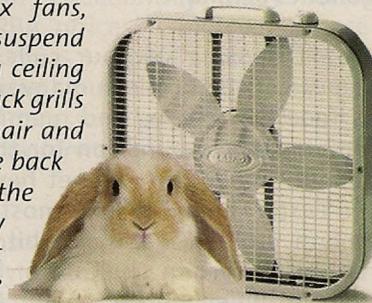


Q What is the best way to reduce flies in the rabbitry?

A Flies are beneficial as part of the decaying process, and maggots can clean out festering wounds, but for the most part, flies are not only a nuisance but also carry diseases. We would like the flies to stay outside in our compost piles and not be present in our barns or rabbit and cavy rooms. The best way to eliminate flies is through the use of fans, especially ceiling fans in barns. The flies are not able to navigate moving air. There is an added benefit to cooling the animals as well as drying moisture when these fans operate. There are no poisons to worry about, or sticky fly strips to run into.

We use inexpensive box fans, which last 2 to 3 years, and suspend them from the rafters like a ceiling fan. Remove the front and back grills from these fans otherwise hair and cobwebs will quickly clog the back grill. Tape the electric cord to the remaining housing as now the grill is gone, the support for the cord may also be gone (duct tape works great). Then suspend the fan from the rafters blowing down like a ceiling fan. We use wire to tie the housing to the rafters.

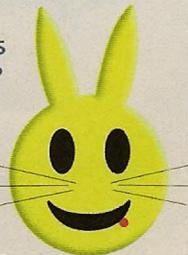
The fans which operate on a thermostat are great, but timers are less expensive and can be adjusted with the weather. In very hot weather, we will turn on the fans manually in the morning and have them run to the wee small hours of the next morning. When it is only hot in the afternoon, the fans come on at noon and go off at 5 PM. The flies are most active when the weather is hot. Using fans not only eliminates your fly problems, but also cools the animals as well as reduces moisture.



Inexpensive box fans attached to the ceiling will help move air and discourage fly populations.

Q I heard that I could give my herpes cold sore to my rabbit. Is this true?

A Yes, there was recently a report in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* July 1, 2009, pages 66-69, of a rabbit owner who had active cold sore lesions on her lips which apparently was transmitted to her rabbit and resulted in the rabbit's death. The owner reportedly often kissed the 8 month old rabbit on the nose. The rabbit was kept as a solitary house pet and last had contact with other rabbits when he was 8 weeks old. At the time the



rabbit became ill, the owner had severe cold sore lesions on the lips and face.

The owner noticed that the rabbit stopped eating and had a mild weepy left eye. When seen by her veterinarian two days later, he had marked salivation, eye infections in both eyes with the left worse than the right, prominent third eyelids, grinding of the teeth, incoordination, intermittent seizures, and stretching back of his head. Treatment consistent of numerous medications, but the rabbit did not respond and was euthanized within a week. Tests for *Encephalitozoon cuniculi* and *Toxoplasma gondii* were negative. PCR tests showed HHV-1, which is the human herpes simplex virus, in the rabbit's brain. According to the paper, rabbits are particularly susceptible to this virus. HHV-1 in rabbits attacks the nervous system and the infection is almost always fatal.

The researchers did not prove that the particular herpes virus found in this rabbit actually came from the owner, but felt this was likely an example of transmission from a human to the rabbit since there had been no contact with other rabbits for 6 months during which time the buck was healthy. I have long felt that researchers should look for an underlying virus, especially a herpes virus, in outbreaks of snuffles in rabbitries since snuffles mimics the cat herpes virus infection. Although this report was not a typical example of snuffles other than the weepy eyes, we do learn that rabbits are known to be susceptible to herpes infections.

Q I am seeing an unusual number of young rabbits dying with a jelly diarrhea. What is going on?

A A number of rabbitries are reporting losses of 4-8 week old rabbits, some with no signs of illness, some with just a hint of diarrhea, but many with full blown mucoid enteritis with rapid weight loss (wasting), diarrhea and jelly stools. You may be lucky to lose one or two in the litter, or the entire litter may die over a period of a week. Generally the adult rabbits are unaffected, but this time we are seeing some adults dying especially nursing does.

In the 4-8 week olds, a considerable proportion of the rabbits that show signs of illness will die regardless of what is pursued. Rabbits over 3 months of age are more likely to survive. I have tried various medications on the babies with little success. One that survived only had pellets withheld and given just hay and water. Subcutaneous fluids are



**Reducing Flies * Infection Disease
Transmission • Coccidiosis Control**



helpful in the older rabbits, but as I said before, little appears to save the 4-8 week olds.

Fecal exams may show coccidiosis, but treatment for coccidiosis is unsuccessful leading me to believe that there is an additional disease and not simply coccidiosis. High protein feeds will aggravate the problem and should be avoided when the rabbitry is experiencing these losses. Although feeding hay is no guarantee of avoiding this current strain of mucoid enteritis, is the best recommendation to lessen your losses. Be sure to give fresh hay each day to nest box babies to insure their first meal is hay to establish the correct pH and microbes in their GI tract. In an out-break, I recommend giving fresh hay twice a day to does with litters over 3 weeks of age. Instead of full feeding these does and litters, feed pellets twice a day and limit the pellets so they are cleaning up each feeding in a couple of hours.

It's important to provide good sanitation by removing soiled bedding and cleaning the cage floors with a wire brush to remove visible manure, feeding hay on a regular basis, avoid over-crowding, and providing water in a closed water system (impossible in winter when freezing water forces us to use bowls). Before moving a new rabbit into a new cage, especially doe and litter, be sure to thoroughly clean and disinfect that cage and equipment. But the bottom line is that the rabbits need to develop and immunity to what appears to be a new infectious agent.

My hope is as this disease goes through a rabbitry that the stock which are exposed and survive will have immunity so that eventually this disease will run its course in a year. Also the normal evolution of an infectious disease is to become less virulent over time because when it is this virulent it dies with its host. A successful organism does not kill its host so it can continue to spread through populations.

Rabbits over 3 months of age are more likely to survive than the 4-8 week old juniors.



Dr. Wenda Feaga received her DVM in 1980 from Ohio State University in the same class as Dr. Chris Hayhow, and owns a small animal veterinary practice, "Twin Oaks Animal Hospital", established in 1987. She obtained her ARBA judge's license in 1996, and has been a 4-H club leader since 1973.

Dr. Feaga also serves as show secretary for her local rabbit club, 4-H club, and county fair. In addition she is very active in her church where she serves in the media ministry. She lives in Maryland with her oldest daughter and her daughter's fiancé.

2011 JUDGES' CONFERENCES



District 8 APRIL 29, 2011
Sponsored by Ohio State RBA
Columbus, OH
Ohio State Fairgrounds
O'Neil Swine Bldg
Contact: Jacinta Taulbee rabsrus@hughes.net
740-385-3861 741-215-3089

District 4 APRIL 30, 2011
Pueblo, CO
Contact: Scott Wiebensohn
971-285-6930 walterjj@hotmail.com

District 1 JUNE 10, 2011
Sponsored by Oregon League of Rabbit & Cavy Breeders
Linn County Fairgrounds
Albany, OR
Contact: Ted DeLoyola
1-541-592-4865 tdeloyola@frontier.com

District 6 JULY 1, 2011
Sponsored by Central Tennessee RBA
Dickson, TN
Contact: Josh Humphries
1-423-364-3065 judge784@yahoo.com

District 5 JULY 10, 2011
Sponsored by Illinois RBA
Morton, IL
Contact: Richard Gehr rwgehr@cbcast.com

District 4 AUGUST 6, 2011
Held in conjunction with the Texas RBA State Meeting and Fun Day. You do not have to be a judge or registrar to attend. Discussions include posing and changes in the new Standard. Riesel, TX
Contact: Carrol Hooks
254-986-2331 hooksarba4@yahoo.com

Check back for future conference dates