

## **Caring for your Rabbit.**

Rabbits make very rewarding pets. They are intelligent, fun and inquisitive creatures with strong personalities. They can live up to 10+ years and so are a long term commitment like a cat or dog.

Illnesses develop quickly with rabbits. As prey species, often they do not look ill until they are really unwell to avoid attracting attention.

## **How do you know your Rabbit is unwell?**

It is important to contact the vets as soon as you notice if your rabbit has not eaten or is off their food, if they are quieter than normal or sitting still and hunched up.

## **Vaccinations**

All rabbits need vaccinations against myxomatosis and viral haemorrhagic disease (VHD). Vaccinations can be started from 6 weeks of age. Vaccinations do not last forever and immunity will wane over time. A yearly booster vaccination is essential in order to maintain protection throughout your rabbit's life.

## **Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD)**

This is a viral infection which infects both wild and pet rabbits. Most infected rabbits die very quickly, often without any warnings or signs. The clinical signs of the disease include loss of appetite and bleeding from the nose. VHD is highly contagious. Transmission can occur by direct contact with infected rabbits including wild rabbits and indirect contact by environmental contamination i.e. from urine and faeces of infected rabbits. VHD is a deadly disease that can affect any rabbit over 6 weeks old (rabbits younger than 6 weeks are resistant to the disease). There is no effective treatment apart from ensuring your rabbit is vaccinated.

## **Myxomatosis**

Many people will have seen this disease; it affects both wild and pet rabbits. This disease is spread by insects such as fleas and mosquitos. The virus causes large swellings in the skin of the face, ears and anus. This makes it difficult for the rabbit to eat, drink and see. Death can take up to 12 days but a very small percentage may recover.

## **Fly Protection**

Flies can be annoying to humans but for rabbits they can be deadly. Flies are attracted to rabbits if they have soiled bottoms and they will lay their eggs here. They will hatch out into flesh eating maggots which are painful and can be fatal for your rabbit if left untreated. Check your rabbit's bottom every day to make sure it is clean and clean the hutch frequently. Products such as Rearguard® can help prevent issues in rabbits who are prone to dirty rears.

## **Teeth**

Rabbit's teeth are continuously growing, up to 1-2mm per week! If domestic rabbits don't eat enough fibrous food to wear their teeth down they over grow causing problems. A diet with plenty of hay, a selection of fresh fibrous food and a small amount of commercial pelleted rabbit diet is ideal. A rabbit's diet is vitally important in promoting good dental health.

### **Easter is coming soon!**

It's nearly Easter, there will be lots of chocolate around so it is best to be aware of the dangers chocolate can cause for your pets.

Chocolate contains a product called theobromine, which is toxic to cats and dogs. The darker the chocolate is, the more toxic it will be. If ingested chocolate can cause diarrhoea and dehydration. Animals may become hyperactive and develop hyperthermia, bad cases can start fitting. Treatment would include inducing vomiting if recently eaten and rehydrating your pet.



Make sure you keep the Easter eggs out the dog's way!

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### **Microchipping Law - from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016!**

The microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 will introduce compulsory microchipping of dogs in England on April 6th 2016.

Veterinary Nurses are able to microchip your dogs, so if you wish for your dog to be microchipped before the deadline then contact the surgery and book an appointment to see the registered veterinary nurse for a £10 microchip.



### **Contact us.**

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