

Mating Methods *A Fur & Feather fact sheet*

A doe should always be taken to the buck's hutch. If he is introduced to hers, she may savage him and probably ruin him for further use, either by physical injury or breaking his nerve.

The hutches must be large enough for comfortable movement on the part of both rabbits. A mating doe stretches out to quite a length, and the buck too, needs additional room to perform his duties.

The owner should stay to keep an eye on the procedure, in case of fighting and for assisted matings.

INDIVIDUAL MATING

The doe is placed in the buck's hutch. If both animals are ready they will make a few runs around the hutch. Then the doe will raise her hindquarters, and the buck mounts her.

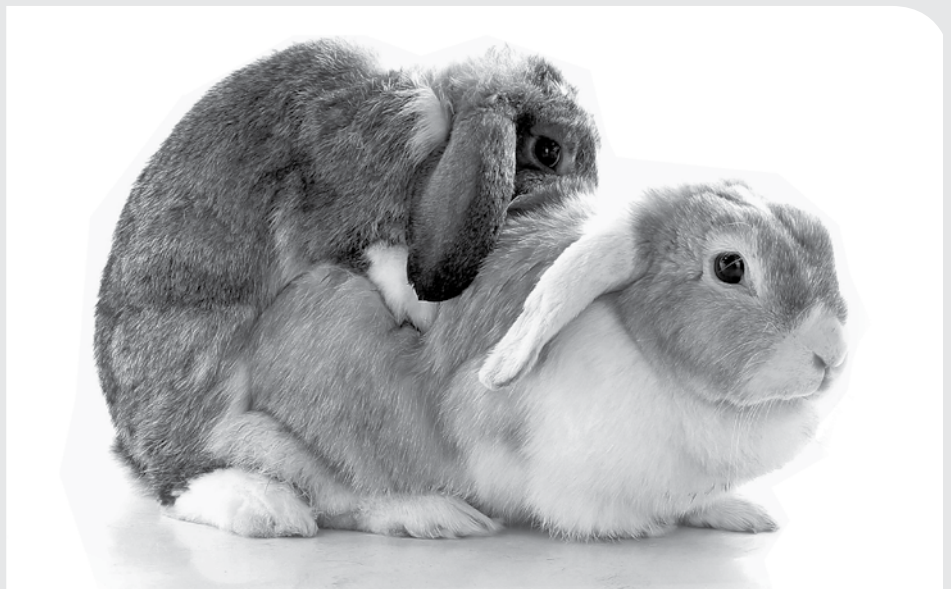
In a matter of seconds, he will enter the doe, ejaculate his semen, and fall off with a cry. The doe may then be removed and the date of the mating entered in the owner's record books, or a note pinned on to the hutch front.

Sometimes if the buck is young and is over excited he will ride her head and should be guided to the correct position.

If the doe races round and round to escape the buck it could indicate that she is not ready to mate, or a dislike of that particular buck, or even inexperience on the part of the buck.

If either animal retires to the back of the cage and squats down, remove the doe and watch both for any signs of ill-health. It may only be temporary sterility, but it may mean incipient illness.

When the doe is removed, examine her vulva; this can give an idea of the success of the mating.



A successful mating will produce some dampness and relaxed muscle around her vulva, but if the buck failed to penetrate her he will have deposited his semen on her back or on the floor under her.

This sometimes happens with a small maiden doe, or an immature one.

It only takes a second to inspect the doe, and it can cut short speculation as to the reason for a missed mating. Also, when she is old enough, or when more ready, she can be mated by the next method.

ASSISTED MATING

Both this and the former method mean the expenditure of a few moments on each mating, but much time is saved in missed or doubtful matings. The extra time pays dividends in better results, in the spotting of laziness or abnormality and defects in either buck or doe.

For assisted matings, the doe is placed in the hutch tail first, the owner keeping a grip of the ears and shoulders with one hand. With the other hand, palm up, support her belly, placing the first two fingers on either side of the doe's vulva and raising her hindquarters slightly.

This position will throw the tail up and the doe is in a favourable and comfortable position for the buck to mount her.

Take care not to raise her too high, just to the level of the buck. The absence of fuss and the position of the doe helps the buck considerably. His reaction should be the same, with ejaculation, fall and cry.

It is rare for any buck to refuse to mate under these circumstances.

RECOMMENDED READING

Reproduction and Breeding of Rabbits by John Sandford, B A (Cantab). (*Fur & Feather*, £6.00 including UK postage).

This 60 page publication is an understanding of what actually occurs during the process of reproduction. Includes a description of the reproductive system, ovulation, pregnancy and kindling, lactation, gestation, puberty and the age of sexual maturity, the breeding season, fertility and fecundity, pseudo-pregnancy, sex ratio, breeding practice and selection of stock for breeding. It was first published in 1952 when the writer was the Secretary of the British Rabbit Council.

Other titles in this series include **Colour Inheritance in Small Livestock** by Roy Robinson and **Practical Inbreeding** by W Watmough.

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