

Population Explosion

The title does not refer to the recent rapid increase in membership of

Our club. Nor does it relate to the world problems of too many humans, but to the fact that at times we fail to achieve the population explosion we desire in our rabbit hutches.

From time to time we hear of fanciers who are experiencing great difficulty in getting their does to kindle. This last season seems to have been a rather difficult time in some rabbitry's – on several occasions I have heard my does seem to be taking the pill'. So I will proceed to examine the problem and offer a few suggestions which may prove helpful.

First of all we must accept the fact that almost all forms of life have a close season when they are reluctant to breed and this is tied to the availability of food supplies, weather conditions prevailing etc. Whilst we can usually provide comfortable conditions and plentiful food supplies for our domesticated livestock they still tend to follow the pattern of their wild cousins. Even in countries which enjoy a warm climate all the year round there is a period when stock are not interested in reproduction. But without doubt the greatest driving force in nature is the desire to ensure the continuance of the race.

So the failure of our stock to breed is mostly due to an unwitting error on our part. That is, except at times of the year when the close season prevails. Even this can be overcome if you mate only maiden does born six months previously, as the period of achieving physical maternity coincides with an period in the reproductive system. The availability of does of 6 months old is easier for people like me who reckon to breed all year round and aim for a litter every 3 to 4 weeks.

But so often the problem of getting does in kindle occurs at times of the year where we would expect them to breed freely. I.e. the early spring. This is almost certainly due to the does being over fat internally. The two year old does will have spent the winter months eating themselves into a condition where the fatty deposits around the ovaries have made these organs

very sluggish. The does bred the previous year and which have been kept in show condition will almost certainly be in a similar state.

The only remedy for this is to put them on a strict diet for three weeks. Hay, water and greens. This will do them no harm and cause them to use up the internal fat as energy. After three weeks return to the feeding of concentrates, oats or oats and pellets. Ten days after return to normal feeding, they should accept the buck and conceive without fail. This is almost identical to the 'flushing' procedure followed by sheep breeders.

This method, nor any other, will be of no use where an abnormality is present. Diseased ovaries, cysts on ovaries etc. So you can almost certainly attribute the persistent failures to this factor. Allied to this is the loss of virility which can occur from too close in-breeding.

Stock - both bucks and does, which are in a full moult should not be bred from as the effort of growing a new coat is sufficient tax on the bodily resources. Although drugs are advertised to stimulate the sexual urge there are mixed reports on their effectiveness.