

Observations of young rabbit behaviour at different cage densities

S u m m a r y

Behaviour is a complex system of body reactions to environmental signals. Specific patterns of animal behaviour that are typical of an organism and make survival possible, are manifested in response to the changes that take place. Weaning of rabbits from their mothers is a key period of animal growth. Many scientists and breeders find it appropriate to wean mothers while leaving the young rabbits in the same cage or pen in which they were born. This is due to stress that occurs in rabbits being moved and results in developmental anomalies and reduced immunity of the animal to disease. In practical breeding, rabbit weaning is used the most often. The number of animals moved into one cage depends on its size. Cage stocking density is one of the major factors affecting the rate and consistency of rabbit growth. The aim of the present study was to observe the behaviour of infant rabbits during the postweaning period (days 35-90 of age) at different cage densities. The study showed that intensive commercial breeding modifies behaviour as new behavioural forms overlap the old forms. In the examined group of animals, behavioural anomalies resulting from the stress were found. The present study may provide guidelines for newly established farms concerning the conditions that have to be created to make animals easily adapted to a new environment. The results obtained may help Polish producers to improve the profitability of slaughter rabbit production.