

RAISING RABBITS IN THE HEAT OF THE SOUTHWEST

by David Weill

Believe it or not, it is possible to raise rabbits where summertime high temperatures are close to or over 100 degrees for several successive days or weeks. There are a few tricks that make it a little easier though. (Some of you may know of others, but these work well for us.)

We have found that a building that is long and narrow, with the long length running east-west provides a good natural ventilation. To this we add fans to help move the air. A definite plus is having the building where it is shaded, although in quite a few areas of the southwest, this is not possible due to the lack of trees naturally growing in the region. Roof foggers lower the temperature inside by keeping the heat from building on the roof surface.

This would be adequate to just maintain the rabbits during the summer, but we breed every month year round, so there are a few other things we do for our rabbits. One thing is that we feed a low protein feed, and we try to use young bucks if possible. We also give does with litters ice that we freeze in two-liter size coke bottles (plastic). We also give ice to senior bucks we plan on using, as well as does that are due, starting four days before due date.

As with any ideas or systems of doing things, these are not perfect. We have lost young bunnies, as well as older does during the summer, but have over a 95% survival rate. Only about 25% of the does we breed during the middle of summer (June through August) are being bred for their first litter.