

## Check your rabbit's health

If you have any questions about your rabbit's health please do phone and ask to speak to one of our nurses.



### Your healthy rabbit should be:

- Alert, active, curious, bright-eyed and have a good coat.
- Hopping about (rather than walking), + the occasional mad half hour.
- Always hungry, and eating most of the day. Drinking lots of water.
- Grooming regularly, and have a clean bottom.
- Passing plump, firm rabbit droppings (currants).

### Worrying signs to watch out for:

- Not eating, Inactive, Uninterested.
- Passing very small "currants", or none at all.
- Drooling - a wet face, chin or front legs usually indicates mouth pain.
- A bad smell or a dirty bottom.

All of the above should be considered to be emergencies.

Rabbits deteriorate very quickly.

See the vet as soon as possible.

### Nursing a sick rabbit:

- Drinking lots of water is vital! Offer the water in an open bowl. Don't rely on a water bottle - they deliver water too slowly and require great effort.
- Assist feeding by placing small amounts of nursing food into the mouth every hour or so. Use vegetable baby foods or special recovery foods from the vet.
- The vet will provide you with medicines that relieve pain, stimulate appetite and fight infection.

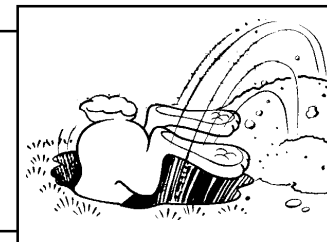
Breed	Ideal Weight	Life expectancy
Dutch	2 - 2.3kg	8 yrs -12 yrs for rabbits neutered young.
Dwarflop	2 - 2.4kg	5 yrs - 10 yrs for entire rabbits.
English	2.7 - 3.6kg	<u>Pregnancy</u> (Gestation) = 31 days (29 - 35days)
Lionhead	1.4 - 1.7kg	Litter size is 4 - 10. Weaning at 7 -8 wks
MiniLop	1.5 - 1.7kg	<u>Normal body temperature</u>
Netherland Dwarf	0.9 - 1.1kg	101.5F - 103.0F, 38.5C - 39.5C

Nov2011@VHC

Name

Date

## Top Priorities for your Pet Rabbit



- GET THE DIET RIGHT!**
  - Feed mainly a GOOD QUALITY HAY (90% - 100% of the diet). We stock a top quality Timothy Hay which most rabbits love.
- VACCINATION against two highly infectious lethal viruses.**
  1. MYXOMATOSIS (6-monthly) - (from 6 wks of age)
  2. VHD (VIRAL HAEMORRHAGIC DISEASE) - (from 10 wks)

**Indoor rabbits need the vaccine just as much as outdoor rabbits.**  
Why? - because biting insects that carry Myxomatosis fly inside, and because VHD virus survives and travels on shoes, clothes and hay.
- NEUTERING for male and female rabbits from 4mo of age**

**MALE rabbits** to reduce aggression and spraying in the house.  
**FEMALE rabbits** to reduce aggression, and to reduce the risk of cancer of the uterus. (an 80% risk in females over 5yrs old!).
- TEETH - need to be checked every 3 months by the vet**

Keep the teeth healthy by feeding correctly (see inside).
- PREVENT E.CUNICULI - Use "Panacur Rabbit" daily for 9 days, 2 to 4 times a year to prevent this common & serious rabbit infection.**
- PREVENT FLY STRIKE** (maggots around the rear end) -  
**For protection throughout the fly season apply "Rearguard" in April, June and August.** Rearguard is a safe insect growth regulator that stops maggots developing and prevents fly strike.
- WEIGHT - Check your rabbit's weight regularly.**

Weight loss is usually a sign of ill health. (see the vet right away).  
Overweight rabbits should be slimmed down by feeding hay only.
- HEALTH INSURANCE - well worth it for peace of mind.**

**Visit our website: [www.vet-healthcentre.co.uk](http://www.vet-healthcentre.co.uk)**

**Daisy Street Veterinary Centre, Daisy St. Blackburn (01254) 53622**

Vets: John Davies MRCVS, David Higginson MRCVS, Sam Purcell MRCVS

Practice Manager: Ruth Swan VN BSc(Hons) PhD



## Enriching your rabbit's environment

**RABBITS NEED SPACE** Minimum recommended size for a hutch and run for a pair of rabbits is: Hutch 6' x 2' x 2' and Run 8' x 4'.

**RABBITS NEED COMPANY** - Ideally keep rabbits in small groups of 2- 8 rabbits. Litter mates usually get on well. Prevent aggression (and breeding) by neutering. Provide plenty of living space. Provide lots of hide holes, things to climb

in and on (pipes, cardboard boxes etc.) - this allows rabbits to get away from each other when they need to. Possible combinations for rabbits include :- male + female, male + male (but not if near to females!), male + several females, avoid 2 males + female. It's now generally accepted that rabbits and guinea pigs should not be housed in the same enclosure. Guinea pigs usually get bullied or trampled by rabbits. **TOYS** - Rabbits love to chew. It's good for their teeth. Provide something interesting every day for your rabbit to chew on. "Nylabone" dog chews, rabbit treats such as softwood gnawing blocks, sticks, leaves, branches of trees (esp. fruit trees), small cardboard or wood containers. Avoid objects that are sharp or poisonous.

**ACTIVITY** An outside run is essential for regular exercise, grazing and digging. Inactive caged rabbits develop weak bones which can result in a broken back (cage paralysis).

**HANDLING** - Rabbits appreciate regular gentle handling once they have got used to it. Handling also gives you an opportunity to examine your rabbit for signs of ill health. Long-haired rabbits (angora type) require regular grooming. Don't pick up a rabbit by the ears. Lift by holding the scruff and support the rear end firmly.

**HOUSE RABBITS** - Rabbits can be kept successfully in the house like dogs and cats. They readily learn to use a litter tray, will play, and come when called. They'll hum when they're happy.

### LOOKING AFTER YOUR RABBIT'S HOME

- ✓ The hutch should be waterproof, draughtproof, escapeproof, easy to clean, in the shade from direct sun in summer, and sheltered from extremes of weather.
- ✓ Make your rabbits home safe from dogs and foxes.
- ✓ The hutch must be large enough for your rabbit to stretch fully up to the roof and to hop 3 times along it's length. Two rabbits need twice the space.
- ✓ Use clean dry straw, hay or woodchips for bedding. Or a good commercial bedding such as "Russell Rabbit Bedding" (dust free, absorbent and has a natural fungicide to keep environment healthy and hygienic).
- ✓ Remove soiled bedding daily. It helps to use a small cat litter tray with bedding in it in the corner of the hutch used for toileting. This can be removed and cleaned easily. Keep the hutch dry. Avoid condensation in the hutch. Rabbits tolerate cold well, but not dampness. They don't mind playing out in the rain if there is a dry bed to run back to.
- ✓ Thoroughly clean out the hutch weekly and use a safe disinfectant such as "Home Help" - safe to use even when the rabbit is in the hutch.
- ✓ Clean the food & water bowls and water bottle daily. Feed hay in a hay rack.

"A healthy rabbit is always a hungry rabbit"



## GET THE DIET RIGHT!

Hay, Grass, Hay, Grass, More Hay and Grass - and not much else!!

### CORRECT FEEDING

1. **Rabbits eat grass. Good quality hay is as good as grass.** Rabbits that eat only grass or hay are much less likely to develop dental problems, have bowel problems, become overweight or have a messy bottom. Hay is 20% - 24% fibre.

● Rabbits need this high level of fibre to maintain normal digestion.

● The teeth need to grind fibre to keep them healthy and strong.

Too little hay and the teeth will overgrow resulting in irreversible damage to the bones of the skull and jaw. Even high quality commercial diets do not have enough fibre (14% fibre is typical).

2. **A small amount of good quality commercial pellet food can be fed but is not essential.** Supreme Selective and Burgess Excel are reliable.

Avoid muesli-type mixes - these result in selective eating (imbalanced diet).

3. **Feed some freshly grass, garden weeds or twigs and leaves from fruit trees daily. A piece of carrot can be used as a chew toy.**

4. **AVOID feeding anything that people eat!** If we can eat it - it hasn't enough fibre in it! Rabbits are not fruit eaters and although they love sweet things they are not good for them. OK a tiny taste won't do any harm, but be careful! And no toast, crisps, biscuits or chocolate! Don't be tempted to buy those rabbit treats and goodies from superstores, most of them are far too sweet and will cause serious bowel and tooth disorders.

5. **Fresh water daily in a water bottle or, ideally, in an open bowl.**

### Vaccination Protection

**Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) vaccination**

VHD is a new and very dangerous disease of rabbits. It first appeared in the U.K. in 1992 and is spreading. The virus can survive on the ground and be transmitted by hands, or on shoes or clothing.

**Myxomatosis vaccination**

Mxyomatosis causes swellings in the eyelids, head and skin. Usually fatal after 10 -14 days. Transmitted by biting insects such as fleas and mosquitoes. Even indoor rabbits can be bitten by insects.