

Rabbit Handling, Observation, and Basic Disease Lesson Plan

AFNR Standards:

- AS.06.03.01.a. Identify and summarize how an animal's health can be affected by anatomical and physiological disorders.
- AS.07.01.01.a. Identify and summarize specific tools and technology used in animal health management.
- AS.07.01.01.b. Describe and demonstrate the proper use and function of specific tools and technology related to animal health management.
- AS.07.01.01.c. Select and use tools and technology to meet specific animal health management goals.
- AS.07.01.02.a. Explain methods of determining animal health and disorders.
- AS.07.01.02.b. Perform simple health-check evaluations on animals and practice basic emergency response procedures related to animals.
- AS.07.01.02.c. Determine when an animal health concern needs to be referred to an animal health professional.

Objectives:

1. After the lesson, students will be able to demonstrate the rabbit handling procedures outlined in the ARBA Standard of Perfection with 80% accuracy.
2. After the lesson, students will be able to trim the toenails of a rabbit to the industry specifications.
3. After the lesson, students will be able to define, explain, and identify the following health conditions or faults; ear mites, weepy eye, snuffles (pasturella), malocclusion, rupture, abscesses, sore hocks, vent disease, and cow hocked.
4. After the lesson, students will be able to define the terms breed and variety with 100% accuracy.

Materials:

Toe nail trimmers, oral medication, thermometer, ARBA Standard of Perfection, carpet square, cages, water bottles, feed cups, and rabbits.

Interest Approach:

Pose the following questions.

What are indicators of good rabbit health?

What are indicators of poor rabbit health?

Body of Lesson and student activities:

The students will be instructed on the following techniques. After they are shown the technique. they will practice it.

Key learning:

1. Breeds of rabbits	<p><u>Key points:</u> There are forty-nine recognized breeds of rabbits according to the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA). There are some other breeds that are in development stages under processes outlined by the Certificate of Development process of the ARBA. These forty-nine breeds of rabbits have five different body types.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Compact▪ Commercial▪ Cylindrical▪ Semi-Arch▪ Full- Arch▪ https://quizlet.com/98323015/arba-rabbit-body-types-flash-cards/ <p>As a result, each body type is posed differently and evaluated differently when competing.</p> <p>Within a breed there may or may not be many different colors or color patterns. These are known as varieties. If the breed only has one color/color pattern the variety is known as standard.</p>
2. Parts of a rabbit	<p><u>Key Points:</u> Before a student begins working with rabbits, they should know all the parts of the rabbit. This allows for better communication when doing a general observation of the rabbit or treating the rabbit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://sites.google.com/site/viveklpm/rabbit-production-management/body-parts-of-the-rabbit
3. Basic rabbit knowledge	<p><u>Key Points:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Males are bucks, females are does, and a castrated rabbit is a lapin.B. Rabbits should be kept in draft free shelter. Rabbits should be kept out of direct sunlight as they can overheat very easily.C. Different breeds of rabbits require varied sizes of cages.D. A rabbit only needs fed once a day. While many breeders free choice rabbits with feed hoppers on the side of cage, free choice feeding can cause the rabbit to become overweight. Also, rabbit feed that is sitting in a cage can absorb moisture and increase the odds of mycotoxin poisoning. While the primary diet is rabbit pellets (proper length of pellet is important), hay can be a very valuable part of the diet. Its long fiber can help move food through the digestive system. Supplements can provide additional nutrition to a rabbit. They may be given to show rabbits or breeding rabbits.

	<p>E. Many good rabbit feed companies. Small breeds only need 16% protein while you will want to consider 18% protein for larger breeds. I would consult with local breeders when selecting the right feed for your rabbits.</p> <p>F. Rabbits can easily be litter trained and make great house pets.</p> <p>G. Rabbits do become frightened easily and do like loud noises. Frightened rabbits will run around their cage, make vocalizations, and potentially flip backwards.</p> <p>H. It is suggested that you do research on the breed of rabbit that may work best for you. It also suggested that you purchase your rabbits from a breeder opposed to a pet store. Please be sure to share with the breeder what your purpose is for the rabbit. Some breeds of rabbits produce offspring that is not showable, but make great pets. You do not want to tell the breeder you want a pet rabbit then to expect to put it on show table. Please note, many pet store workers lack knowledge on sexing rabbits or the breed of rabbit. It is highly possible the Dwarf doe you buy at a pet store could turn in a nine-pound buck!</p> <p>I. Rabbits are a common Easter holiday present to young children. They are also commonly given to animal shelters when they lose their cuteness. Both males and females can make good pets, but you do need to think about these two factors. Male rabbits can spray urine, but there are breeders of rabbits who cull male sprayers in their rabbitry. Female rabbits can have an attitude change when they reach sexual maturity.</p> <p>J. Rabbits are post gastric fermenters. They eat a portion of their fecal matter known as the soft pellet. This allows them to digest microbes and use them as a protein source. A lot of post gastric fermentation occurs in the large intestine of the rabbit. Absorption of nutrients takes place in the small intestine. By digesting the soft pellet, these microbes from the hind gut can be utilized for their nutritional needs.</p>
4. Proper attire for handling rabbits.	<p><u>Key points:</u> You will notice that many rabbit handlers wear a white laboratory coat or apron. Rabbits shed hair very easily. If you are not going to wear an apron or lab coat, you may want to keep a lint ruler at hand! Rabbits also scratch easily. If you would like to protect your wrists from scratches, take an old pair of socks and cut off the toe portion of the sock. You can use this now as protective wear for your wrists and lower arms.</p>
5. Lifting a rabbit.	<p><u>Key points:</u> The way you lift a rabbit has greatly changed over the years. Modern best practices should be used. These have the welfare of the</p>

	<p>animal at interest. Student can remove rabbit from cage by putting one hand on the belly and the other hand on the rump for support. When returning the rabbit to the cage, student places rabbit back in cage hindquarters first. If the rabbit cannot be easily removed, students cover eyes with cloth to assist them with calming the rabbit for pick up. A loin grab can be effective for removing a rabbit from the cage, but does not provide the rabbit with the support it needs. Rabbit backs are very fragile and can be snapped easily. In the old days, many rabbit owners/breeders would grab the rabbit by the scruff of the neck. This is no longer an industry best practice as it can cause blood vessels to rupture and result in a hematoma.</p>
6. Carrying a rabbit.	<p><u>Key points:</u> Student carries rabbit in his arms (the feet of the rabbit should be resting on the arm) so that the feet and body of the rabbit are clearly supported and head of rabbit is tucked under their arm. Other arm is resting on rabbit's back for support.</p>
7. Turning a rabbit over on its back.	<p><u>Key points:</u> When resting a rabbit on a table for observation, you should place the rabbit on a carpet square. Here is a general description on how to lift a rabbit and turn it over: With rabbit head facing the student, he/she lifts rabbit for examination effortlessly with precision and control, placing ears between the fingers of one hand and using the other hand to lift and support the rump so that the weight of the rabbit is clearly stabilized. The rabbit is then placed on its back with weight being supported by the table or the student's arm. At this point, one hand is used for holding the rabbit still while the other hand is used for evaluation. A fun enrichment activity for students is hypnotizing the rabbit!</p>
8. Checking a rabbit's ears and introduction to ear mites and wry neck.	<p><u>Key points:</u> Breeding rabbits are tattooed in their left ear with a series of numbers and letters that help the breeder identify the animal. Some rabbit breeders register their rabbits with the ARBA. The ARBA will only register rabbits that meet the senior requirements of the breed with no disqualifications that are outlined in <u>The Standard of Perfection</u>. Rabbits who are registered are given an additional tattoo in their right ear by a register.</p> <p>A common ear disease in rabbits is ear mites. They can be very dangerous to the rabbit and require immediate treatment. Signs of ear mites may be the rabbit scratching at its ear or redness.</p> <p>Wry neck is a condition that involves a tilt to the neck and head. There are numerous factors that can cause this including disease and genetics. Rabbits with this situation should be culled.</p> <p>Summer ear is condition seen in summer born rabbits that have larger sized ears than normal. A rabbit cools their body by using their ears. Since the blood that is cooling the bodies is moving to the ear, it</p>

	provided a nutrient rich environment optimum for ear growth. Often when the weather cools, the rabbit may grow into its ear size.
9. Checking a rabbit's eyes and introduction to weepy eye.	<u>Key points:</u> Rabbit eyes should be checked for many conditions including ulcers, blindness, coloration, and weepy eye. Weepy eye can involve a contagious leakage of bacteria from the eye. Please note that a cause of discharge from an eye could be blocked tear ducts. Rabbits with allergies may redden and pass discharge from their eyes. Conjunctivitis can also cause eye drainage. Also, rabbits with teeth abscesses tend to drain from their eyes as well. Rabbit eyes should be checked for cloudiness which could be a sign of blindness or ulcers. Show rabbits will have their eyes examined for proper breed/variety color according to the ARBA. While a rabbit with one brown eye and one blue eye may make a cool pet, this rabbit is probably not doing to be a good breeding rabbit.
10. Checking a rabbit's nose and introduction to snuffles.	<u>Key points:</u> Snuffles is the leading cause of rabbit death. This disease should not be taken lightly. This airborne disease can spread rapidly through a rabbitry as one rabbit sneezes. Students check for this disease by placing a finger on each side of the nostril and pulling back the skin towards the side of the rabbit's face. Rabbits with snuffles may have matted hair on the sides of their legs from using their legs to wipe the mucous from their nose. Please note, not all rabbits that have mucous coming from their nose have snuffles. Rabbits can sweat through their noses. The best way to tell if your rabbit has snuffles is to involve your veterinarian in culturing the mucous that drains from the rabbit's nose.
11. Checking a rabbit's bite and introduction to malocclusion.	<u>Key points:</u> A rabbit has four top incisors and two bottom incisors. A condition referred to as malocclusion is common in rabbits. A proper rabbit bite is the four top incisors overlapping the two bottom incisors. The teeth on the top and bottom should not touch and the bottom pair should not surpass the top set. Curling of teeth due to improper bites is not acceptable either. In theory, rabbits with malocclusion should not be used as FFA project animals (disqualification from ARBA competition) as it is a hereditary trait passed down from one generation to the next. Please note malocclusion can self-correct on young animals. In some breeds such as Netherland Dwarf or Dutch, the heads are large and round. On a young rabbit, there may be misalignment of the top and lower jaw. Environmental factors can influence malocclusion. Rabbits that are bored may pull their teeth on cage wire.
12. Checking front and hind legs for straightness and sorehocks.	<u>Key points:</u> A rabbit should have four nails (one per toe) and a dewclaw on their front leg and four nails on each of their rear toes. Rabbits can easily break nails and toes. Front legs should be checked for straightness. Straight front legs allow for easier motion. When checking

	<p>the hind legs, there are several different ways. The simplest way is to simply take the palm of your hand and push down on both rear feet at the same time and observe if the reflex is straight or cow-hocked. You really want to check the hock of the rabbit for missing fur and or irritation/redness. Sore hocks are more common in some breeds than others. If sore hocks are a problem, giving the rabbit an industry recommended rest in the cage will help with this issue.</p> <p>Keeping a rabbit's nails trimmed is extremely important although often overlooked. Long nails can actually damage the wool of wool breed rabbits. When trimming the nail, you are removing the portion of nail above the blood line with a pair of nail trimmers. Securing the rabbit on its back between your legs is one easy way to secure the rabbit while trimming the nails.</p>
13. Examination of the belly.	<p><u>Key points:</u> There are several conditions that can be observed by using the palm of the hand to feel the belly and between the chest floor. Some common belly conditions could include an abscess (abscesses should be lanced when mature and cleaned out with peroxide and iodine), a stomach rupture, mastitis, and pigeon breast. Another indication of mastitis besides swelling an inflammation of the teat is unfed kits that slowly die due to a lack of nutrition.</p>
14. Sexing a rabbit and checking for vent disease.	<p><u>Key points:</u> Sexing a rabbit can be challenging. By placing one finger above the labia and or genital area and the other below the labia / genital area and spreading the tissue, you will notice either a slit or a circle. A circle is a buck and a slit is a doe. On mature bucks or bucks approaching maturity, you will see testicle development. However, sometimes bucks only drop one or no testicles. Bucks who do not drop testicles are known as cryptorchids. This condition can be highly hereditary. Rabbits with this issue can be test bred before culling or culled at maturity. Rabbit syphilis or vent disease is a common infection in the genital area. You will see the formation of pimple or scabbing. In bad case, you will see the scabs on other parts of the body especially around the mouth as the rabbit will lick the genital area of their body. This condition needs treated as soon as possible under the supervision of a veterinarian. Dirty cages can cause hutch burn in the genital area.</p>
15. Checking a rabbit's tail.	<p><u>Key points:</u> Rabbit tails should be straight and pointed at the end. Mother rabbits may bite the tip of the tail of a kit while cleaning the rabbit. Tails can curl to the side. This is known as screw tail. Tails also can be dead.</p>
16. Checking fur quality (color, density,	<p><u>Key points:</u> When looking at the fur you are looking for three basic things. One is color. Color specifications for a specific breed or variety will be outlined in the ARBA Standard of Perfection. Another trait you</p>

<p>texture, molt, free from stains).</p>	<p>view is density. Density refers to how close the hair follicles are packed together. If you blow into a dense coat, you will notice that you will not see any skin at the base of the hair. Texture of coat refers to the feel of the coat. As rabbit's transition from a baby coat to an adult coat, the amount and length of guard hairs will change. As the guard hairs cover the rabbit, the texture will develop. As rabbit's molt or prepare to molt (loose fur), their texture quality will decline. You can check to see if a rabbit is changing coats, by blowing into the coat and looking for new growth at the base of the hair follicles.</p> <p>It is very important to keep rabbit cages clean. Male rabbits will spray the side of a solid cage and then rub their fur against the side of the cage. This can stain the coat of the rabbit and make the feel of the coat tacky. This is known as hutch stain. You can tell how clean a rabbit cage is by looking at the bottom of the paw of a rabbit. If the paw is yellow, the cages need pressure washed! If the paws are clean, the cage floor is clean.</p> <p>Fur mites can be seen in the coat of an infected rabbit. They will appear as white arthropods. Immediate treatment is necessary to stop spreading to other rabbits. Condition refers to the amount of body flesh the rabbit carries. To check the condition of the rabbit, you should rub the palm of your hand over the spine of the rabbit. You should not feel bone. You should feel flesh. You do want to check the belly of the rabbit as its sitting in a posed condition. The belly should be firm and not potbellied. Pot bellies can be a sign of parasites.</p>
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Evaluation:

Students will be able to demonstrate mastery of the skills outlined in this lesson during a practicum test.