

Double 'D' Ranch

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DI SEASES WE HAVE DEALT WITH


By Debra Olon-West


Note: Information was found from a combination of sources, such as experienced breeders, our vet, and 'Official Guide Book: Raising Better Rabbits & Cavies' by the ARBA. We have been fortunate enough to work with a veterinarian who specializes in small animals.


CAUTION: this information is meant to supplement current knowledge and is no substitute for the care of a qualified veterinarian. If you are unsure what is wrong with your rabbit, please contact your rabbit savvy vet for help.

BREEDING CONDITIONS

Young Doe Death Syndrome:


 Symptoms: Does die suddenly at 1-2 weeks after kindling or from inconsistent causes. Usually happens to first time mothers, but can happen to older does.

 Treatment: no specific treatment due to acute nature of condition, but supportive care can include fluids and glucose. Seek assistance from your vet immediately.


 Prevention: Do not let does get overweight; supportive care of does when off feed to prevent death.

We feel that in the case of Babette's passing, it was a similar situation. She was 15 lb. (should have been 13 lb. maximum), this was her first litter, Lucky was unusually large, and she suddenly passed on with no signs of trouble.

Fetal Giantism

 Symptoms: Difficult birth (dystoxia) with unusually large kits in a small litter (one-two babies); Doe straining on the nest pushing the feti out; bloody discharge from vulva area.


 Treatment: C-Section; Manual assistance; help from your rabbit savvy vet.


 Prevention: Do not allow your doe to get overweight (see ARBA Standard of Perfection for approximate weight recommendation); select does used to having larger litters.


Lucky was a case of Fetal Giantism. He only had the one littermate of usual size; who was a stillbirth.

In general allowing a rabbit to get overweight is not a good idea, since it can contribute to heart disease, as well as the fetal giantism if you are breeding you rabbits. A rule of thumb that we use is to feel for your rabbit's spine; if you cannot clearly feel the spine, most likely the rabbit is overweight.

Orphaned Kits

 Symptoms: Sudden death of the dam due to unexpected litter size or other problems.

 Treatment: feed surviving kits once to twice daily with appropriate formula, or can be placed with a foster mother with a litter of her own. Consult your vet for any questions.

 Prevention: Good management to prevent orphans; breed several does at once so extra kits may be fostered to does with smaller litters.

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We have hand fed kits (including little Benten) on a few occasions. In this situation, you could use Esbilac kitten formula, available at pet stores, but fresh goats' milk is the best as it is easier on the digestive tract.

Scattering of the Young at Kindling

 Symptoms: Doe fails to make a proper nest for the young and/or allows kits to be scattered on the wire. Young often die of exposure. Often found with first time mothers.


 Treatment: Young may be fostered to other mothers; kits may be hand fed if necessary.


 Prevention: select replacement does with good mothering instincts; may use subterranean nest boxes; control predators or rodents in the rabbitry; make certain the no bucks are too close to the pregnant or nursing dam.

We have seen this in the case of one first time doe that left a kit on the wire. I put the kit next to my skin on my chest to warm her for 45 minutes and replaced her in the nest adequately covered with successful results.

Early Nestbox Fatality


 Symptoms: Dead kits in the nestbox from 2-10 days after kindling.


 Treatment: mismanagement by the mother or too small of a nestbox; the problem is often not found until it is too late.


 Prevention: Proper nestbox size according to breed; proper feeding of the mother close to kindling; check to make certain that the kits are being fed (round tummies).

We have found this in the case of mothers being brought to us with unexpected pregnancies, first timers, or if they were too young. The important thing is to monitor the litter and the mother, make certain they are being fed, and the area in the hutch and nestbox is clean as possible.

False Pregnancy

 Symptoms: pulling hair; nesting; behavior change

 Treatment: Go ahead and put the nestbox in just in case and consult your vet. This is usually a case of over abundant hormones. You also may wish to palpate (feel in the pelvic region) the doe.

 Prevention: Spay the doe.