

Bunny 101



Learning the Basics of Rabbit Care



* Rabbits are very social animals

They should live indoors as a member of the family with plenty of space to play and a safe place to sleep.

* Rabbits aren't good "starter pets"

Rabbits are fragile and easily scared. They **DO NOT** make good pets for young children. Loud or sudden noises and movements can startle rabbits which can cause injury to the child or the rabbit. They may also bite, box, or lunge at children when they feel their boundaries are not being taken seriously.

* They need specialized veterinary care

Rabbits are considered "exotic" by vets which means their care can also be quite expensive. They also need an annual exam and RHDV-2 Vaccine.

* Rabbits should be spayed or neutered

This reduces hormone-driven behaviors, reduces the risk of cancer (females have exceptionally high cancer rates), and eliminates the risk of accidental litters. ALL GHRS rabbits are spayed/neutered before adoption.



* Most rabbits don't like being picked up

Rabbits are prey animals which means they do not like being held and can bite or scratch to get away. Some rabbits may tolerate being handled, however most don't like to be picked up and carried.

* They can live 10 years or LONGER

That's the same length of time as most dogs!

Know the Dangers

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF RABBIT CARE

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."
-Benjamin Franklin



OUTDOORS

- **DON'T HOUSE OR EXERCISE YOUR RABBIT OUTSIDE** • There is an inherent risk from predators, parasites, and pesticides • Outside housing increases chance of serious disease and decreases lifespan by at least half
- Do give your rabbit plenty of space to run around in your bunny-proofed home and they will be happy!
- They get Vitamin D from the food in their diet • A sunbeam from the safety of a familiar inside space is ideal

FASTING



- **DON'T FAST YOUR RABBIT BEFORE SURGERY** • Rabbits do not have the ability to vomit, therefore they cannot aspirate during surgery • Food has to pass through the entire GI system before it is expelled
- Provide hay, greens, and pellets as normal when taking in for surgery • Constant access to food keeps their gut moving properly • **IF YOUR VET TELLS YOU TO "FAST" YOUR RABBIT BEFORE SURGERY, FIND A NEW VET.**

LIFTING BY EARS

- **NEVER PICK A RABBIT UP BY THE EARS OR SCRUFF** • Both can cause nerve damage and tear the skin away from underlying muscle (ears suffer torn cartilage) • "Scruffing" isn't natural for baby rabbits (prey animals)
- To handle a rabbit, **squat down, kneel, or sit on the floor** placing one hand under the rib cage and one under his bottom • Bring him directly to your chest keeping him in a "C" shape to discourage jumping

BATHING

- **NEVER BATHE YOUR RABBIT** • It can cause shock or hypothermia when rabbit's fur is soaked • Bathing can lead to respiratory, skin and/or ear infections • **Like cats, they self-groom and do not need bathing**
- "Spot clean" messy areas (like a dirty bottom) with gentle soap and warm water • **Dry thoroughly** • Be sure to see a veterinarian to determine why the rabbit is soiling himself or not grooming himself (could be illness)

TRANCING

- Forcing a rabbit flat on their back causes "tonic immobility" which is an innate defense to play dead because they fear for their lives • "Tranced" rabbits show physiological responses similar to PTSD
- **Hold your rabbit with his head higher than the rest of his body** while trimming nails or doing home health checks, etc. • Squat to the floor as quickly as possible to minimize the distance of a fall

COLLARS LEASHES HARNESSES

- **NEVER PUT A COLLAR, LEASH, OR HARNESS ON A RABBIT** • They can injure themselves trying to break free
- They can cut off their own air supply if it is caught on another object or in mouth while trying to chew free
- Keep your rabbit safely confined for transport by using a carrier or stroller and never put any object around his head, upper body, or neck in order to restrict his movement

HITTING

- **NEVER HIT AN ANIMAL** • Not only can it cause serious injury to a fragile animal like a rabbit, but it will only worsen any aggressive or defensive behavior • **Animal abuse is also a crime punishable by law**
- If you're frustrated with a behavior, consider your actions and be respectful to the animal • **If your rabbit has recently started acting out, it could be health related so schedule a vet appointment**

WIRE FLOORING

- **NEVER HOUSE A RABBIT ON UNSOLID FLOORING** • Because rabbits don't have foot pads, wire or hard floors can cause foot sores (sore hocks) which can become infected and so painful the rabbit may stop eating
- **Always provide solid non-slip flooring to encourage exercise and promote proper extension of joints** • Our suggestion: Place a short-piled rug that is wider than the ex-pen area over a flannel-backed vinyl tablecloth

Behavior



The more you interact with a rabbit, the better you will get to know them. To get to that point, you'll need to understand what they are "telling you". When you learn to respect them, you'll begin building the foundation for a great relationship!!!

GOOD REACTIONS

- He pushes his nose under your hand and lowers his head for pets
- He closes his eyes and lowers his ears
- He licks you
- His teeth gently click or chatter together (this is similar to a cat purring!)
- He zooms through the house and jumps crazily into the air (this is called a "Binky")
- He suddenly flips onto his side and kicks his feet out (bunny flop)



HORMONAL REACTIONS

- An un-neutered rabbit may circle you, hum/buzz, rub his chin on you or items to "claim" them
- This level of attention is a "romantic" reaction which will continue until he is neutered
- Often, this behavior escalates into spraying pee and possibly biting
- Neuter him as soon as he's over 3-4 months (and testicles have dropped)
- Female rabbits may also begin biting and/or boxing when they are sexually mature
- Females should be spayed around 6 months because they also have HIGH RATES OF REPRODUCTIVE CANCERS
- Any delay in neutering/spaying may cause unwanted behaviors to become a bad habit they never grow out of

BAD REACTIONS

- As you place a rabbit on the floor, he turns his back to you, adds a "thump" of his foot, or flicks his back feet as he hops away in offense
- Biting, charging, or boxing can also be a response to fear
- Cowering, hunching, and hiding can all be signs of fear or pain
- Rabbits want to be invisible so predators won't target them
- What used to benefit their survival now inhibits it
- Pay close attention to what is normal for your rabbit so you can quickly spot something unusual
- You'll be more likely to see signs of discomfort while they are at home in a safe place
- A screaming rabbit is either in severe pain or has fear for his life and is trying to warn others



Interaction

With any good relationship, you have to build trust and the best way to do that is to be patient, understanding, and consistent.

Remember, rabbits are PREY animals. You have to think like they do. The instinct to escape predators is still inside each domestic rabbit. If you FORCE a rabbit to ENDURE interaction with you rather than ENCOURAGE interaction on his terms, you will inadvertently be teaching him that being around you is not something he enjoys. He will begin to hide from you and possibly even charge, box, or bite.



Rule #1 DON'T PICK THEM UP

- Prevents you from building trust with them

Rule #2 SIT WITH THEM ON THE FLOOR

- Helps them get to know you in a space they are comfortable with
- Makes all of you accessible and on their level

Rule #3 BE CALM AND QUIET

- Rabbits can scare easily so make sure the area is relaxing for them
- Don't be nervous (they will pick up on it)

Rule #4 INTRODUCE YOURSELF

- Bring items to encourage interaction
- Healthy treats and toys are a great way to get their attention
- Face grooming is social for rabbits so start by petting between their ears



Rule #5 BE CONSISTENT

- Rabbits love to have a routine, so keep things such as feeding time, exercise/play time, and location consistent so they feel secure
- Routine kept his ancestors safe in the wild
- Rabbits are most active at dawn and dusk (crepuscular) so keep this in mind when you are establishing their daily schedule
- Consistency comforts your rabbit which helps him build trust and bond

Exercise

RABBITS CAN'T JUST BE STUCK IN A CAGE.
LIKE EVERY LIVING BEING ON THIS PLANET, THEY NEED EXERCISE.

Make it fun and change things up from time to time to challenge them

- Build a blanket fort for them to burrow under
- Supply multiple hide-boxes to destroy or hide in
- Provide tunnels for them to run through or lounge inside

Offer toys to encourage them to be active

- If you don't give them something to do, they'll find something themselves
- Toys that require problem solving or foraging will fulfill natural behaviors

Provide non-slip flooring, sit back and watch the zoomies and binkies!

- Helps ensure proper extension of joints
- Encourages more activity
- Helps avoid injury

Make it interactive!

- Rabbits are curious and SOCIAL creatures who love exploring
- Have fun WITH your bunny
- Try using treats to lure your bunny into playtime with you!



THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE:

- Prevent "sludge" (see "Pee" section), urine scald and "dirty booty" caused by obesity
- Strengthens and improves muscle tone (including heart, lungs, and smooth muscles of the intestines)
- Aids in bone development and density
- Reduces aggression and frustration
- Can help decrease territorial behavior
- Exercise helps you bond and build trust with your rabbit through interaction



**MINIMUM of
3+ hours daily
out of their "rabbitat"
or "bedroom"**

Bunny Proofing

BE SURE ROOMS THE RABBIT WILL HAVE ACCESS TO
ARE SAFE FOR HIM (AND YOUR POSSESSIONS)

- Move house plants because they can be poisonous
- Rabbits are drawn to CORDS AND WIRES which are very dangerous (they can be burned, electrocuted, or killed if they chew them)
- Wrapping cords with protectors is an option but the best suggestion is to keep them out of the rabbit's reach
- To prevent intestinal blockages, if a rabbit chews carpets/rugs, cover the spot with a tile or shorter pile rug, or restrict their access to the area
- Discourage wall/baseboard chewing by blocking access, using a wall protector (large piece of untreated wood, clear plastic panels, or an ex-pen panel), or rubbing original Ivory Soap bars on baseboards
- Block off access under recliners and rocking chairs
- Introduce him to the bunny proofed areas and he will show you what you have missed



Bunny Bedroom



"RABBIT CAGES" AND "HUTCHES" ARE TOO SMALL, HARD TO CLEAN, AND OFTEN MADE OF MATERIALS TOXIC TO RABBITS!!

first PICK THE AREA

- Rabbits are incredibly sensitive to scents/smells so make sure there are no perfumes, candles, air fresheners, and other strong odors in their area or areas where they exercise
- Cigarette smoke is **ESPECIALLY BAD** for your rabbit because they have small, very delicate lungs
- Provide SOLID flooring with a NON-SLIP layer on top • Rabbits need a climate controlled area between 65°-75°F with air conditioning and heat • Never let their area get above 80°F for risk of overheating • Pick a spot where they can see you while they are in their "bedroom" so they feel like they're part of the action • Loud noises can be painful to rabbits, so choose an area away from TVs, stereos, and high noise areas IF they will be played at high volumes • Rabbits love lounging in sunbeams and keeping an eye on the neighborhood so windows are great as long as they aren't drafty • Make sure curtains, blinds, etc. are out of reach • They need to be able to move away from the sunlight if they want

next SET IT UP

1ST LAYER

Flannel Backed Vinyl Tablecloth

- Inexpensive and easy to clean/replace
- Make sure it is completely covered with non-slip surface (Note: Replace or remove if chewed)

2ND LAYER

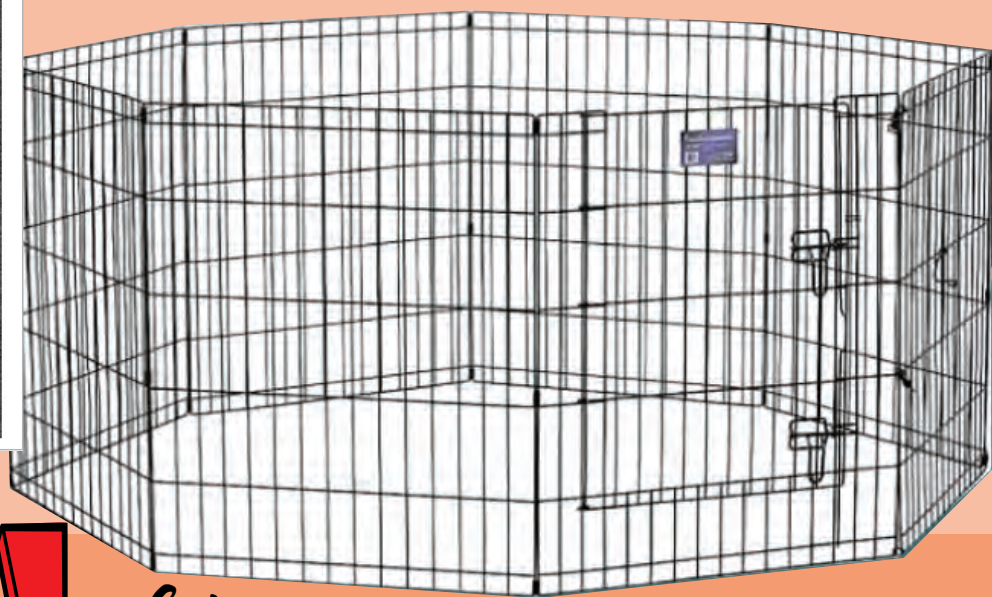
Short Piled, Inexpensive Rug

- Should be large enough so edges reach outside of pen area
- Short pile decreases the desire for rabbits to chew or pull rug
- Decreases chance of catching toenails in loops of carpeting
- Easy to clean or replace

3RD LAYER

3RD Soft Fleece Blanket

- Nice for snuggling
- Good alternative for towels
- Fun to burrow under (Note: Some rabbits chew towels)



Last

Place exercise pen over the rug making sure the rug's edges extend beyond the ex-pen area

Litter Box



PET STORE "RABBIT LITTER BOXES" ARE TOO SMALL!!

- Use a cat-sized litter box (it needs to be large enough for rabbit to sit in)
- Only use a liner if the rabbit doesn't chew it (such as a non-scented trash bag)
- **Add an absorbent layer such as newspaper to absorb urine (DO NOT USE CLUMPING CAT LITTER)**
- Top with plenty of fresh Timothy Hay or use a rack that rabbits can easily access the hay from
- Because they are grazing herbivores, rabbits will typically eat and poop at the same time
- One side of the litter box is their "kitchen" and the other side is their "toilet"
- Every morning and evening, add one handful of hay to the "kitchen" and one to the "toilet"
- Change litter box approximately every 3 days (a soiled box will be heavier than a clean litter box)



PLENTY OF UNLIMITED TIMOTHY HAY

ABSORBENT LAYER FOR URINE

33-GALLON TRASH BAG

LARGE PLASTIC LITTER BOX

NEVER USE THESE:

- Cedar or Pine Shavings: Causes liver and respiratory damage
- Clumping or Clay litter: Causes lethal blockages if eaten
- Silica-Gel Crystals: Toxic if eaten
- S'weat: Causes illness if eaten
- Corn Cob: Causes lethal blockages if eaten
- Litter/bedding with Baking Soda or fragrances



SAFE Litter Options



Tractor Supply Co's Pelletized Bedding



Carefresh



Purina's Yesterday's News



Oxbow's Eco-Straw



TIMOTHY HAY

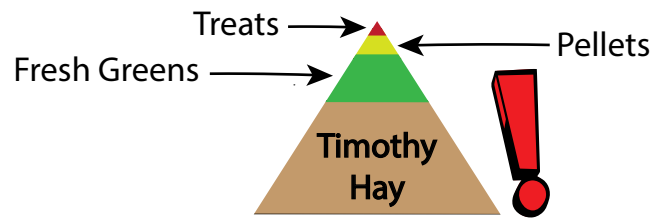
ABSORBENT PELLETS

Litter box with attached hay rack

ENCOURAGE GOOD HABITS:

- Place litter box(es) in a corner of his living space
- Block off areas until he learns where to poop/pee
- Have an extra litter box in his exercise area
- Gather stray poops and put them in the litter box to encourage him to poop there
- Start in a smaller area of your home, expand gradually

Daily Diet



**BREAKFAST
PELLETS**

**ALL DAY
HAY & WATER**

**LIMITED
HEALTHY TREAT**

**DINNER
LEAFY GREENS**



UNLIMITED TIMOTHY HAY

Hay is THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT food a rabbit needs and should NEVER BE LIMITED. Timothy Hay is the best all-around hay to offer. If your rabbit doesn't eat enough hay, try decreasing the amount of pellets fed to encourage hay eating. GRASS HAY, such as TIMOTHY HAY, is rich in Vitamin A and D while also being lower in calcium and protein than other hay. It provides long, indigestible fiber which keeps the digestive tract clean and moving while also naturally wearing down the rabbits' constantly growing teeth. Other grass hay can be ADDED for the interest of the rabbit, such as Botanical Hay, Orchard Grass, Meadow, and Oat Hay, but Timothy Hay must always be provided.

ALFALFA is actually a LEGUME and is higher in calcium and protein than an average adult needs. Alfalfa is only suggested for nursing mothers, babies under 8 months, elderly rabbits without calcium issues, and long haired breeds of rabbits (such as Angoras and Jersey Woolies). Hay can be stored easily if kept dry, VENTILATED, and out of the sun.

Veggie Wash Recipe

This wash helps remove residue from pesticides, fertilizers, & soil.

We suggest combining the ingredients in this order because it will BUBBLE!

#1 Stir together to form a paste:

- 2 tbsp baking soda
- 4 tbsp lemon juice

#2 Add to paste (stirring slowly):

- 2 cups water
- 2 cups white vinegar

Refrigerate in spray bottle.

TO USE VEGGIE WASH:

Pour/spray needed amount of Veggie Wash in a large bowl (use approx. 2 tbsp of Veggie Wash per 1 gallon of water).

Place fresh greens in bowl & cover completely with water.

Let sit for 5 min. Gently swish veggies around in water.

Empty bowl & refill with water ONLY. Repeat water rinse.

Store clean veggies in a plastic container for approx. 3 days!

PELLETS

Pellets are a supplemental food source, NOT a MAIN food source. Healthy pellets will have TIMOTHY HAY listed as the FIRST ingredient AND NOT HAVE A PRE-MIXED blend of treats/pellets (even if it's dried fruit), because they will always eat the treat instead of the pellet. ALWAYS MEASURE the pellets. (Don't guess.) Typical amounts for a 5-7lb rabbit are around 1/4 cup. Pregnant, nursing, young (under a year), or elderly rabbits and breeds like Angoras may need additional or different pellets.

FRESH LEAFY GREENS

Offer a consistent mix of 3 leafy greens DAILY for a variety of nutrients. Clean the greens with Veggie Wash (see recipe) before serving. **FOSTERS WILL ONLY BE FEEDING OUR RABBITS cilantro, parsley, and romaine or green leaf.** For owners, optional exchanges to "NORMAL GREENS" are shown below:

GROUP 1 - "Well Rounded": Romaine, Green Leaf, or Red Leaf Lettuce (serve approx. 2-4 leaves)

GROUP 2 - "Lower Calcium": Cilantro, Arugula or Watercress (serve 1/4 bunch=about 8-10 sprigs)

GROUP 3 - "Higher Calcium": Parsley, Carrot Tops, Dandelion Greens, Bok Choy, or Dill (serve 1/4 bunch=about 8-10 sprigs) •

DO NOT FEED ICEBURG LETTUCE because it has no nutritional value.

*REMEMBER: Add only one new green at a time and stop feeding new greens if digestive upset occurs.

HEALTHY TREAT

Limit treats to very small amounts of fresh fruit (less than a tsp.). Good options are fresh banana, strawberry, apple, carrot, 1-2 blueberries) OR 1-2 dried/unsulphered papaya cubes daily. Consider the nighttime "Treat Test" of 1/2 Probios biscuit a treat, too. Timothy Hay-based treats are healthy options. Fun veggie "treats" are fresh basil, dill, and mint.

Daily Diet continued (AND WATER)

- Rabbits like to drink a lot of water at one time so provide plenty of it
- A 5 pound rabbit can drink as much as a dog 5 times his size
- Encourage hydration by providing FILTERED water (less chlorine taste)
- Make sure the water is fresh and clean and changed DAILY
- Water bottles WILL NOT encourage or provide adequate water intake
- Use a heavy crock bowl and clean it at least every 3 days
- "Skin tenting" to gauge hydration IS NOT dependable for rabbits



NEVER FEED:

CORN	SEEDS
NUTS	RAISINS
CEREAL	BREAD
TOMATO	BEANS
ICEBERG	POTATO
ANIMAL PRODUCTS	
YOGURT DROPS	



An example of
HEALTHY pellets from
Oxbow Animal Health



SUGGESTED PELLET BRANDS

RHDV-2 *New Serious Threat to Rabbits in Georgia*

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease was first identified in China in 1984. A new strain called "RHDV-2" emerged in Europe in 2010 and has since spread throughout the world. It is a highly contagious hemorrhagic disease that ONLY affects domestic rabbits and wild rabbits/hares. In areas that have not had exposure to this hemorrhagic disease in the past, such as the United States, the affected animals have no natural defense to fight the virus and experience high mortality rates.

It causes sudden death in unvaccinated rabbits and can even easily be spread to rabbits housed inside by insects, humans bringing it in on shoes and clothes, or indoor/outdoor animals. Once infected, there is no treatment or antiviral medication available other than supportive/palliative care in quarantine.

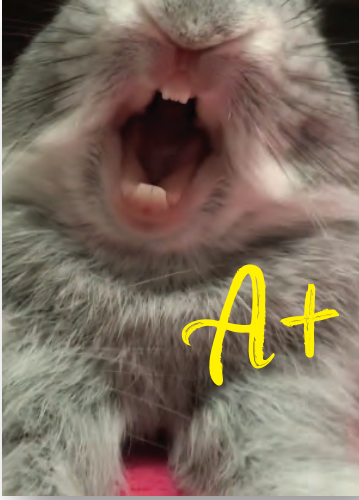
In 2021, RHDV-2 cases were confirmed here in Georgia. **THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT DISEASE AND DEATH from RHDV-2 is to have rabbits vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian in addition to adhering to suggested biosecurity measures in your home.** There are 3 ANNUAL vaccines available in Georgia. Eravac and Filavac are both a 1-dose vaccine which achieves full effectiveness within 7 days. Medgene is a 2-dose vaccine given 21 days apart and achieves full effectiveness within 14 days after the SECOND injection.

These annual vaccines are about 90% effective at the prevention of RHDV-2.
ALL GHR RABBITS ARE VACCINATED BEFORE BEING AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION.

Reduce the chance of spreading RHDV-2: Avoid pet stores that sell rabbits (it is incredibly unlikely the rabbits are vaccinated and even objects in the store could be contaminated), never allow your rabbit outside, take your shoes off in your home, wash your hands before petting your rabbit, and minimize exposure to flying insects inside your home.



Teeth



DID YOU KNOW RABBITS' TEETH NEVER STOP GROWING?

Rabbits' teeth evolved in conjunction with their diet. In order to withstand a fibrous, abrasive diet, rabbits developed teeth that would constantly grow. The high fiber food would wear down and sharpen the teeth so they could graze freely on the food that their bodies needed to function properly...grass hay!

They have 28 teeth:

- 4 Incisors located in the front of the mouth (for cutting food)
- 2 "Peg" teeth behind upper incisors (rarely seen and rarely cause problems)
- 22 Molars located in the back of the mouth (for grinding food)

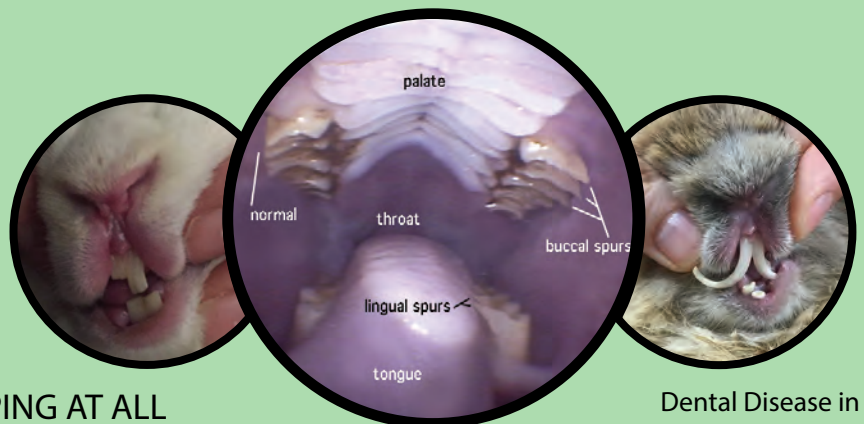
Teeth Problems

DENTAL HEALTH HAS A HUGE IMPACT ON A RABBIT'S QUALITY OF LIFE

When teeth get out of line for any reason, it is called "malocclusion". Because rabbits' teeth never stop growing, dental issues will only get worse if not addressed. They WILL NOT go away on their own.

SIGNS OF TEETH ISSUES:

- Eating less, taking longer to eat, or not eating at all
- Recently choosing a specific type of food (may be easier to eat or cause less pain)
- Appears eager for food, but when he tries to eat, he drops his food or doesn't eat
- Poops are SMALLER, FEWER, OR NOT POOPING AT ALL
- Seems to be chewing differently/strangely or on one side of mouth
- Has wetness under chin/edge of mouth (that is not from recently drinking water)
- Is lethargic and not acting normal



HOW IT STARTS:

- The #1 cause of dental problems in rabbits can be traced back to a POOR DIET (low fiber content)
- Other causes are related to trauma or genetics

Dental Disease in Domestic Rabbits
www.bio.miami.edu

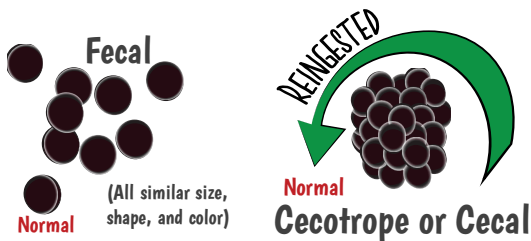
Poop

RABBITS ARE GRAZING HERBIVORES

This means they may eat and poop at the same time AND they poop A LOT (between 200-300 times daily!) This is another reason why it is so important for rabbits to have constant access to hay.

THEY HAVE 2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF POOP

A "fecal pellet" has no further use to a rabbit. A "cecal pellet" or "cecotrope" is a bundle of mucus-protected, partially digested food that has been fermented by bacteria in a special organ called the "Cecum". Cecals are REINGESTED to further process food and absorb vital nutrients. Cecals will have a strong odor but are usually eaten as soon as they are produced.



What is GI Stasis?

THE SLOWING DOWN AND/OR STOPPING OF THE GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT

GI Stasis very painful for the rabbit because the bacteria levels in his gut are out of balance and his gut fills with gas as his GI tract slows. **GI STASIS IS NOT A DIAGNOSIS, IT IS A SYMPTOM OF AN UNDERLYING ISSUE.**

MANY DIFFERENT THINGS CAN CAUSE GI STASIS:

- An INAPPROPRIATE DIET and/or teeth problems are the #1 cause
- Depression, pain, stress, dehydration, or other illnesses or injury

WHAT ARE WARNING SIGNS OF GI STASIS?

- Fewer poops, oddly shaped poops, or NO poops
- Decreased eating, selective eating, or NO eating
- Sitting hunched, hiding, inactive, not acting normal, not wanting to move, and/or tolerating being handled when he usually struggles
- Stretching with stomach pressed strangely to the ground forming a "U" shape with the belly arched toward the floor
- Laying down and getting back up again multiple times (unable to get comfortable)
- Loudly GRINDING teeth in pain
- Eyes are partially closed (from pain) and look tired or distant



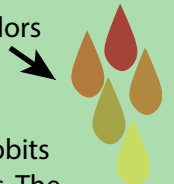
DIARRHEA: LOOSE, WATERY, UNFORMED STOOL IS AN EMERGENCY. VET RABBIT IMMEDIATELY.

Pee

NORMAL URINE CAN HAVE A "CHALKY" APPEARANCE

When dry, urine can leave a chalky outline caused by CALCIUM. Unlike most animals, rabbits eliminate excess calcium through their urine instead of expelling it through their bowels. The more calcium in a rabbit's diet, the more calcium he will excrete.

Rabbit urine can be different colors



EXCESSIVE CALCIUM LEVELS IN THE URINE CAN LEAD TO "SLUDGE" WHICH CAN CAUSE INFECTION OR CONTRIBUTE TO THE FORMATION OF KIDNEY/BLADDER STONES

Gritty, pasty, powdery urine, or the presence of small sandy looking stones (caused by excess CALCIUM) is commonly called "Sludge". The two best ways to help prevent sludge and stones are to limit the amount of higher calcium foods and make sure your rabbit is very well hydrated. A dehydrated rabbit's urine will appear dark and/or be strong-smelling. If blood is present, it could be an indication of an infection or trauma (spray with hydrogen peroxide and it will bubble if it is blood; if blood, vet your rabbit asap). Calcifications can occur in their kidneys, ureters, bladder or urethra.



DISTILLED WHITE VINEGAR HAS A PH LEVEL OPPOSITE OF RABBIT URINE AND HELPS ELIMINATE URINE SMELLS LEFT BEHIND IN THE LITTERBOX!



ILLNESS PROTOCOL

When a rabbit is behaving abnormally and there is no clue as to why, this is the protocol we suggest to help determine the level of care needed. DO NOT HESITATE TO ACT.

Severe symptoms need IMMEDIATE emergency veterinary care!!

1 Do a "Treat Test"

A rabbit that doesn't want to eat his favorite treat or fresh greens should be cause for concern.

Question: When you offer your rabbit his favorite treat, did he take it?

Answer: "Yes" Continue to watch for any changes in attitude and appetite.

Answer: "No." Continue to Step 2.



2 Take the Temperature

A rabbit's temp is a good indicator if he is ill. You cannot tell his internal temp just by feeling his ears.

GENTLY take his temperature rectally with a small, flexible tipped children's thermometer lubricated with Vaseline.

IF BELOW 101°F: Warm up with a heating pad and/or towels and blankets warmed in dryer. (He should begin to move around more as his temp returns to the normal range.) Continue to Step 3.

Normal Temp (101-103°F): Continue to watch for any changes in attitude, and appetite. Continue to Step 3.

IF ABOVE 103°F: Cool down by wetting ear tips with rubbing alcohol, using refrigerated cans/bottles, and AC.

HIGH TEMP NEEDS VET CARE ASAP while continuing to cool. Skip to Step 4.

3 Give pediatric gas drops orally

TEMP STABILIZED? Often, a rabbit will need gas drops to help relieve gas pain. Simethicone (Pediatric GasX) is safe to give even as a precaution.

REPEAT 3-4 TIMES: Give 1ml baby gas drops (simethicone) every 30 minutes and check his temperature at the same time. Gently pat the sides of his belly to help pass built-up gas.

Temp still normal? Continue to Step 4.

If temp isn't returning to normal range and/or there are additional signs of discomfort, such as TEETH GRINDING, MAKE AN EMERGENCY VET VISIT!

4 MAKE A VET VISIT TO DETERMINE THE CAUSE

Regardless of the severity of ANY of these symptoms, you need to make a vet visit to determine the CAUSE.

Often, GI Stasis is triggered by tooth pain (because it is too painful to eat, then the gut slows down and causes stasis) but this needs to be determined by a veterinarian while the rabbit is under light anesthesia. Severe symptoms need IMMEDIATE vet care!



AN EMERGENCY:

NO CHANGE, SLOW CHANGE,
OR ADDITIONAL
CONCERNING SYMPTOMS,
CALL VET/CONTACT SHELTER
REP IMMEDIATELY

ALL OTHER:

Schedule a vet visit as soon as possible.
GI Stasis (the slowing down and/or stopping of
the gastrointestinal tract) will very LIKELY RETURN
until the ACTUAL CAUSE is addressed.
GI STASIS IS NOT A DIAGNOSIS, IT IS A SYMPTOM
OF AN UNDERLYING ISSUE.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS:

GHR preferred Veterinarian:

Windward Animal Hospital
770-569-7298
11895 Jones Bridge Rd.
Johns Creek, GA 30005
windwardanimalhospital.com

Current list of Georgia Veterinarians who treat
rabbits: houserabbitga.com/vets

Health Check

TIPS FOR KEEPING AN EYE ON YOUR BUNNY'S HEALTH AT HOME

DAILY

While petting your rabbit, feel for:

- Lumps under skin (abscesses)
- Bumps over skin (growths, cuts, or bites)
- Wet chin
- Matted fur

While looking at your rabbit, check for:

- Clear eyes and ears
- Yellow staining on nose and front paws (can indicate nasal discharge)
- Parasites such as fleas, ticks, mites, larvae
- Boniness or weight loss
- Weight gain
- Heavy, labored, or mouth breathing

Look for changes in the amount of water consumed, food eaten, poops created, **CHANGES IN MOOD** and the excitement level at feeding times.

NEVER USE FRONTLINE OR OTC FLEA MEDS!

WEEKLY

While looking at your rabbit, check:

- Ears for wax buildup or lumps at base
- Feet for issues (sore hocks or jagged toenails)
- Genitals for irritation, dirty bottom, or urine scald
- Incisors for uneven wear and/or overgrowth

EVERY 2 MONTHS

Bring them to the Shelter or do at home:

- Clip toenails (5 on front feet, 4 on back feet)
- Check and clean out scent glands
- Lift lips for a teeth visual checking evenness
- Check genitals for irritation, sores, etc.

YEARLY

Schedule a Wellness Check with a rabbit savvy veterinarian AND KEEP IT! We also recommend having blood drawn, molar checks under light anesthesia, and RHDV-2 vaccination done EVERY year.

THE THREE BIGGEST WAYS YOU CAN INFLUENCE YOUR RABBIT'S HEALTH:

- 1. Prevention:** Taking our warnings to heart rather than “learning from your own mistakes”(keep them indoors and protect them from predators, pesticides, and parasites)
- 2. Be Proactive:** Apply the info we share and act before something becomes an issue (follow a good diet plan for your bunny and make sure they get plenty of exercise)
- 3. React:** Do something before an issue becomes a BIGGER problem (know the signs and symptoms of illness, what to do when they are detected, and address them before there is a downward spiral of your bunny's health; it is not only more expensive for you, but your rabbit will be the one suffering if you don't help)

