



Congratulations on the arrival of your new rabbit! The vets, nurses and client care team here at the George Veterinary Hospital hope that you have many happy and healthy years together.

Nutrition

- ✓ **Hay/ Grass** – A rabbit's diet should mainly consist of fresh, good quality hay and grass and they should have access to this at all times. If feeding handpicked grass then it should be washed thoroughly and only picked from areas that are free from pollutants, pesticides and weed killers.
- ✓ **Dried Food** – Rabbits should be fed a good quality dry diet although they only need less than an egg cup a day!! Rabbits can be quiet fussy with dry food and will selective feed, if given the chance, so the best option is to feed a pellet food where all the biscuits look the same.
- ✓ **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables** – These are very good treats and should not be fed too often. Only certain things should be fed as a lot of fruit and veg may cause diarrhoea, for example dark greens. Here are some healthier options that can be fed in moderation:



- * Broccoli
- * Brussel sprouts (small amounts)
- * Cabbage (small amounts)
- * Celery
- * Dandelions (not the flower)
- * Spinach (small amounts)
- * Carrots and tops
- * Watercress
- * Fresh leafy greens
- * Apple (remove the seeds, these are poisonous)



Bottom Management

It is important that rabbits are not allowed to become overweight as this leads to problems with grooming and keeping their bottoms clean. A rabbit's bottom should be checked every day (more frequently on warm days) to ensure it is clean and free from matted fur and faeces.

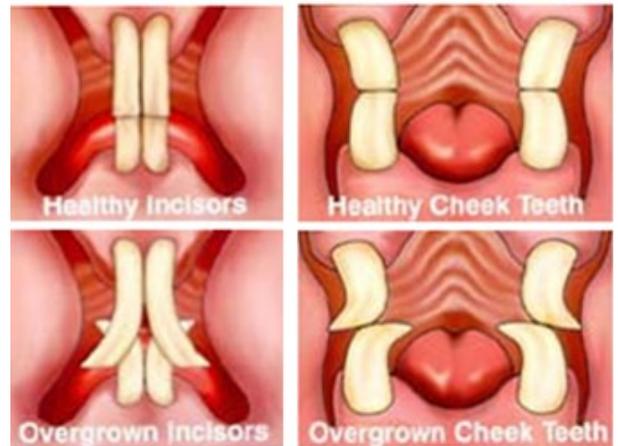


If a bottom is left dirty and matted, unfortunately it will only be a matter of time before the rabbit develops *flystrike*. This is a potentially fatal condition in rabbits of any age and begins when flies lay their eggs around the bottom. This can quickly become life-threatening if not spotted and treated immediately.



Teeth

One of the most common problems we see in pet rabbits is dental disease. Contributing factors include incorrect diet and breed-related problems. Rabbits' teeth grow continuously throughout their lives and if they don't meet and wear down properly then they will grow too long or grow sharp points and cause pain. Signs include rabbits being quieter than usual, eating less, losing weight or salivating. It is important to seek veterinary attention if you notice these signs.



Vaccinations

It is vitally important to vaccinate rabbits against myxomatosis and viral haemorrhagic disease (VHD). Both of these highly infectious diseases are very dangerous and can often result in death.

Myxomatosis is spread by blood-sucking insects such as fleas and mosquitoes. It can also be spread by close contact with infected rabbits. Symptoms of myxomatosis include lethargy, inappetence and fluid swellings around the eyes, lips, anus and genitals. Within a few days, these swellings can become so severe that they can cause blindness, eating and drinking becomes increasingly difficult and death usually follows within 7-10 days.

Viral haemorrhagic disease is shed in the urine, droppings and respiratory secretions of infected rabbits. It can be spread by direct contact between rabbits, or indirectly via biting insects, contaminated clothing or hutches. Symptoms of VHD are limited and rarely seen but include dullness and lethargy lasting a few hours. Signs may also include a fever and convulsions that progress rapidly to a terminal coma, with affected rabbits dying within 12-36 hours.

More recently, a new strain of the VHD virus has emerged, known as VHD2. It was first recognised a few years ago but more recently has become increasingly prevalent. Symptoms are similar to VHD1 but in many cases they present even more acutely.

Fortunately, there is a combined vaccine that will prevent myxomatosis and VHD1. This vaccine can be given from 6 weeks of age and is repeated annually. A separate vaccine called *Filavac* is available to protect against VHD2 and can be administered from 10 weeks of age.

Please speak to one of our clinical team about the most appropriate vaccination protocol for your rabbit.



E. cuniculi

Many rabbits are infected with *E. cuniculi* which is a protozoan (a single-celled organism) *E. cuniculi* can cause a variety of signs including head tilt, hind limb paralysis and kidney problems. Many rabbit experts recommend treating new rabbits daily with Panacur for 28 days to eliminate this parasite and prevent problems. Panacur can also be used as a prevention, it is recommended to dose daily for 9 days and repeated 2-4 times a year.



Neutering



Most females are territorial and aggressive from around 4-6 months of age, they may bite their owners as well as attack the other rabbits in the house. Also up to 80% of female rabbits that have not been spayed develop uterine cancer by 5 years of age.

Male rabbits make great pets but can have some draw backs if they are not neutered. Most are territorial and frequently spray urine; aggression is also a common problem. This is why, here at the George we strongly recommend neutering your rabbit. It can be done from 4-6 months old and will help keep your rabbit happy and healthy.

Insurance

Insurance for rabbits is now widely available and is definitely something to consider. The level of care that can now be given to rabbits, and the specialist services now available at referral centers, are very impressive but not always cheap. For more information please speak to one of our client care team.

Keeping Active

Rabbits need to keep active otherwise they will get bored and even become a little grumpy! It is important keep a rabbit stimulated with toys, games and challenges to ensure they get the exercise and mental stimulation they need.

Try not to make it too easy to get the food they love by hiding it around the hutch or home. Encouraging them to work for their treats will help burn the calories and keep them entertained!

**Please contact us if you have any
questions or concerns on**

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