

THE LITTER TRAY

Rabbit urine can be colourful! Anything from white to yellow or even red is normal. Signs of trouble include the bunny straining to pass urine, or blood in the urine (a red patch in a lighter coloured pool of urine).

Rabbits droppings should look like plump raisins. You may also notice "caecotrophs" occasionally - soft, dark shiny droppings usually eaten directly from the anus. If you see caecotrophs often, make sure your rabbit is eating a healthy diet and have him checked by the vet.

BEHAVIOUR

Rabbits are prey animals who conceal signs of illness. If your bunny is quieter than normal; sitting in a crouched position; hopping with difficulty; or grinding his teeth, he may be ill or in pain. Check him over and seek advice from your vet.

WHICH FUEL AND HOW MUCH?

Your bunny will only stay healthy if he eats the right food! A healthy diet consists mainly of hay or grass, plus small quantities of a good quality rabbit food. You can feed dark leafy greens and vegetables too. Don't let your rabbit get fat. Overweight bunnies can develop all sorts of problems including flystrike and sore hocks.

Never change your rabbit's diet suddenly - switch foods over a period of at least 1-2 weeks.

ANNUAL SERVICING

Your bunny should be vaccinated against two killer diseases: myxomatosis and VHD. He'll need booster injections every year. When you take your bunny for his vaccinations your vet should check your bunny thoroughly (including his teeth and weight) and you can ask questions about caring for your rabbit.

Rabbit medicine is quite specialised: you may be referred to another vet if your bunny requires surgery or specialised treatment.

NEUTERING

It's a good idea to have all pet rabbits neutered - male and female. Neutered rabbits are happier, healthier, much easier to litter train, and can live with another bunny without fighting or breeding. It's particularly important to have female rabbits spayed to prevent uterine cancer.

EMERGENCIES: WHEN TO RING THE VET IMMEDIATELY!

- Rabbit has difficulty breathing; or blueish lips and tongue
- Rabbit is limp, floppy, cold, or hasn't eaten for 12 hours
- Uncontrollable bleeding
- Flystrike
- Severe diarrhoea
- Fractured back or leg
- Rabbit is in pain



This leaflet is brought to you by the Rabbit Welfare Fund - the charitable wing of the Rabbit Welfare Association.

If you love rabbits, please consider supporting the Rabbit Welfare Fund. You can make a donation, or you may like to join the RWA. As well as fund-raising activities, most RWA members kindly make a small donation to the RWF in addition to their annual £17.50 RWA membership fee. RWA members receive a fabulous quarterly magazine packed with health, behaviour and care advice to help you to build a wonderful relationship with your bunny - whether she/he lives indoors or out.

To contact the RWA/Rabbit Welfare Fund:
Ring the RWA National Helpline on 0870 046 5249

**Write to us at PO Box 603, Horsham,
West Sussex RH13 SWL.**

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BUNNY M.O.T

HOW TO KEEP YOUR RABBIT RUNNING SMOOTHLY



Keeping your rabbit running smoothly isn't difficult, but it's important to recognise problems early. If you check your bunny carefully you will soon become familiar with his eating habits, behaviour, and general body condition.



NOSE - CLEAN AND DRY.

Rabbits don't get colds, so if your bunny sneezes frequently, or has a runny nose, take him to a vet.

EYES - CLEAN AND BRIGHT

Runny eyes are commonly due to a scratch or dust, but may be something more serious and must be seen by a vet. Bathing the eye may help temporarily, but probably won't cure the problem.

EARS - CLEAN AND DRY

Rabbits have big ears, but they're usually trouble-free. See the vet if your bunny is shaking his head frequently; scratching his ears, or has lots of ear wax.

SKIN AND FUR - CLEAN, EVEN AND SHINY

Rabbits moult several times a year - don't panic if fur starts dropping out in handfuls! It's important to brush moulting rabbits every day.

"Dandruff" is usually caused by mites. Treatment usually involves a series of injections. Don't use flea sprays without asking the vet - some products are dangerous to bunnies. Areas of bare, red or sore skin should be seen by the vet.



TAIL AND BOTTOM - CLEAN AND DRY

Check your rabbit's bottom daily and keep it clean. Flies can lay eggs on soiled fur and hatch into maggots which eat into the flesh. This is "flystrike". If you find fly eggs or maggots on your rabbit, call the vet immediately.

Rabbits have scent glands - clefts at either side of the genital region. If they fill with smelly wax you can clean them gently with a damp cotton bud.



TEETH

Rabbit teeth never stop growing and if the top and bottom teeth don't line up correctly, they'll grow too long and the bunny won't be able to eat properly.

Front teeth are easy to see - just fold back the top lip. You can't check the back teeth at home, but if they are causing problems your bunny might dribble; lose weight; change his favourite foods; or stop eating altogether.

Rabbits with dental problems may not like having their heads touched, and sometimes have bumps along the lower jaw.

If you think your rabbit has a tooth problem, take him to the vet. He'll probably need to be sedated or anaesthetised for a careful examination. Clipping teeth at home is no longer advised.



Overgrown front teeth

FEET

Nails need to be trimmed every few months. You can do this at home, but ask the vet to teach you. Rabbits use their front paws as a handkerchief so look out for wet, matted fur - your rabbit may have a running nose or eye.

HOCKS

A small bare pink patch is normal, especially in large rabbits. Sore hocks (red, broken or infected skin) need to be treated by a vet.