



Keeping your pet rabbit healthy

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Rabbits are popular pets in the UK but require specific care and diet to stay healthy. There are several breeds, ranging from dwarf varieties (less than 1kg) to the Flemish giant, which can weight up to 8-10kg! Rabbits are strict herbivores and can live up to 8-12 years old. More information can be found at www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk.

Diet

- 85% good quality hay and grass;
- 10% varied vegetables and herbs (including some wild plants such as dandelions, blackberry and apple leaves, chamomile);
- 5% good quality pellets.

Some food items are **not suitable** for rabbits and can cause health problems:

- Ornamental and some garden plants (e.g. bulbs);
- Seeds and “muesli”-like mixes;
- Treats like fruit or milk-based products.

Fresh water should be available at all times and changed daily. **Water bowls** are preferred for rabbits.

Housing

Rabbits are very social animals and should always be kept as bonded pairs. Having a neutered pair reduces aggression and prevents unwanted pregnancies.

Rabbits can be kept either indoors or outdoors, always providing ample space for exercise. It's not acceptable to keep them all day long in a cage or hutch!

Important things to provide include non-slip floor, easy-access litter trays, hiding and resting places, and toys or other means of environment enrichment.

A bare minimum would be an area of 3m x 2m but rabbits should still exercise daily outside this space. All housing should be safe and escape proof.

Care should be taken to prevent chewing on ornamental plants, electric wires and other common household objects.

Veterinary care

We advise that all rabbits should have the following **medical care**:

- Yearly vaccination against Myxomatosis and Viral Hemorrhagic Disease VHD-1 and VHD-2;
- Neutering surgery (both males and females) when around 4-6 months old;
- Routine health checks every 6-12 months (some patients might require more frequent checks).

Rabbits can sometimes hide they are unwell but there **are common signs of illness**. If your pet shows any of these, don't hesitate to contact us:

- Gut stasis (loss of appetite and not passing droppings) – can potentially be an emergency!
- Lameness or stiff back;
- Hair loss and itchiness, also any lumps on body;
- Passing blood on urine, struggling to urinate and/or dirty bottom