



# COOL TIPS FOR SUMMER

*By Dave Mangione  
The Ohio State University*

Oh how we yearn for those warm sunny days of summer. I sure don't miss frozen crocks and fingers of winter. Even though the summer months are more comfortable for you and me, the dog days of summer can be pretty hard on the rabbits. So here are a few cool tips to get you and the rabbits through the summer.

**Ventilation** is critical to a healthy environment for rabbits. The constant movement of fresh air into the building and stale and/or warm air out of the building promotes clean and comfy air for the rabbits. If natural ventilation can not keep up with the proper movement of air, the use of mechanical ventilation (fans) should be considered.

**Litters** born during the summer are vulnerable to heat exhaustion as well as the doe. Always remove excess hair from the nest after the birth of the kits and the use of oversize nest boxes with wire floors will help to keep the kits cool. You may also want to consider removing the nest box when the kits are fourteen days old and place them in nursery boxes to provide a cooler more open environment. Weaning bunnies at 4-5 weeks of age vs. 6-8 weeks of age will reduce the number of rabbits in one cage making it better on the doe and litter.

Consider **feeding twice a day** to reduce the amount of energy from the diet entering the rabbit's digestive system at one time. Feeding smaller amounts of feed multiple times during the day will reduce the amount of heat generated during the digestive process. This process will also help to condition your show rabbits coming out of the summer in preparation for the fall show season.

Last but not least, **provide cool, clean, fresh water** at least twice a day during the summer. The use of electrolytes in the water will guard against dehydration and heat stress. Forget about frozen water bottles, they just cause more stress from the extreme fluctuation in temperature.

Stay cool and good luck with your summer litters.