

HUSBANDRY OR HEREDITARY?

The title of this article is a question in itself and one to which I do not know the answer, nor so far as I am aware does anyone else. Therefore what follows must be accepted as a personal opinion supported by a few inconclusive clues:

Many people claim that husbandry (by this we mean the best housing conditions and the best food plus regular attention) is more important than hereditary, others claim precisely the reverse.

It is obvious that neither viewpoint can be correct and that the two must go hand in hand. A first class stockman will succeed in obtaining the maximum potential from stock of poor or mediocre parentage; equally first class stock poorly managed will sometimes overcome its inevitable handicaps and prove fairly successful.

To consistently obtain the desired first class results, the breeder must use first class stock with a high hereditary potential and lavish on his stock the ultimate husbandry.

Let us examine the possible effects of a deficiency in husbandry or hereditary. We are all aware that vitamin deficiencies can cause temporary or permanent injury to the body – for example, scurvy, or rickets. Also, it is known that serious malnutrition can cause damage to the body and mind of a human being. Hospital treatment in many cases can partially or completely restore the body but never the brain, which remains permanently damaged. This touches on the possibilities very briefly so far as nutrition is concerned. Damage can also occur by housing conditions of an inadequate nature, for instance TB or similar respiratory ailments, rheumatism, or in the case of our rabbits the aggravation of sore hocks etc.

Therefore, is it too fanciful to suggest that if the body and mind of a living creature can be permanently damaged by poor husbandry the so very sensitive reproductive system can also be damaged? If the flow of vitamins and minerals is restricted or disease allows the multiplication of germ viruses in the body, can we not similarly accept that the reproductive system can be damaged sufficiently to prevent it from operating at its maximum potential, i.e. it will produce only cells of a less perfect quality.

Personally I would never purchase or breed from any stock that has a past history of less than perfect husbandry.

A considerable amount of research is being conducted on this subject and probably some of the answers will be revealed shortly.

Article by Joe Phillips (Life Member) taken from the 1980 Winter NOFRRRA Newsletter.