



Chicken Coop News

Update on the poultry industry

By Herb Jordan

Penn State Extension Poultry Specialist

Prevent rabbit disease through management

To prevent disease and health disorders in rabbits watch their behavior and restrict them on what they want but give them what they need and have to have.

Examples are as follows: Rabbits want fresh juicy vegetables, too many pellets, too much fruit, which may give them diarrhea. Rabbits need a balanced pelleted ration in restricted quantities along with a little (10 percent of diet) high quality legume hay.

They need an adequate environment to live in. Rabbits have to have adequate fresh unpolluted air - without air a rabbit will die in minutes. Rabbits have to have water. Without water for a few days they die; they may get sick in just a few hours off water. These simple necessities are overlooked by some producers.

Here are a few ideas to pursue with your rabbits to help them resist disease and stay healthy.

- Genetically select rabbits for resistance to disease. This is controversial; whereas some say it can be done, others say it cannot. Some professional geneticists say it cannot be done. Many breeders with experience say selective breeding can build resistance to disease over several generations.

Study this question; I believe the answer is somewhere in the middle - rabbits which build antibodies to

overcome disease can transmit this ability to off-spring at least to a degree for some diseases. Examine your own breeding records.

Environment can cause health disorders if improperly managed:

- Ammonia gas from bacterial action in wet manure left under cages more than 4 days increases susceptibility to respiratory disease and leads to poor reproductivity and death.

- High temperatures above 80 F are damaging to the rabbit and will cause poor health and death if relative humidity is above 80 percent at the same time. Temperatures above 90 F and 90 percent RH rapidly cause death.

- Intense light kept on 24 hours a day seems to cause abnormal behavior and poor health in rabbits.

- Nutrients that are inadequate or toxic can cause poor health or death. Rabbits are sensitive to toxic residues in feed such as mycotoxins from mold or fungus. Hay can cause sickness and death if sprayed with pesticide or herbicide before it is fed to rabbits.

Feed rabbits only fresh, pure feed ingredients which contain adequate nutrients. If in doubt ask a nutritionist, have a lab test the feed or change feeds temporarily to see if rabbits respond positively or negatively. Positive responses are better health, faster growth, higher quality coat, more energy,

more constructive behavior or more successful reproduction and lactation.

- Health in rabbits can be observed by a clear eye, no drainage from nose, mouth or vent area, and quality coat, normal behavior and healthy ears.

- Abnormal behavior of rabbits can result in damage to the herd or litter. Handle rabbits frequently enough to keep them behaving properly around people. Protect them from fright, loud noise, predators, mites, and anything that will infect, infest, damage or harm rabbits.

When rabbits appear to be sick or behave abnormally, check the following:

- Feet, ear, skin, vent, nose, mouth, nipple, eye.

- Feed quality, quantity, and proper ratio of nutrients.

- Water - keep it fresh, clear and unpolluted.

- Air - keep it fresh, clean and unpolluted.

- Salt block - adequate.

- Hutch floor or litter for filth, manure or urine burns.

- Nest box cleanliness, insulation, litter, etc.

- Density of muscle - is the rabbit light in weight for its size?

- Energy of rabbit - is it normal?

- Time of day, age of rabbit or season of year may help solve the problem.

- Weather - such as heat, wind, chill factor or changes in temperature.

- Humans who sabotage rabbits by intent or by negligence.

- Pet dogs, cats or other predators.

- Pesticides if in use nearby may cause problems.

- Rat tracking powder if used nearby may contaminate feet.

Drug toxicity to rabbits - read

the label on all medicines.

- Drug level in feed or water may be mixed incorrectly.

- Behavior of all rabbits as a clue to problem or solution.

- Environment for abnormal physical factors.

- Genetic weakness of family or parent stock.

- Space given rabbit - is it adequate?

PFU selects ex. committee

HARRISEBURG — New executive committee members were elected by the Pennsylvania Farmers Union Board of Directors at their meeting last Monday, held in conjunction with the organization's 11th annual state convention.

According to President James Brown, the newly added members are Forney Longenecker, Lancaster Co.; Irk McConnell, Washington Co.; Sam Reed, Clinton Co.; Jack Rynd, Crawford Co.; and William Sturges, Tioga-Potter Co.

The Board also selected a delegate for the National Farmers Union convention which will be held in San Diego, Feb. 27 through March 2. Barbara Woods, PFU

vice president, was chosen. The entire state delegation also elected Allen Deiter, Northumberland Co. and Albert Bentz, York Co., to represent PFU, along with President Brown. Alternates chosen were Walter Jordan, Jefferson Co. and Charles Kalinowski, Wyoming-Sullivan Cos.

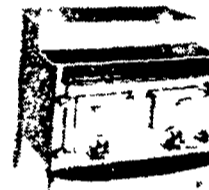
Woods, who with her husband Bob, is a Franklin County dairy farmer, said she hopes to help delegates from other parts of the United States to better understand Pennsylvania farmers' problems. President Brown said they also hope to join with all delegates in adopting strategies which will improve the outlook for all of the nation's farmers.

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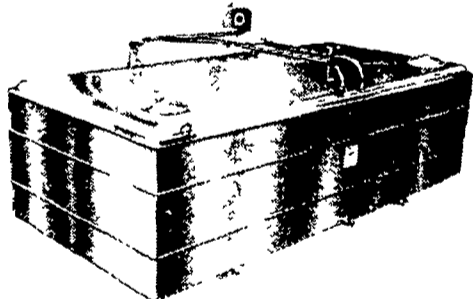


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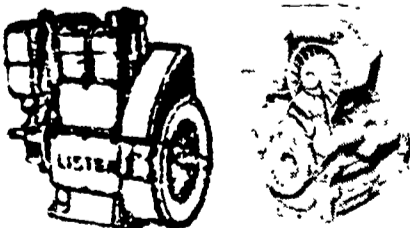


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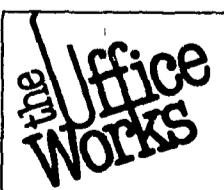
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