

Cedar Veterinary Group

Care Of Your New Rabbit



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Congratulations on the arrival of your new rabbit!

It is our aim to help you keep your Rabbit happy, fit and healthy from day one. We therefore recommend the following procedures so you can relax in the knowledge that your Rabbit is receiving all their needs at this stage of life and for the future.

VACCINATIONS

There are 2 diseases that we recommend vaccination against. Both of these are seen in the wild population of rabbits and can affect the domestic rabbit just as seriously.

1. Myxomatosis: This virus is commonly seen in the wild rabbit population and is spread by fleas and other biting insects or mites. It can also be spread directly from rabbit to rabbit. It can cause swelling around the head, face, eyes, ears, anus and genitals. Symptoms can vary from runny eyes to lumps found throughout the skin. Treatment is almost always futile and euthanasia is normally recommended. Vaccinated rabbits can still catch this virus however treatment is often much more successful.

2. Viral Haemorrhagic disease (VHD): This Virus can be spread directly from rabbit to rabbit, by biting insects or mites and also carried on clothes, boots and from infected hay. The virus causes many different signs including internal bleeding, lethargy, convulsions, fever and bleeding from the nose or anus. VHD can be fatal very quickly and often causes sudden death without symptoms.

At the vaccination appointment the vet will give your rabbit a thorough examination and ensure that they are in good health and you will be given a vaccination card to keep

record of the annual vaccinations that they receive. There is now a new vaccine which will vaccinate for both of these diseases at the same time. It can be given from 5 weeks of age onwards and your rabbit will be protected after a period of 3 weeks from the date of vaccination for one year.

WORMING

Generally, rabbits are not routinely wormed like dogs or cats. They are however affected by a parasite commonly called E.Cuniculi. It can affect many parts of the body and has the potential to cause many of the problems that we see affecting domestic rabbits within the surgery.

The parasite can be passed from the mother to the young via infected urine. This can also occur from one rabbit to another if either is affected or has come into contact with a contaminated environment.

Symptoms can range from incontinence or urine scalding to kidney failure and severe neurological signs and paralysis but not all infected rabbits will show signs of the parasite. Treatment can be effective if caught early enough but is not always successful.

A 28 day course of Fenbendazole, usually given at the same time as the first vaccination of a new rabbit, can help reduce the risk of getting the disease in later life, please discuss this with your vet.

FLEA, MITE & LICE TREATMENT

As mentioned above there are a number of diseases which can be spread through

biting insects. For this reason it is important to treat any fleas seen as soon as possible. Your vet will advise you on the best drug to use. Mites can also be problematic and the mite *Cheyletiella* commonly affects rabbits causing hair loss, skin problems and can cause irritation to humans. Mites can be a sign of other illnesses so a check with your vet is recommended. Do not use Fipronil (e.g. Frontline or Effipro) as this is toxic to rabbits.

NEUTERING

There are a number of reasons to recommend castrating males and spaying female rabbits. The most obvious is to stop unwanted pregnancy. The incidence of uterine and mammary cancer in females has been quoted as affecting up to 80% of entire female rabbits, whilst males can develop testicular tumours if left unneutered. Aggressive hormone related behaviour can also be greatly reduced if neutered from a younger age. Rabbits enjoy the company of other rabbits and ideally should not be kept alone so a neutered pair makes for a more harmonious relationship. The recommended minimum age of neutering is 4 months of age for males and 5 months of age for females.

DIETARY NEEDS

This is a rather complicated subject to cover in depth in this booklet; we do have a separate handout for this if requested. There are some simple basic rules to follow which will help keep your rabbit in good health. The digestive system of a domestic rabbit is virtually identical to that of a wild rabbit so their diet should reflect this. They have evolved to feed on a high fibre low energy diet and eat frequently to absorb all the nutrients needed to support their fast metabolism. 70% of their diet should be made up from **good quality** hay; this will help provide them

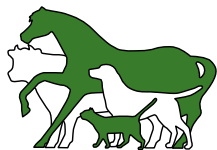
with the digestible and in-digestible fibre needed for good gut motility, assist dental wear and help reduce the risk of obesity. 28% should be a mixture of vegetables and herbs, while only 2% should consist of a concentrate pelleted mix. We advise to feed a pelleted diet as opposed to the muesli mix to reduce the chance of selective feeding, aid dental health and again for good digestive motility. Because their digestive system works continually they will pass faeces very frequently, lack of faeces can be an indication of gut stasis, if you are concerned about this contact your vet immediately.

TEETH

Rabbit's teeth grow continuously throughout their lives so it is important for your rabbit to have the correct diet to assist in their dental wear and help avoid dental disease. Some breeds of rabbit are predisposed to dental problems i.e. Lop eared rabbits and Netherland dwarfs, so it is particularly important to have regular checkups with your vet and as with all rabbits feed a high percentage of hay in their diet. Daily access to sunlight (minimum 2 hours a day to daylight) is also an important factor and aids the synthesis of Vitamin D within the body; this enables calcium to be used by the body for healthy teeth and bones. This is important especially for house rabbits to aid good dental health along with a balanced diet.

MICROCHIPPING

Any animal can be microchipped and rabbits are no different, we have a number of stray rabbits handed in to the practice each year and a microchip can ensure that should your rabbit go missing we can trace your details through the central microchip database.



Cedar Veterinary Group

Surgery Hours

ALTON

Monday - Friday: 8.30am - 6.30pm

Saturday: 8.30am - 12.30pm

Tel: 01420 82163

FOUR MARKS

Monday - Friday: 9.00am - 6.00pm

Tel. 01420 562048

ALRESFORD

Monday - Friday: 8:30am - 6:30pm

Saturday: 8.00am - 12.00pm

Tel: 01962 732535

ALL BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

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