

CAO Breeding Cycles by Sr. Glen

Sheep Breeding Cycle

The gestation period for sheep is approximately 150 days which is five months.

1. After a female sheep gives birth she stays in a pen with other females who have young children. They stay in that pen for 6 weeks.
2. When the lamb is 6 weeks of age, the mother and the child go to the pen with the male. They remain in the pen with the male for 8 weeks. The child is now 14 weeks of age and ready to be separated from the mother
3. When the child is 14 weeks of age the mother is moved to another pen with the other pregnant sheep.
4. The children go to separate pens away from their mother. The males go with the males and the females go with the females.
5. When the young females are 11 months of age they go into the pen with the male for 8 weeks.

Summary

When female sheep is 11 months of age she goes into the pen with the male and remains for 8 weeks.

When a female gives birth and the child is 6 weeks of age the mother and the child go into the pen with the male and remains for eight weeks.

When the child is 14 weeks of age, the mother goes to be with the other pregnant sheep and the child goes into a pen for males and females to be kept separately.

We have 4 primary pens.

Young males

Young females

Pregnant females

Females with the male

When a female sheep looks like she's ready to give birth she could be moved into a small birthing pen but sometimes moving her creates too much stress and it's better if she stays with the other pregnant females.

Rabbit Breeding Cycle

Gestation period for rabbits averages 31 days.

We need enough cages so adult males and females always live separately. Younger than 2 months they can normally live together.

Females that are 7 months of age can be put with a male who is 8 months of age. Female rabbits can be identified by their cage number whereas sheep have a number in their ear.

Always take the female to the cage of the male because if you put the male in the cage of the female she will fight with him. If the female will not accept the male and either runs from him or fights with him, don't leave her in the cage to fight. Wait 3 days and try again.

Put the female in the cage of the male and allow them approximately 20 or 30 minutes together. But, remain near enough to know if they are fighting so you can remove her if they fight. After 30 minutes return her to her cage. The next day put her with the male again for 15 minutes and then return her to her cage. 27 days later put the nest box in her cage so she can begin building her nest in that box.

When the babies are born do not disturb the mother or the babies. Observe if there are any dead babies and remove them but otherwise do not touch or disturb. Do not touch the babies or the mother. If you touch the babies, your aroma will be on the babies and the mother might kill them or not feed them. If there is a dead baby, use a clean spoon to get the dead baby so your hands don't touch the mom or babies.

Four weeks after the babies are born, the mother is put with the male for 30 minutes and then she is returned to her cage without the nesting box. The next day she is put with the male again for 15 minutes and then returned to her cage. On the 27th day after being with the male, the nesting box is returned to her cage.

Remove the nest box when the babies are 3 to 4 weeks old. Keep the box clean until it is needed again by turning it upside down and putting it on top of her cage.

At six weeks old begin separating the babies from their mother. Remove the largest 1 or 2 the first day. The next day remove the next largest 1 or 2. Continue each day until all are removed. Removing the babies gradually allows the mother to adjust her milk production. When they are removed, all of those

brothers and sisters live together for 2 weeks. When they are 8 weeks of age, the males are separated from the females.

At 8 weeks of age it is sometimes difficult to accurately distinguish males from females. Do the best you can and then reexamine them each 2 or 3 weeks to see if you made any mistakes. The older they are, the easier to distinguish males from females.

To examine and determine gender, hold in your arms upside down, in other words on their back so their genitals are up. With your finger open the gentle area so you can see if it is a penis or if it is a vagina. When they are very young it is difficult to distinguish but as they get older you can see the small slit that indicates a female. It is easier for two people to do the exam. One person holds the rabbit and the other person examines.

At 4 or 5 months of age is a good time for eating the male rabbits. If some of the males are aggressive fighting with the others, eat them sooner.

Organic rabbit meat is the healthiest meat in the world.

Cages Needed

1 for the adult male

1 for each adult female. Needs 1/2 x 1/2 wire walls.

1 for the babies to live together for 2 weeks as they leave their mother.

1 for the young males to live together.

1 for the young females to live together.

Timeline Summary

Breed young females at 7 months of age.

Put the next box in with the female 27 days after breeding.

Breed the mother when her babies are 4 weeks old.

Remove box when babies are 3 to 4 weeks old.

Remove babies when they are 6 weeks old.