). Staple/nail them to the sides and top to keep them secure; cover the top and leave a flap to cover the front. You may want to secure the flap in place to keep the cold air out.

 Place boards on the bottom of a wire hutch for protection from the elements and to assist insulation.

 Take precautions against any predators in your neighborhood that go after your rabbits, such as wandering dogs and cats. This would include having a secure fence around the area that the rabbit is in. Also, remember that one of the most vulnerable areas is underneath the hutch, so you may wish to make certain that no predators can get into the hutch.

 Use the above measures if the rabbit is being kept on or under a porch or patio.

Most of these measures are commonsense and will help to keep your bunny safe and secure during the colder months. Remember that your bunny will get lonely, so if he is outside, try to arrange some time to spend with your rabbit daily. It is a good idea to remember why you got the rabbit in the first place and he needs as much love and care, as any other pet deserves.

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Deb and Dale's home for wayward bunnies

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