

Burgess[™]
SINCE 1790

Excel



THE FIVE RABBIT WELFARE NEEDS

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STAMPING OUT
SELECTIVE FEEDING
WITH
**MUESLI
FREE**
CO.

A BRITISH FAMILY COMPANY, CARING FOR ANIMALS FOR GENERATIONS

We're a proud, independent, family-owned business based in the heart of Yorkshire, with roots in farming and animal care stretching back over 300 years. Today, we combine that heritage with nutritional science to create high-quality food that helps pets live happy and healthy lives.

Every recipe we make is developed by our in-house experts, including vets and nutritionists, so you can trust that what's in the bowl is carefully balanced and backed by science.

Our Burgess Excel range has been supporting small animal health since 1998, when we pioneered the first single-component nugget for rabbits to help prevent selective feeding. We've championed nuggets over muesli ever since because better nutrition means better welfare.



RABBIT AWARENESS WEEK

Education is just as important as nutrition and that's why we launched Rabbit Awareness Week in 2006.

RAW is a nationwide welfare campaign designed to help owners better understand rabbits' five welfare needs. Every year, thousands of rabbit owners, vets, retailers and charities come together to share advice, raise awareness and champion better rabbit care.

Throughout the campaign you'll find:

- Free rabbit care guides
- Downloadable education packs
- Posters and social content
- Fun activities for families
- Expert-led welfare advice

And the support doesn't stop when the week ends. Our resources are available all year round, helping owners make informed choices and give their rabbits the happy, healthy lives they deserve.



Scan to explore, download and get involved:



WELCOME TO EXCEL'S GUIDE TO CARING FOR YOUR RABBITS.

Please read through this guide and keep it handy for reference.

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INTRODUCTION TO RABBITS



RABBIT FACT FILE



LIFE EXPECTANCY: 8-12 YEARS

RABBIT NAMES:

MALE: BUCK, **FEMALE:** DOE, **YOUNG:** KIT

ORDER: LAGOMORPHA

FAMILY: LEPORIDAE

SCIENTIFIC NAME: ORYCTOLAGUS CUNICULUS

DIET CATEGORY: HERBIVORES

FUN FACT!

When happy, rabbits will perform a joyful jump called a 'Binky'.

DID YOU KNOW?

A group of rabbits is called a colony, a nest, or a warren.

FUN FACT!

According to the Guinness World Records, as of November 2025 the oldest living rabbit is Herbie Dubham. Herbie lives in Surrey; UK and is 15 years and 82 days old!



DID YOU KNOW?

Rabbits teeth never stop growing! Their teeth are open rooted and will grow throughout their life, meaning they need lots of hay to help keep them healthy and prevent overgrowth.

DID YOU KNOW?

Rabbits are crepuscular, which means they are most active at Dawn and Dusk.

FUN FACT!

Just like their wild counterparts, pet rabbits love to dig!

FUN FACT!

Rabbits will purr when they are happy, content and relaxed. It's called tooth purring or tooth chattering

FUN FACT!

Rabbits have incredible vision! They can see in almost every direction with their nearly 360° vision.

DID YOU KNOW?

A female rabbit can get pregnant very young, at just four months old. Rabbits are only pregnant for four weeks and can have litters of up to ten babies. She can also get pregnant again within hours of giving birth!

DID YOU KNOW?

Rabbits are very social animals and are happiest when living with other rabbit friends.

DID YOU KNOW?

Rabbits are not rodents! They may look similar to many pet rodents, and they were originally classified as rodents, however in 1912 they were reclassified as Lagomorphs, along with Hares and Pikas.

FUN FACT!

Rabbits ears can grow very big and are responsible for their excellent hearing! Rabbits can hear high pitched frequencies that humans cannot. Their large ears also help them to regulate their body temperature.



GETTING RABBITS

Rabbits can make delightful pets for several reasons. Rabbits are lively and playful animals, and it's a pleasure to watch them hop, sprint, and explore their surroundings. They are sociable and intelligent creatures. With proper care, companionship from other rabbits, and attention from a caring owner, they can form strong bonds and become wonderful pets. Rabbits naturally keep themselves clean and can be trained to use a litter tray.

There are several options when it comes to adopting rabbits, including rescue centres, breeders, and pet shops. Each has its advantages, but it is essential to do thorough research before making a decision. Ensure that the establishment is a reputable and registered charity or breeder.

There are many rabbits in rescues around the country that are looking for their forever home, and if you do choose to get rabbits we'd recommend looking into adoption through rescue centre such as Blue Cross, RSPCA, SSPCA, Raystede or Woodgreen Pets Charity where you'll get great advice on how to look after your bunnies. Rescues centre's will also have already neutered your rabbit, provided their vaccinations and will provide you with lifetime back up.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Rabbits are social animals and should always be kept in bonded pairs or groups
- Rabbits have complex needs and require specialised care
- Rabbits can live up to 12 years, sometimes longer and are not a short term easy pet
- Who will look after the rabbits when you are unable to, during holidays for example

PREPARING FOR YOUR RABBITS

Before welcoming your new rabbits home, make sure you have all the essentials that they need. If in doubt speak to a veterinary professional or a reputable charity.

You will also need to register your new rabbits with an exotic vet and look into pet insurance.

SHOPPING LIST

- Excel Feeding Hay
- Excel Rabbit Nuggets suitable for their life stage
- Suitable bedding
- 2 Litter trays (one for digging and one for the toilet)
- Suitable housing
- Toys and enrichment
- Water bottle and bowl
- Puzzle feeder
- Pet carrier
- Grooming kit
- Tasty hay based treats

CARING FOR YOUR RABBITS

It is important to know what to look out for when it comes to your rabbits health. Rabbits are prey animals so will hide signs of ill-health, which is why it is very important to get to know what is normal for your bunny and when to take action.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I TAKE MY RABBITS TO THE VETS?

You should take your rabbits to the vets every six months for a routine check up and rabbits need two vaccinations a year. If you are concerned about your rabbit's health or behaviour in between these times, always seek advice from your local veterinary practice.

SHOULD I MICROCHIP MY RABBITS?

It is good practice to microchip your rabbits. This can ensure that if they get lost, they can be identified and returned to you swiftly.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY RABBITS ARE ACTING DIFFERENT?

If one of your rabbits shows a change in behaviour or in their eating or drinking patterns you should seek the advice of a vet as soon as possible.

SHOULD I INSURE MY RABBITS?

Insuring your rabbits will help you to manage costs in the event of them needing veterinary treatment.

SHOULD I NEUTER MY RABBITS?

Neutering your rabbits will prevent unwanted litters and help to prevent any health concerns linked to their reproductive organs. Up to 80% of unspayed females develop uterine cancer by the age of five, but early spaying prevents this. Unneutered males can be aggressive, while neutered rabbits may be calmer and can live happily with both males and females.

SHOULD I WASH MY RABBITS?

Generally, washing rabbits is not necessary as they are capable of grooming themselves effectively. On occasions where your rabbits do become dirty, a gentle wipe with a damp cloth or baby fragrance-free and alcohol-free or water based wipe to the affected areas is usually sufficient. If your rabbits are unable to keep themselves clean, it could be a sign of other health issues and it would be recommended to seek veterinary advice.

WHAT ARE COMMON PROBLEMS TO LOOK OUT FOR?

There are a few common issues that some rabbits may be prone to, including obesity, dental disease, flystrike and gut stasis. To read more about common diseases see page 26.



HOUSE KEEPING

It is important that your rabbits' enclosure is clean and all 5 of their welfare needs are met at all times.

DAILY TASKS

- Clean and replenish litter tray and hay
- Removed soiled bedding material
- Wash and replenish water bowl/bottle
- Wash food containers
- Remove any uneaten food items
- Carry out a top to tail health check including grooming if necessary

WEEKLY TASKS

- Remove all items from the environment and clean thoroughly
- Clean the housing with an animal safe disinfectant and allow to dry
- Remove and replace all bedding materials. Keep a small amount of old, but unsoiled bedding material to maintain a familiar smell.

TOP TO TOE HEALTH CHECK

Daily health checks help you understand what's normal for your rabbits, supporting their wellbeing and enabling you to spot potential health issues early. Take care when handling your rabbits, and place them onto a non-slip surface, ensuring they are safe during their health check.



NOSE

Ensure the nose is clean and clear, with no discharge.

EYES

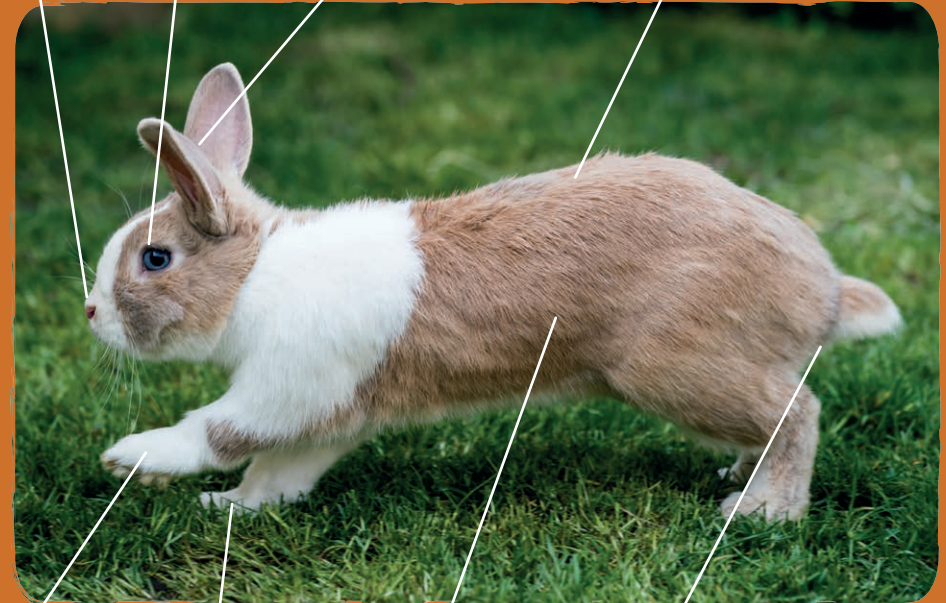
Ensure the eyes are bright and clear, with no signs of weeping.

EARS

Ensure the ears are clear with no signs of discharge or mites. Check base of ears for lumps.

FUR

Inspect your rabbits coat, it should be clean, free of bald spots and tangles. Part the fur to ensure the skin is healthy and flake free.



FEET

Check your rabbits feet, look for any loss of hair, redness, sores or wounds.

NAILS

Ensure your rabbits nails are not overgrown or curling into their feet.

BODY

Lightly feel down your rabbits body, ensure there are no lumps or bumps, or any signs of pain when being touched.

BOTTOM

Ensure your rabbits bottom is clean, dry and free from any stuck droppings. This is even more crucial in summer months to prevent flystrike (see page 28).

BEHAVIOUR

As much as physical health is important, behaviour is also essential. Ensure your rabbits are performing their natural behaviours and eating normally. If you are concerned about your rabbits health or behaviour, contact your exotic vet for advice.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Rabbits are prey animals, which means they instinctively hide signs of illness. Regular checks and preventative care are essential to help them live long, healthy lives.

PREVENTATIVE CARE

VET CHECKS:

Book a health check at least once a year. Your vet will assess weight, teeth, digestion and overall condition.

VACCINATIONS RVHD:

Your vet can advise on protection against serious diseases such as myxomatosis.

INSURANCE:

Pet insurance can help manage unexpected veterinary costs and ensure prompt treatment when needed.

DAILY CHECKS:

Make sure your rabbits are:

- Eating normally (especially hay)
- Drinking
- Passing plenty of droppings
- Bright and alert

**IF A RABBIT STOPS EATING,
THIS IS AN EMERGENCY AND
YOU SHOULD CONTACT YOUR
VET IMMEDIATELY!**

SPOTTING SIGNS OF ILL HEALTH

Seek veterinary advice if you notice:

- Reduced appetite or smaller/fewer droppings
- Changes in behaviour or activity
- Head tilt or balance issues
- Discharge from eyes or nose
- A wet or dirty bottom

Early treatment makes a big difference.



NEUTERING & MICROCHIPPING

Neutering is strongly recommended for both males and females. It prevents unwanted litters, reduces aggression and greatly lowers the risk of uterine cancer in females. It also helps rabbits live happily in bonded pairs.

Microchipping is advised so lost rabbits can be identified and safely returned.

GROOMING & NAIL CARE

Rabbits are naturally clean and should not be bathed. Immersing them in water can cause stress and illness.

BRUSHING:

Groom regularly (daily during moulting) using a soft rabbit brush. This reduces hair ingestion and allows you to check skin and body condition.

BOTTOM CHECKS:

Check daily to ensure the rear end is clean and dry, especially in warm weather when there is a risk of flystrike. Seek veterinary advice if you notice soiling.

NAIL TRIMS:

Check nails weekly.

Overgrown nails can cause pain and mobility problems. If you're unsure how to trim them safely, your vet or a qualified rabbit groomer can help.



**REMEMBER
WHEN IN DOUBT,
ALWAYS CONTACT
YOUR VET**

Rabbits are strict herbivores and naturally spend much of their time grazing on grasses and plants. They require a high-fibre diet to maintain healthy digestion. Ideally, their diet should consist of 85–90% good-quality hay and fresh grass, 5% fresh greens, 5% rabbit nuggets, plus unlimited fresh water. Follow the Excel 5 Step Feeding Plan on page 14 to help ensure a balanced diet.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FIBRE

A Rabbit's diet should consist of **85–90% feeding hay and fresh grass**. This part of the diet provides the **largest portion of fibre**, which is crucial for their digestive and dental health.

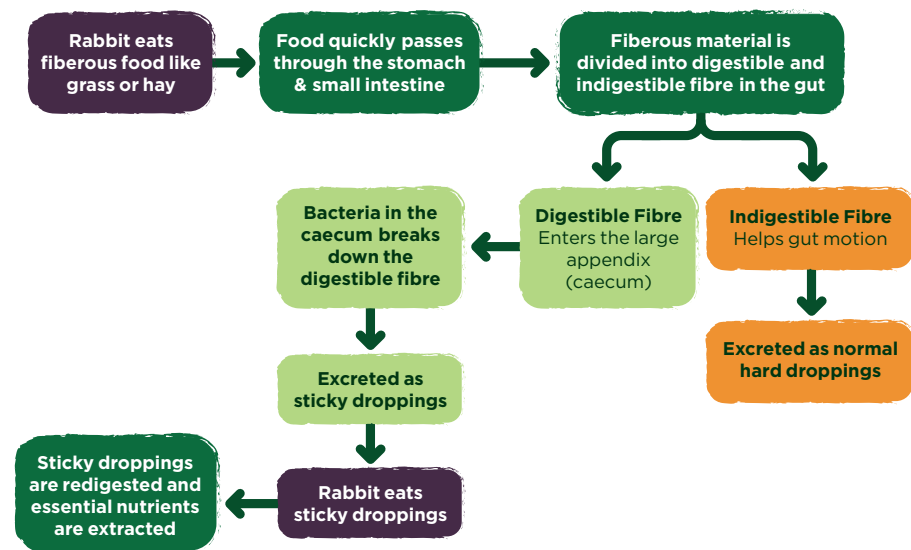
Fibre is divided into two types:

1. Indigestible fibre

- Passes through the digestive system largely unchanged
- Keeps the gut moving
- Stimulates appetite

2. Digestible fibre

- Fermented in the caecum by beneficial bacteria
- Broken down into nutrients that are reabsorbed when Rabbits eat their **caecotrophs**



Both types are essential to maintain healthy digestion, prevent gut stasis, and ensure overall wellbeing. Without the correct balance of fibre, rabbits can develop serious health problems.

SELECTIVE FEEDING & MUESLI STYLE DIETS

Muesli-style diets can encourage selective feeding, where rabbits eat only their favourite, tastier pieces and leave the high-fibre components, leading to nutritional imbalance.

To prevent selective feeding, offer a small daily portion of high-fibre, good-quality nuggets alongside good quality feeding hay instead of a muesli mix.



TRANSITIONING FROM MUESLI TO NUGGETS

If your rabbits are currently fed a muesli-style diet, transition them gradually to nuggets to avoid upsetting their sensitive digestive systems.



DON'T FORGET THE HAY!

THE EXCEL FEEDING PLAN

FEEDING HAY



EXCEL NUGGETS



NATURE SNACKS



FRESH GREENS



FRESH WATER



Step 1 EXCEL FEEDING HAY

Hay is vital for dental health (vets say on average 41-60% of rabbits have seen evidence of dental disease)*. We grow our hay in the heart of Yorkshire where it is barn dried and dust extracted to deliver the sweet smell and green colour which is characteristic of the best quality hay.



Step 2 EXCEL TASTY NUGGETS



Nuggets prevent selective feeding and help maintain digestive health, with prebiotics and an ideal blend of fibre. Research has shown that muesli-style foods lead to selective feeding. This can result in an unbalanced diet.

Step 3 EXCEL NATURE SNACKS

Snacks provide additional nourishment and promote emotional health by encouraging foraging. They're ideal for mixing through Excel Feeding Hay.



Step 4 & 5 FRESH GREENS & FRESH WATER

Feed a range of fresh greens to add variety. Ensure fresh water is always available.



DAILY

Aim to feed 5-6 greens a day. Mix and match - remember the bulk of the diet should be hay/grass!



TOXIC

If you suspect your rabbit has eaten a toxic plant, seek veterinary advice immediately.

THE EXCEL RANGE

HAY

ALL OUR HAY PRODUCTS ARE 100% NATURAL AND DUST EXTRACTED

EXCEL LONG STEM FEEDING HAY

A long stem, sweet smelling feeding Timothy hay that's irresistible and high in beneficial fibre (63%). The time of cutting and the drying process helps to maintain the nutritional goodness. Lush, green and long, it encourages chewing, which is essential for dental health and provides emotional enrichment.



EXCEL LONG STEM WITH MARIGOLD FEEDING HAY

Packed with flavour and fibre, this long-stem Timothy Hay with marigold keeps rabbits munching happily while supporting dental health, digestion, and natural foraging instincts. Fresh, tasty, and irresistible-feed freely each day alongside Burgess Excel Nuggets for a complete, balanced diet.



EXCEL HEDGEROW HERBS FEEDING HAY

Fresh, fragrant, fibre-rich Meadow hay to keep teeth trim, tummies happy and boredom at bay. This feeding hay is packed with hedgerow herbs, including nettle, to support urinary health—perfect daily forage. Available in 2.7kg bag.



EXCEL FEEDING HAY WITH DANDELION & MARIGOLD

A sweet smelling Timothy Hay with Dandelion and Marigold, high in beneficial fibre (63%). Timothy Hay is an excellent source of good quality, long fibre.



EXCEL FEEDING HAY DRIED FRESH GRASS

A barn dried Timothy grass harvested straight from the field that's naturally high in beneficial fibre (55%).



EXCEL HAY BOX

Our hay boxes are suitable for rabbits, guinea pigs & chinchillas and are made with 100% natural ingredients, packaged in a fully recyclable box.

Dust has been extracted to help protect your pet's respiratory health, and our hay is high in Beneficial fibre, which aids with digestion. Available in Meadow Hay or Timothy Hay.



BEDDING

EXCEL NAP AND NEST PAPER BEDDING

The Excel Nap & Nest is great for use as bedding and litter for your small animals. Our bedding is made from unused offcuts from the teabag production industry, which makes it super absorbent and soft on little paws.

Designed for use as litter and bedding, it's suitable for rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, and small animals. Now in a handy resealable bag.



THE EXCEL RANGE

NUGGETS

EXCEL TASTY NUGGETS FOR JUNIOR & DWARF RABBITS

Young and dwarf rabbits have higher metabolic rates than adults, so Excel Junior & Dwarf accounts for this through its higher protein level.



EXCEL TASTY NUGGETS FOR ADULT RABBITS

With four varieties to choose from: Mint, Oregano, Light and Nature's Blend, rabbits can enjoy variety in their diet.



EXCEL INDOOR ADULT RABBIT NUGGETS

With vitamin D, dandelion and nettle, Indoor Rabbit Nuggets have been specially formulated for the needs of indoor rabbits. Formulated with L-Carnitine to help maintain healthy weight.



EXCEL TASTY NUGGETS FOR MATURE RABBITS

Nuggets formulated to support rabbits through their golden years. With glucose to help support their joints and ingredients to help support brain health.



NATURE SNACKS

OUR RANGE OF NATURE SNACKS HAS BEEN DEVELOPED WITH ANIMAL NUTRITIONISTS TO MAKE SURE THAT NOT ONLY ARE THEY DELICIOUS FOR YOUR BUNNIES, BUT HEALTHY TOO!

EXCEL BAKED TREATS

Baked with love our Excel Herby Hearts, Fruity Feasts and Veg Patch Bites are irresistible to rabbits and are healthy too.

Available in three tempting flavours:

- Fruity Feasts** with Banana and Blueberry
- Herby Hearts** with Apple and Mixed Herbs
- Veg Patch Bites** with Root Vegetables



EXCEL MEADOW MUNCHIES

Our meadow munchies are compressed hay cookies made from a tasty blend of dried grasses, dandelion and camomile.



EXCEL FORAGE AND FEAST HAY BAR

Our hay bars are high in fibre and perfect for hand feeding. These tasty hay bars are made with natural ingredients and topped with delicious flowers - Rose, Cornflower and Marigold.



EXCEL FORAGE

Lovingly made, our delicious forage mixes are a healthy treat and are ideal for sprinkling on hay to encourage natural foraging behaviour. Luscious Leaves are made with a tempting mix of dandelion leaves, nettle leaves, red clover and ribwort and our Wildflower Forage are made with a tempting mix of rose, hibiscus, marigold & cornflower.



THE EXCEL RANGE

EXCEL FORAGE AND FEAST MINI BALES

Our Excel Forage & Feast Mini Bales are perfect boredom breakers for your rabbits. Available in four tasty options, Cornflower, Rosehip, Marigold and Chamomile. Made with natural ingredients, they are great enrichment to encourage foraging behaviour.



EXCEL BOTANICAL BLENDS HEDGEROW HERBS

Burgess Excel Botanical Blends Hedgerow Herbs, is a complementary feed for rabbits, guinea pigs and chinchillas, made with a delicious mix of Nettle leaf, Dandelion leaf, Marigold flower, Burdock root Cleavers Sprinkle a small handful of Botanical Blends, through Burgess Excel Feeding Hay to encourage natural foraging behaviour and, it comes in a handy tub perfect to reuse for storage of nuggets, hay or more forage! Feed in moderation.



BEHAVIOUR & COMPANIONSHIP

BETTER TOGETHER

Rabbits are social animals and should not live alone. A bonded pair or compatible group allows them to groom, rest and feel secure together. Neutered male-female pairs often bond most successfully. All rabbits living together should be neutered to prevent unwanted litters and reduce tension.

BONDING RABBITS

Introducing rabbits should be done gradually and in neutral space. Some chasing or mounting can be normal while they establish hierarchy, but persistent fighting is not.

If you're unsure, experienced rescue centres or rabbit-savvy vets can offer advice. Careful bonding helps build lifelong companionship.

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR

Rabbits communicate through body language. Relaxed rabbits may flop onto their side, groom each other or lie stretched out. Because they are prey animals, they can become fearful if startled. Biting or kicking is usually a sign of fear, not aggression.

LIVING WITH OTHER ANIMALS

Rabbits should not be housed with other species. Larger animals may cause stress, and rabbits can accidentally injure smaller pets such as guinea pigs. Rabbits are happiest living with other rabbits.

TIME WITH YOU

Rabbits enjoy gentle interaction and often prefer to be stroked at ground level where they feel safe. Sit quietly, let them approach you and build trust gradually. Daily interaction helps strengthen your bond.

HANDLING

Avoid picking rabbits up unless necessary. When lifting is required, support the chest and hindquarters securely and hold them close to your body. Calm, confident handling helps rabbits feel secure.



HOUSING

ROOM TO BE A RABBIT

Rabbits are active animals who need space to run, stretch upright and explore. A hutch alone is not enough. Their home should include a secure sleeping area permanently attached to a much larger exercise space.

As a guide, rabbits should have 24/7 access to a safe enclosed area of 3m x 2m x 1m high. More space is always better if you're able to offer this.

OUTDOOR LIVING

Outdoor housing should include a weatherproof shelter attached to a large, secure run. The sleeping area must be dry, well ventilated and free from draughts.

Housing should be fully predator-proof and escape-proof, with shade in summer and extra bedding in winter. Rabbits should have constant access to their run - not just occasional exercise time.



INDOOR LIVING

Rabbits can thrive indoors when given a large pen or rabbit-proofed room. Protect electrical cables, remove unsafe plants and provide non-slip flooring. Indoor rabbits still need room to move freely, along with safe hiding places and enrichment.



WHAT EVERY RABBIT HOME NEEDS

Rabbits feel safest when they have a quiet hideaway to retreat to. Each rabbit should have access to shelter, with separate sleeping and toilet areas.

Provide unlimited feeding hay at all times, fresh water and a large litter tray with paper-based litter.

Enrichment is essential. Tunnels, platforms and dig boxes help rabbits express natural behaviours and prevent boredom.

CLEANING & CARE

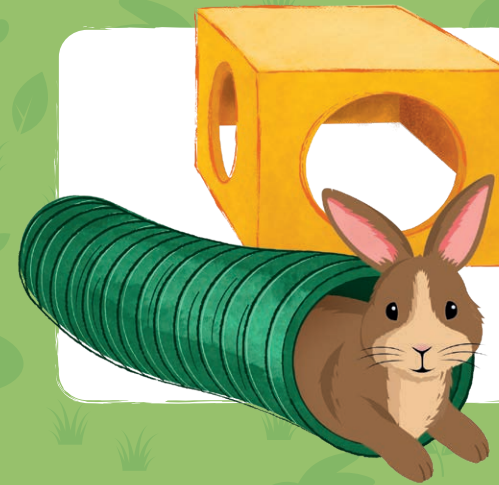
A quick daily tidy helps keep your rabbits comfortable, remove wet or dirty bedding, replace it with fresh, and refresh hay and water. Once a week, give the enclosure a thorough clean and once a month, carry out a deep clean by taking everything out and cleaning the housing fully using an animal-safe product before setting it back up with fresh bedding.

EXERCISE AND ENRICHMENT

Alongside safe, spacious housing, daily enrichment and exercise are essential to keep rabbits physically fit and mentally stimulated. Here are some great activities you can do with your rabbits:

FREE RANGE EXERCISE TIME OUT OF THEIR ENCLOSURE

If you have a safe secure garden or rabbit proof indoor space, allow your rabbits to explore. They may even binky, hop and run with excitement! This will help your rabbit to maintain a healthy bodyweight and help prevent boredom. This must be done under careful and constant supervision.



TUNNELS AND PLATFORMS

As rabbits are prey animals, they love to hide and run through tunnels. Include several hiding spaces and tunnels in their environment. Different levels can also aid curiosity and exploration, adding in small rabbit safe platforms can also enrich their environment.



FORAGING ACTIVITIES

Rabbits are natural foragers and making foraging activities will enrich their environment and encourage natural behaviours.

Try hiding dried flowers and herbs in their hay, or scattering their favourite hay, treats and forage on a tray for them to snack on. You could even use treat balls or puzzle feeders.

SAFE CHEW TOYS

Chewing is a natural behaviour and to discourage your rabbits chewing items they shouldn't be chewing, provide them with safe rabbit friendly options such as willow balls, apple tree sticks, and hay-based enrichment treats.



DIGGING BOXES

Rabbits in the wild would dig burrows and tunnel systems, this natural behaviour is also seen in pet bunnies. To encourage natural behaviours provide a digging space. This could be a cardboard box filled with hay and brown paper, large boxes filled with damp child safe play sand or even soil.



SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Rabbits are friendly companion animals and if introduced slowly they will learn to trust you. Sitting on the floor and getting down to your rabbits level will make them feel safer and they will slowly begin to trust you. You can also encourage them by hand feeding them rabbit friendly treats, gently grooming them and stroking them when they allow.

RABBIT VIRAL HAEMORRHAGIC DISEASE 1 (RVHD 1)

ABOUT THE VIRUS

RVHD 1 is an extremely infectious virus that is usually fatal. It is a calicivirus and was first recognised in 1984 during an outbreak in China. The virus has an incubation time of sixteen hours to three days. The virus causes catastrophic internal bleeding and rabbits are usually found dead, suddenly with no clear signs of prior illness.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION

The virus can survive for months in the environment, especially in cold temperatures. It is a myth that RVHD1 can only be caught through contact with an infected rabbit. It spreads through direct contact with infected rabbits or indirect contact via contaminated objects such as bedding, hay, clothing, and footwear.

As well as contact with an infected rabbit, the virus can also be carried by:

- Birds and insects and their droppings
- The wind
- Soles of shoes, car tyres, or other pets' feet
- An infected rabbits droppings
- Owners' hands or clothing

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of RVHD are not always apparent, the virus can cause sudden death without any noticeable signs, meaning it is very hard to spot and seek help. However if symptoms are seen, these may include lethargy, blood discharge from the nose or mouth and blood in faeces or urine.

PREVENTION

The most important step in preventing RVHD1 is annual vaccination. Vaccines are advised for all rabbits, even those kept indoors as the virus can be spread indirectly on bedding or clothing. For further information on vaccinations, speak with your veterinary practice.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment available for RVHD1, although your vet can offer supportive care. Including pain relief and fluid therapy.

PROGNOSIS

RVHD1 is usually fatal within a couple of days to weeks. There are very limited examples of rabbits surviving this disease.



RABBIT VIRAL HAEMORRHAGIC DISEASE 2 (RVHD 2)

ABOUT THE VIRUS

Rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease 2 (RVHD2) is a newer strain of the RVHD1. Cases of the disease were first reported in the UK in 2015. As with RVHD1 the virus also causes internal bleeding.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION

RVHD2 can be transmitted by both direct and indirect contact. As well as contact with an infected rabbit, the virus can also be carried by:

- Birds and insects and their droppings
- The wind
- Soles of shoes, car tyres, or other pets' feet
- An infected rabbits droppings
- Owners' hands or clothing

These are just a few examples of how RVHD2 can be carried. Realistically, there is no way to stop the virus getting into your rabbits' indoor or outdoor environment.

SYMPTOMS

RVHD2 often has no symptoms, meaning that it is very hard to spot early on. Where symptoms do occur these signs are easily confused with other health conditions: fever, lethargy, neurological signs (coma) and blood clotting problems. Like with RVHD1 sudden death occurs before any signs of illness can be noticed.

PREVENTION

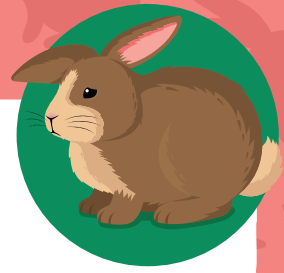
The most important step in preventing RVHD2 is annual vaccination. Vaccines are advised for all rabbits, even those kept indoors as the virus can be spread indirectly on bedding or clothing. For further information on vaccinations, speak with your veterinary practice.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment available for RVHD2, although your vet can offer supportive care. Including pain relief and fluid therapy.

PROGNOSIS

RVHD2 is usually fatal within a couple of days to weeks. There are very limited examples of rabbits surviving this disease.



HIGHLY VIRULENT RABBIT VIRAL HAEMORRHAGIC DISEASE 2

ABOUT THE VIRUS

The Highly Virulent RVHD2 is the newest strain of RVHD and was first reported spreading through Europe in late 2024. Although the new strain has not yet been officially confirmed in the UK, its presence in nearby countries suggests that spread to the UK is highly likely.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION

Like RVHD2, this new strain is extremely contagious and is transmitted by both direct and indirect contact. The virus is environmentally stable and can persist for weeks, even on dry surfaces or in hay—posing a risk to indoor rabbits as well as outdoor ones.

SYMPTOMS

It is believed this new strain progresses faster than classic RVHD2. The symptoms are alike the previous two strains of RVHD and signs are often absent or missed and sudden death is the only indicator of illness.

PREVENTION

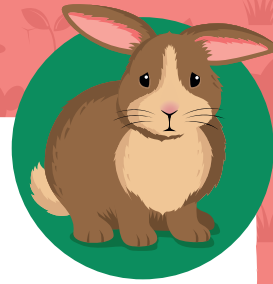
Vaccination is the most important step for preventing this new strain and there is now a vaccination available in the UK. For more information around vaccinations, please contact your veterinary practice. In addition to vaccination, simple precautions can be taken to help reduce the risk of exposure, this includes cleaning enclosures regularly, change footwear and outerwear before interacting with your rabbits, and quarantine new rabbits for a minimum of 14 days before introducing them to other rabbits.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment available, although your vet can offer supportive care. Including pain relief and fluid therapy.

PROGNOSIS

Highly Virulent RVHD2 is known to be fatal, like the other strains, reports of cases of this disease is currently limited.



FLYSTRIKE

Flystrike is a potentially fatal condition in which flies lay eggs around a rabbit's bottom. The eggs hatch into maggots that feed on the flesh, and in summer this can happen within hours. Check your rabbits at least twice daily. If you suspect flystrike, contact a vet immediately for treatment, including clipping fur, removing maggots, and giving antibiotics.



MYXOMATOSIS

ABOUT THE VIRUS

Myxomatosis is a severe viral disease, caused by the Myxoma virus, which affects rabbits, both companion and in the wild. Myxomatosis has been present in the UK since the 1950s and was responsible for rapid and sudden death of millions of wild rabbits and pet populations across the country. The disease is still present today and most cases end in fatalities.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION

Myxomatosis is mainly spread by direct contact of fleas. Rabbits fleas are the most common carriers but flying and biting insects can also spread it. Rabbits can also catch the disease through direct contact with other infected rabbits.

SYMPTOMS

The disease damages multiple areas of the body such as the skin, eyes, lungs, liver, genitals, and negatively impacts the immune system. Symptoms include:

- Swelling around the eyes, face, ears and genitals
- Weepy eyes (milky)
- A runny nose
- Skin lumps, ulcers and scabs on the face and body
- Lethargy
- Difficulty eating or drinking
- Breathing problems
- Fever

PREVENTION

Vaccinations are available for Myxomatosis and for more information about vaccinating your rabbit, contact your veterinary practice.

Sadly, vaccination doesn't fully eliminate the risk of your rabbit contracting Myxomatosis, however those that are vaccinated and come into contact with the disease often have fewer and more mild symptoms and have a much better prognosis.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment available, although your vet can offer supportive care. Including pain relief and fluid therapy.

PROGNOSIS

The prognosis for an unvaccinated rabbit with myxomatosis is not positive and will eventually be fatal, therefore some vets may advise the rabbit is euthanised.

The prognosis for vaccinated rabbits is usually good and most make a full recovery after receiving veterinary support.



OBESITY

ABOUT THE CONDITION

Just like humans, rabbits can easily become overweight and even obese due to incorrect diet and lack of exercise. Obesity is very serious for rabbits, not only because it impacts their quality of life but because it is also linked to other problems such as gut stasis and fly strike.

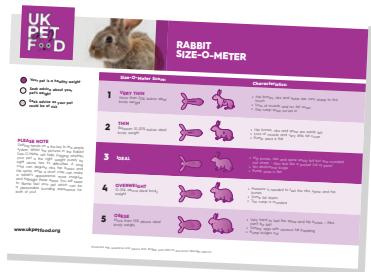
SIGNS OF OBESITY

Rabbits are seen as fluffy and cuddly, this general view can be detrimental when it comes to keeping track of their weight. It is good practice to often reference the UK Pet Food's Rabbit Size-O-Meter and give your rabbit regular body checks.

Scan the QR code to download your copy.



You may also notice that they have their caecotrophes (sticky droppings) stuck to their fur around their bottom, a sign that they are too overweight to eat these directly from their bottom which is a natural rabbit behaviour and paramount to their health.



CAUSES

Obesity in rabbits can develop when they eat more food than they need, receive an unbalanced diet, or do not get enough physical activity.

PREVENTION

A balanced diet plays an important role in helping rabbits maintain a healthy weight and preventing obesity. Most of their diet should consist of **grass or feeding hay**, alongside a **small portion of high-fibre nuggets** and a **handful of leafy fresh greens**. Following the feeding guidelines on food packaging can help ensure appropriate portion sizes. Providing rabbits with **plenty of space to move around**, as well as **regular access to a large run or exercise area**, also helps support their overall health and activity levels.

TREATMENT

If you are concerned that your rabbit may be overweight, it is a good idea to speak with your vet. They can assess your rabbit's health and help create a safe and appropriate weight-management plan. Any changes to your rabbit's diet should be made gradually, as sudden changes can upset their sensitive digestive system.

DENTAL DISEASE

Rabbits have open-rooted teeth that grow continuously throughout their lives. Eating plenty of hay and grass helps wear their teeth down naturally.

Inadequate nutrition can lead to dental problems, which may cause pain, eating difficulties, and additional health issues. Some rabbit breeds are more prone to dental diseases such as brachy breeds.

DENTAL PROBLEMS INCLUDE:

Misaligned incisors – front teeth which can become so long that they become embedded in their nose, lips and tongue.

Overgrown molars – cheek teeth that wear unevenly and develop sharp spurs that can lacerate the tongue and cheek, or even trap the tongue.

Malocclusion – malocclusion occurs when teeth overlap and do not align properly. It can be inherited or develop at any stage of a rabbit's life. Misaligned teeth fail to wear naturally, leading to overgrowth and potentially further complications.

SYMPTOMS

You can check your rabbits' dental health weekly, looking for any of the below symptoms:

- Discharge from the eyes or nose
- Abnormal looking teeth
- Weight loss
- Drool
- Partly-chewed food
- change in food preferences

If you spot any of these symptoms, then you should take your rabbit to the vet.



PREVENTION

The best way to prevent dental disease is to ensure that your rabbits eat plenty of feeding hay/grass. Feeding hay and fresh grass should make up 85-90% of a rabbit's diet. Overfeeding fresh greens, treats or nuggets is likely to reduce a rabbit's hay/grass consumption, so always follow the feeding guidelines on pack. Never feed your rabbits muesli style diets.

TREATMENT

Your vet will first look to take steps to relieve pain, restore hydration and deliver nutritional support. Then it is likely that your rabbit will need either their teeth trimming or extractions under anaesthesia.

PROGNOSIS

If dental disease is treated quickly rabbits usually have a good chance of recovery. However, once they have dental disease, it is likely they will require treatment again, and you will need to be observant.

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