

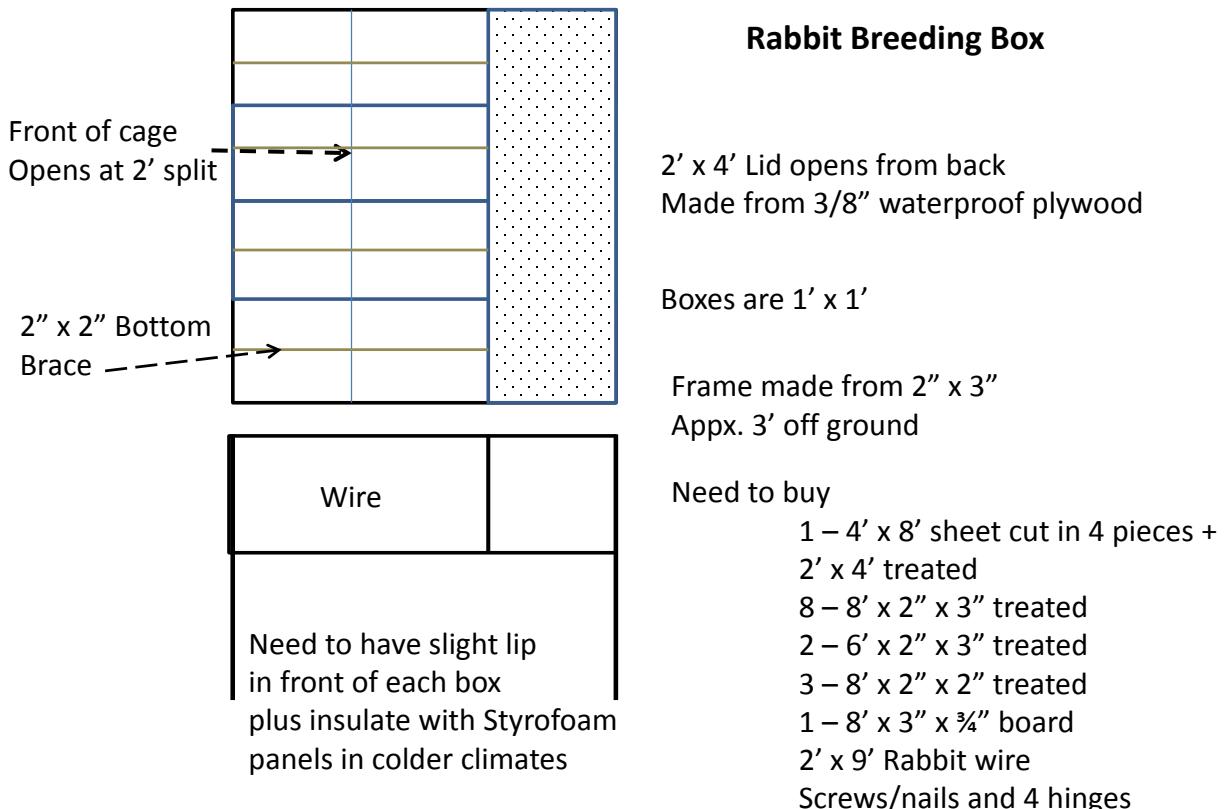
## Rabbit Breeding for Restocking

Bruce Gabrielson – Tikiline Beagles – April 2013

Regardless of how well your wild or tame rabbits do in the starting pen, it's always a good idea to have a constant source of new babies or outcrossed rabbits for restocking. This is particularly important for those with small enclosures, with a fox or hawk problem, and also clubs that are constantly short on rabbits. If you have room to keep at least two does and can find an outcrossed buck every few months, the following will work to keep your pen well supplied with plenty of rabbits.

### Whelping Boxes

My whelping pen is shown below. In my case I have 4 individual boxes, one for the buck and three for does.



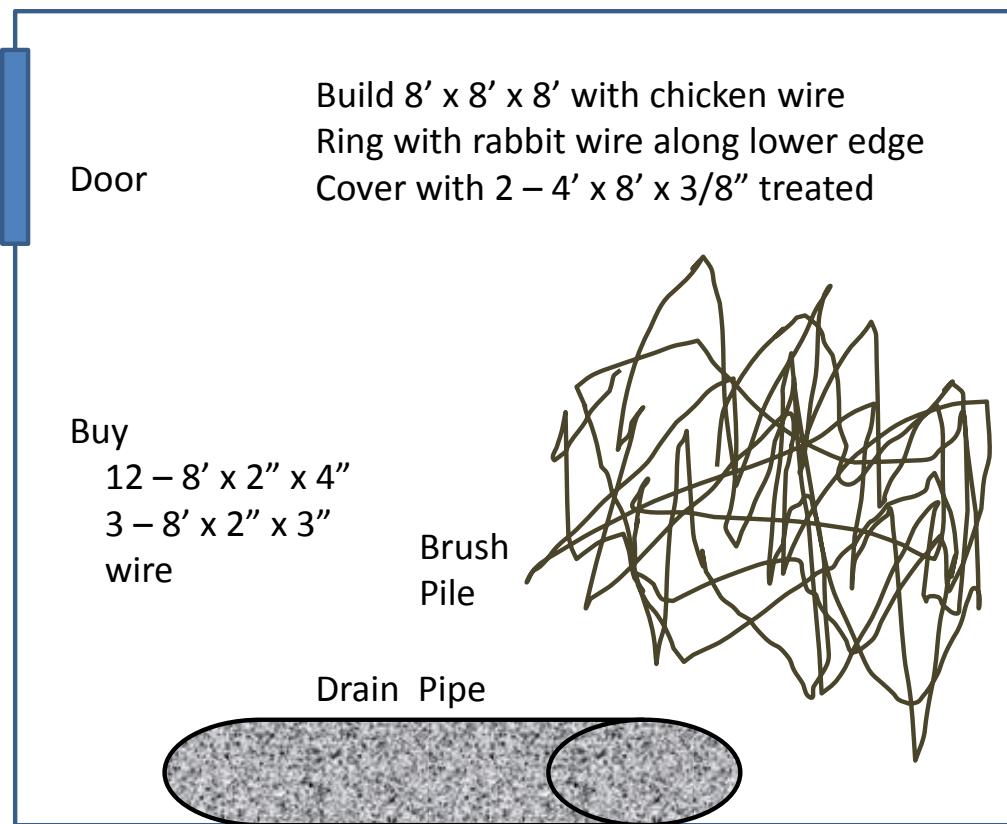
When the doe is ready, bring her to the buck's pen and leave her there for around 24 hours. Rabbits will have litters within about 30 days after breeding. Baby rabbits should be well enclosed in the whelping box until they are at least 10 days old. You can re-breed a doe when the kits are at least 5 weeks old.

As shown, my regular rabbit boxes are about one foot by 1 foot and are used all the time for whelping. The floor of the box is filled to the lip with pine chips about 25 days after breeding. Some people use

hay. About a week after the babies are born change the bedding but try to keep the fur for a full 10 days.

### Outside Adjustment Enclosure

Keep the babies with the mother in the whelping box until weaned at around 5-6 weeks and then put them outside in a covered ground enclosure. Details on my covered enclosure are shown below. If no other babies are in the enclosure you can put the mother outside with them for a week to help relieve stress.



The outside enclosure should have a brush pile with the bottom of the pile dry. Cover the top of the pile with a piece of tarp if necessary. There should also be a 6-8" 4' long drain pipe in the enclosure. I use drain pipes since I have them in my starting pen and I've noticed young rabbits use them while they are little for escaping nearby hounds. A picture of my outside enclosures and pens are shown below.

The door on the enclosure should be high enough that you won't need to stoop to go inside and catch young rabbits to turn lose. Keep the young ones in the enclosure for 6 weeks. Male and female baby rabbits must be separated from each other at about 10 weeks of age, so turning them out in your big training enclosure at 6-7 weeks will ensure they have the best chance to thrive.

## Location

The final part of this article deals with where to put the rabbit breeding pen. I've seen rabbit breeding pens both inside and outside the enclosure. Mine are located close to my kennels. Some folks say that locating the pen close to your kennels will either make your hounds get used to the scent so they don't smell it or keep them agitated. This hasn't been a problem for me as far as I can tell. My closest kennel is about 10 ft. away with no line of sight for any kennel to the pen. My pens are near to my chicken coop. The chickens keep the rodents and bugs down as well as a good source for raw eggs when my bitches are close to whelping.

