

FOSTERING BABY RABBITS

Provided by Blue Ribbon Rabbitry

What is fostering?

Fostering the process of placing newborn baby rabbits (kits) with a different mother. There are several reasons why this may be done. Some breeders do this to "even out" the litters. Personally, we never foster for this reason. We have never had a doe have problems with raising a large (or small) litter simply due to the number of babies.

More commonly, fostering is done when the doe is either unable to care for the kits (due to illness or death) or is unwilling. If the doe has the babies on the wire or does not make a nest, she may be unprepared to care for the newborns.

How do I foster?

Once you have determined that fostering is really necessary, you will need a doe with babies born around the same time. This is one reason why breeders often breed more than one doe at a time. Gather the kits and ensure they are warm. If they are not you will need to first warm them. To do this I run water in the sink until it becomes warm. I then partially fill a ziplock bag with water and then place the sealed bag into another bag (just to be very sure it does not break). I then place the bag in a deep bowl and place a towel on top. The babies then go on the towel and are warmed by the gentle heat.

Once the kits are ready to be fostered, mark them so they can be distinguished from the other babies the foster mother already has. One way to do this is with a marker. It will need to be reapplied every other day or so. The babies should then be gently added to the existing nest of the foster mother.

Before placing the babies in the nest, some breeders prefer to place something with strong odor (such as vanilla extract or Vick's Vapor Rub) on the doe's nose. The idea is that all the kits will smell the same to the new mother and she will not "reject" the new babies.