



Whether you've had Rabbits for a while or you're thinking about getting a rabbit, there are several issues to consider. Rabbits are very different to Dogs and Cats and need a specialised diet and understanding of their differences. This leaflet will help to highlight some of the most important health issues we see.

Vaccination

Just like Dogs and Cats, we recommend vaccinating your Rabbits—even indoor rabbits can be exposed to some nasty diseases.

Myxomatosis

Myxomatosis is a rapid disease which causes skin and eye problems and is often fatal within 14 days. It can be transmitted directly between rabbits or it can be carried on flies and mosquitoes.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease

VHD comes in two varieties called 1 and 2. VHD 1 is the one most are familiar with and causes severe diarrhoea and is usually fatal in a few days. In some cases there may be no symptoms and only sudden death. We have seen whole colonies of rabbits die over a weekend from VHD1. VHD 2 is a newer strain which causes symptoms over a longer period of time before death. Both are highly transmissible and can cause death before the disease is even diagnosed

We recommend vaccination against Myxomatosis and VHD1 on a yearly basis—they come as a single injectable vaccine, available from 5 weeks old

As VHD2 is a newer strain, it is not yet integrated into an 'all-in-one' vaccine but we do have a vaccine available. We recommend giving this alongside the Myxomatosis/VHD1 vaccine, two weeks apart (from 10 weeks of age)

Feeding

Proper feeding of rabbits is critical to their general health. They are much more sensitive to dietary imbalances than other animals. Rabbits should eat mostly Hay and Grass—more than 80% of their diet should be these. They provide roughage and help wear teeth down. In addition to this we recommend feeding rabbit pellets (15%) —not muesli as they will just pick out the nice bits and a small amount of fresh leafy greens or vegetables (~5%). Some rabbit specialists have said that most rabbit health problems can be linked to not enough hay or grass!

Housing

Rabbits can be kept indoors if provided with a secure cage for when you are out of the house. They can be housetrained to use a litter tray. Make sure they can't chew wires! They don't get on well with cats or dogs in the house .

If kept outdoors they should be in a well designed living area with a solid bedding area and mesh fronted living area. Make sure to provide plenty of space and ensure they don't get too hot or cold. It's important they have time on grass to exercise every day.



Worming, Fly Strike and Fleas

Just like cats and dogs, rabbits need regular worming treatment. We recommend using a paste type worming every 3 months. This helps protect against a parasite called *E. cuniculi* which can be the cause of head tilt and death.

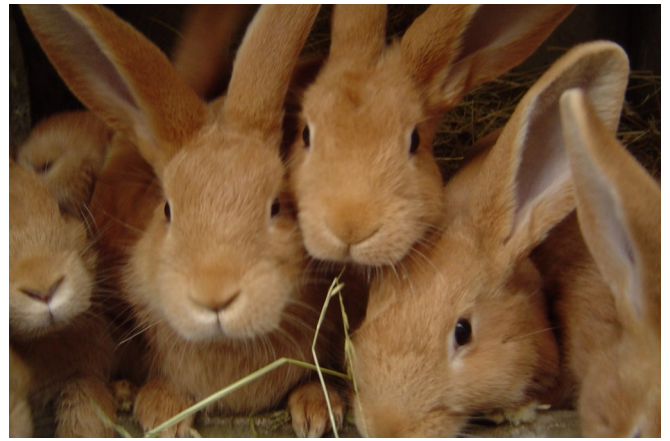
Rabbits outside in the summer also benefit from protection against fly strike—when flies lay eggs and maggots around their rear end. We have special rabbit friendly fly repellents available to help in the summer.

Sometimes rabbits will get external parasites like mites or occasionally fleas. It's important not to use cat or dog spot on treatments on rabbits as some of them can cause fatal reactions. We can help you choose an appropriate medication if needed.



Rabbit Friends

Rabbits are social and group animals and do better with a companion. Guinea Pigs don't make great companions as they can be bullied by the rabbits and sometimes get respiratory infections. Neutering is recommended as un-neutered animals will often fight or breed with each other.



Microchipping

Microchipping is available for rabbits as well as cats and dogs and provides extra security in case they ever go missing. Rabbits are excellent escapologists and can dig and burrow under bushes and out of hutches and runs.

Neutering

Neutering is the word given to the removal of the reproductive organs. It is usually done to prevent accidental breeding and to improve health.

Rabbits benefit from neutering. It reduces aggression in Male rabbits which can be directed towards other rabbits or even humans in the house! It can also help stop urine spraying. Spaying the female rabbits helps prevent unwanted pregnancies as well as significantly reduce certain types of cancer.

Rabbits can be spayed from 4 months of age but those rabbits not living in a mixed-sex environment often get done about 6 months old.

If you'd like your rabbit checked over or have any questions about their healthcare, give our friendly team a ring on the numbers below:

Treforest Veterinary Clinic Ltd

16 River Street, Treforest, Pontypridd, CF37 1TD

01443 491 433

www.treforestvets.com

Tonypandy Veterinary Clinic

2-3 De Winton Street, Tonypandy, CF40 2QZ

01443 42 12 12