

# TO ALLOW RABBITRY VISITORS OR NOT??

*Provided by Blue Ribbon Rabbitry*

For the first 15 or so years that we raised rabbits, we almost always let visitors into our rabbitry. The only exception was that we would prohibit people from coming into our rabbitry at times when we had a doe due to kindle or a doe with a very young litter. As we started to breed more over time, it got to the point where we always have doe ready to kindle or with a litter, which has led us to no longer allow visitors at any time.

That leads us to the first consideration, which happens to be the reason for our no visitor policy:

## **1. Safety of mothers with young litters (or expecting mothers)**

All does behave differently when they have litters and we have found that a "better safe than sorry" policy is best. We like to keep the environment quiet for them. Even a polite guest may make a rabbit nervous. Loud kids (or adults) are even worse. Rabbits can sense strangers and we feel its not worth of the risk of stressing out our mothers.

The following is a list of other considerations to take into account when deciding what your personal rabbitry visitation policy will be:

## **2. Rude guests**

We have found the overwhelming number of guests to be quiet and polite. Occasionally though we have found that adults will bring children that yell, scream, poke and run around the rabbitry. It is unnerving to not only the rabbits, but me as well. Even adults are sometimes guilty of poking and prodding the rabbits. On one occasion we had a rabbit break its back after being startled from a screaming child that ran by his cage.

## **3. Personal Safety**

This is something I have never been too worried about, but I realize I should take it more seriously. Many breeders have their animals in a rural area, possibly in a barn away from their house. Would anyone else be nearby if an attack occurred? Regardless of your ultimate decision to allow or not allow visitors, if you do it is best to only do so when another person is home. Years ago an incident occurred when a breeder I know had her house burglarized while she was being distracted in the barn with a fake prospective buyer.

## **4. Animal Rights Activists**

If you are a breeder, this is something you should take very seriously. I have never had a personal incident occur, breeders have been raided by animal activists and animals have been stolen or set loose in the wild. There have also been cases of activists scoping out your set up and then filling a report (regardless of merit) with local animal control agencies.

### **5. Disease Transmission**

Unfortunately, you have no way of completely protecting your herd from the transmission of communicable disease. Steps can always be taken to lower your risk though. When you allow visitors, you have no idea where they have been or what they have been exposed to.

#### **So what do I do now?**

So what do you do if you decide to not allow visitors? We all need to sell rabbits from time to time, right? It's really simple. I often meet people at shows I am attending, which can be a win-win if your buyer lives closer to the city in which the show is located. I also meet people at the exit nearest our home. Not only is it a safe, public place, but again it helps my buyers out a little by saving them the time and hassle of finding my house once they get off the interstate.

This "no-visitors" policy is still a bit new to our rabbitry, but so far it has worked. No one has asked me to explain why they cannot visit. Everyone seems very understanding. '

It should be noted that this list is not intended to persuade anyone to employ a no visitor policy. The only intention is to get you to think about the implications of allowing visitors and make an educated decision.