



Information sheet

Rabbits

Diet -

- Rabbits need grass pellets only, as mixed feeds often lead to selective feeding, good quality grass pellets include Burgess's Super Excel or Supreme.
- They also need good quality hay to help wear down their teeth, such as Western Timothy, Oxbow or Excel.
- Some fresh vegetables, such as carrots, cabbage, and broccoli, daily are good but not too much as it can cause diarrhoea.
- Fresh water every day.

Environment

- Rabbits get bored easily so need stimulation.
- Give an exercise area with places to hide and shade from weather, be careful to keep it well secured.
- Try to give access to hard areas to keep claws worn down.
- Always keep all areas clean to prevent flies being attracted and clean up spilt food.
- Rabbits can be very aggressive toward each other and must always be mixed together slowly and under supervision.
- Rabbits tend to bully guinea pigs and have very different diets so it is best not to keep them together.

Vaccination

- Myxomatosis – spread by flying and jumping insects so all rabbits are at risk (even house rabbits). Symptoms include swollen eyes, genitals and breathing problems. A painful condition that often results in euthanasia.
- Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) a fatal disease that shows little signs and kills very quickly,
- A single vaccine is available to protect against myxomatosis and VHD strains 1 and 2

Worming

Rabbits can get an internal parasite called E-cuniculi; symptoms of infection include head tilt, falling over, dragging legs, wobbly walk, and anorexia. Once signs are seen it can be very difficult to treat. To help prevent this we recommend worming with Panacur every 3 – 6 months.

Neutering

MALE. - Castration prevents unwanted litters and fighting.

FEMALE. Prevent unwanted litters, development of large dewlaps, prevention of nesting and prevention of some cancers. All neutering has to be done under a general anaesthetic and this does carry a risk.

PROBLEMS

- Anorexia (not eating) – rabbits must eat every day, if not then they MUST be seen by a vet, you can syringe baby cereal paste into the mouth in the meantime.
- Ears – they can get crust in their ears which can be ear mites and is painful, they need treatment as soon as possible. A tilted ear or head can be a sign of e-caniculi an internal parasite they need to be treated and seen by a vet.
- Eyes – these can run this may be a sign of an infection or blocked tear ducts which can be linked to poor teeth seek veterinary attention.
- Fly strike – Flies can lay eggs on your rabbit and the resulting maggot's can eat the rabbits flesh, the whole process can be fatal within 48 hours. Vital to check your rabbits every day and keep them and their bedding clean. Preventative treatments help deter flies include Rear Guard and Xenex.
- Nose – Nasal discharge can be a sign of infection or blocked tear ducts.
- Obesity – rabbits can become overweight, try to give only daily amounts as recommended of grass pellets (give adlib hay), encourage exercise.
- Saliva – excessive salivation can be a sign of dental pain.
- Skin – rabbits commonly get a mite called Cheyletiella that looks like excessive dandruff, it needs treating by a vet. Try to use sterilised hay and bedding to help prevent. Rabbits can get swellings around their mouths and necks these are often painful abscess and may be linked to poor teeth.
- Teeth – the most major problem seen in rabbits. Rabbits teeth grow all their lives and must meet to grind down, if their diet does not include enough things to grind these teeth or the teeth do not match then the teeth form sharp edges that can cause ulcers and sore in the rabbits mouth and so stop them eating. Always give plenty of hay and only used grass pellets for food. It is a good idea to get your rabbits teeth checked regularly especially as they get older.