



Stamford

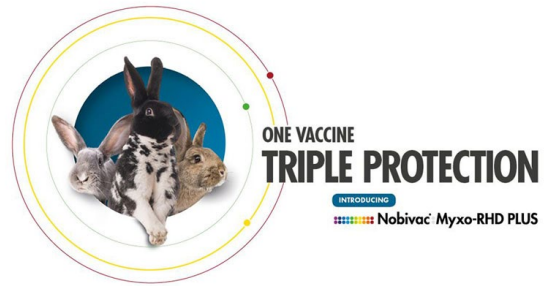
Veterinary Centre

Rabbit Care Pack



Vaccines

Your rabbit will be vaccinated with **Nobivac Myxo-RHD Plus**. This covers **Myxomatosis** and **Rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease**.



Myxomatosis

Myxomatosis is a fatal infectious disease with a very poor prognosis. It is mostly passed on through contact with a wild rabbit, but is also carried via fleas, flies, midges and mosquitoes, so all rabbits including indoors should be vaccinated.

RHD 1 and 2 - Rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease

RHD types 1 and 2 have both been reported in the UK, it is mostly transmitted via wild rabbits' urine and faeces and is easily brought home on shoes.

A yearly booster vaccination is required to maintain immunity to these diseases.

Neutering

Neutering is generally recommended for all rabbits. Not only will it **prevent pregnancy** in male/female pairs, it can also **reduce aggressive and territorial behaviours** in both male pairs and female pairs.

It is also advised to spay females as **uterine tumours are common (Can affect 50-80% of pet rabbits by age 6)** and very aggressive.

We would recommend having your rabbits neutered by the age of **5-6 months**.

Be aware that **males are still fertile for 6-8 weeks** after surgery and will need to be kept separately if you have an entire female.



Pet Health Club







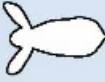



Join the **Pet Health Club** to spread the cost of pet care. A monthly direct debit will cover the cost of vaccinations, a 6 monthly health check, nail clippings and a yearly bottle of Rearguard, as well as other discounts at the practice.



For more information, speak to reception or visit thepethealthclub.co.uk

Diet

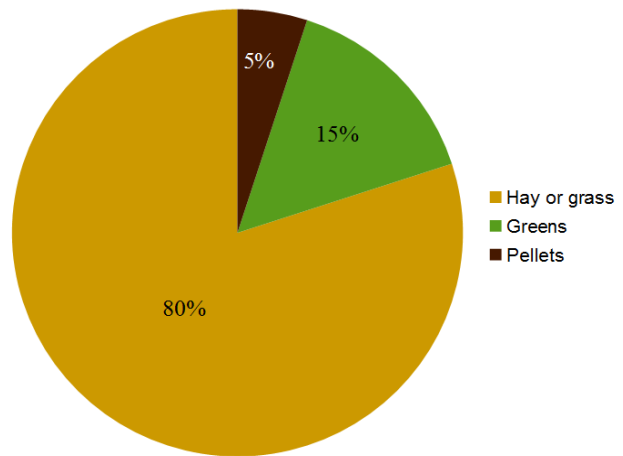
Keeping your rabbit on their ideal diet will **prevent obesity** and all the problems that come with it.

PET SIZE-O-METER				Characteristics
Size-o-meter score				
1	Very thin			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hip bones ribs and spine are very sharp to the touch• Loss of muscle and no fat cover• The rump area curves in
2	Thin			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hip bones ribs and spine are easily felt• Loss of muscle and very little fat cover• The rump area is flat
3	Ideal			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hip bones ribs and spine are easily felt but are rounded, not sharp• Loss of muscle and very little fat cover, feel like a pocket full of pens• No abdominal bulge• Rump area is flat
4	Overweight			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pressure is needed to feel the ribs, spine and hip bones• Some fat layers• The rump is rounded
5	Obese			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very hard to feel the spine and hip bones — ribs cannot be felt• Tummy sags with obvious flat padding• Rump bulges out

Components of an ideal diet

Forage (80%)

A rabbit's diet should be mostly forage. This means plenty of grass and hay should be available at all times.



- 🥕 Keep it near litter trays and in beds
- 🥕 Keep hay racks topped up at all times
- 🥕 Rabbits love to forage and it provides lots of enjoyment for them
- 🥕 Eating plenty of grass and hay is good for wearing down teeth and healthy digestion

Fruit and Vegetables (15%)

- 🥕 Fruit can be too sugary, it can upset gut bacteria and is fattening
- 🥕 A small amount of vegetables are ok – limit these in overweight rabbits
- 🥕 Also limit root vegetables such as carrot, sudee, parsnip. These are very energy dense and should be avoided entirely if your rabbit is overweight
- 🥕 Try feeding leafy greens and weeds for variety instead – such as kale, dandelion and herbs such as coriander and parsley.



Pellets and Muesli (5%)

- 🥕 These foods, although marketed for rabbits, are not ideal. They are very energy dense so provide a lot more calories compared to the same volume of hay...
- 🥕 ...This means they spend less time chewing – which is detrimental to their teeth. As well as less time foraging, which increases boredom.
- 🥕 Muesli in particular contains a lot of starch and sugar, as well as encouraging selective feeding so the rabbit is only picking out the tastiest “junk” food from the selection.
- 🥕 Pellet diets are better in regards to selective feeding – but they are still very energy dense. A good quality pellet diet is best used in very small amounts as a treat and used in a puzzle feeder. For example, a treat ball or snuffle mat, or sprinkled into forage.

Accommodation

Naturally, rabbits live out **in large open spaces** and love to **run, jump and stretch**. Rabbits who do not have access to adequate space **become sore and grumpy**.

The **Rabbit Welfare Association** recommends the following sizes as a **minimum for one or two rabbits**.

Traditional hutch:

- 🥕 At **least 3 unhindered hops** long and tall enough to **stand on hind legs with ears up**.
- 🥕 L6ft xW2ft x H2ft
- 🥕 With a run of L8ft x W6ft x H3ft

Indoor or Outdoor?

Rabbits can make great indoor and outdoor pets. Each method has its own pros and cons.

Outdoors

Pros

- 🥕 Outdoor is the natural habitat of a rabbit, with access to grass they can forage and explore normally. Expressing their normal behaviours is very good for their wellbeing.

Cons

- 🥕 Living outside does come with risk, runs must be secure from predators as well as escape-proof.
- 🥕 Use sturdy wire and bolts to prevent a predator breaking in.
- 🥕 Lay wire underneath the edges of the run to prevent the rabbit digging their way out.
- 🥕 Ensure there is an enclosed area for the rabbit to shelter from rain, wind and direct sun.



Indoors

Pro

- 🥕 Living indoors provides protection from adverse weather, predators and escape.
- 🥕 More time is spent with their owner, providing more opportunities for play and bonding.

Cons

- 🥕 Rabbit's natural behaviours can result in chewed wires and toileting accidents – the rabbit's area should be safe and supervised to avoid damage to the house and injured rabbits!
- 🥕 Indoor rabbits don't have access to direct sunlight, try to provide access in a secure run in nice weather, and supplement vitamin D using indoor rabbit food.



How to Maximise Welfare Indoors

Adaptations in the house can provide the rabbit with opportunities to **express natural behaviour**, such as climbing, running, chewing and foraging.

- 🥕 The rabbits own **safe secure area** – can be a hutch, a cage, a room or a run. Somewhere they can be when not supervised or home alone.
- 🥕 **Areas around the house to be their “burrows”**. You can use rabbit beds and hidey holes, cat hideys work well, they may choose specific areas in the house where they like to sit, make sure there are no wires and possibly lay down a mat or towel as they may toilet there to scent mark it.
- 🥕 Provide multiple areas where they can **access toys and forage**, this will prevent them directing forage and chewing onto furniture and carpets.
- 🥕 **Tidy away cables**. Chewing on wires is a natural behaviour, rabbits chew on roots to clear them out the way when digging. Any wires they deem to be in the way will be chewed!
- 🥕 **Add mats and rugs to hard floors** – rabbits can't walk on slippery surfaces.

Not just for indoor rabbits! – Outdoor rabbits will also benefit from having plenty of variety in their enclosure for forage, toys and beds.

How to Litter Train

Litter training is essential for indoor rabbits.

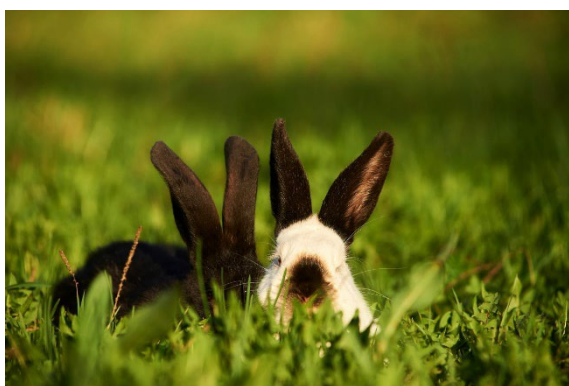
- 🥕 Start in a **small area**, a single room or part of it.
- 🥕 Find out what the rabbit prefers – a tray - Wood chip? Hay? A towel?
- 🥕 **Place the litter tray in the area they prefer to toilet**. Ideally near a source of hay as they like to eat in the tray.

- 🥕 **Start to make their free area larger.** Ensure they continue to use the tray – if not, limit the area again, or if they have a new preferred place, move it there. **They may have multiple preferred places.**
- 🥕 **Some accidents will happen** – scent marking with a small amount of urine or a single faecal pellet is normal, and you will still see it occasionally.

Companionship

Rabbits are herd animals and are naturally meant to live with companions.

As owners, we can't spend all of our time with our rabbits, which is what they expect of us!



Companionship allows them to exhibit **natural behaviours** such as grooming each other, as well as making them feel more **safe and secure** in their environments, allowing more time for play, exploration, and foraging.

However, seriously consider **neutering pairs of rabbits**, not only for prevention of pregnancy, but also **prevention of fighting and territorial behaviour** even in same sex pairings.

Common illnesses

To keep your new rabbit as **healthy as possible**, look out for signs of common illnesses and **contact the practice if you have any concerns**.

E. cuniculi

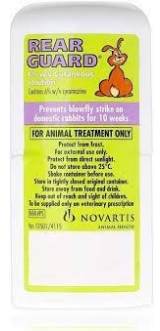
- 🥕 E. Cuniculi is a parasitic disease which affects the brain. It is mostly transmitted through infected wild rabbits.
- 🥕 Signs you might see include **weakness on back legs or a head tilt**.

Sore feet

- 🥕 Rabbits don't have hardened pads on their feet like a dog or cat, and also like spend time sitting in their litter tray.
- 🥕 This can lead to **hair loss and sores** on their feet.
- 🥕 Keep litter areas as clean and dry as possible, and check your rabbit's feet regularly.

Fly Strike

- 🥕 Rabbits who are not keeping themselves clean enough can have **faeces stuck to their bottom** that they are not able to remove.
- 🥕 This can happen if they are **overweight or old**, they may not be able to reach or it may be painful.
- 🥕 It can also be seen in **long haired rabbits**, who may need some help from their owners keeping their hair tidy, clean and dry.
- 🥕 Ensuring your rabbit is on their **ideal diet** will ensure they stay a good weight as well as passing healthy solid faeces.
- 🥕 **Check them regularly for cleanliness.**
- 🥕 Rabbits with dirty bottoms are at risk of fly strike, flies will be attracted to the faeces and lay their eggs on the rabbit.
- 🥕 Fly strike is a nasty illness and **not always treatable** if it is very severe.
- 🥕 **Our nurses are always happy to assist with and demonstrate how to keep them clean.**
- 🥕 **Rearguard** is a product we can use to deter flies over the summer season, once applied, it lasts for 10 weeks.
- 🥕 If you think your rabbit is suffering from fly strike please contact the practice as an emergency.



Overgrown teeth

- 🥕 Rabbits' teeth are constantly growing, so they are constantly eating to wear them down. Normally if rabbits are eating enough grass and hay, they will manage on their own.
- 🥕 Occasionally some rabbits have a problem with overgrowth.
- 🥕 If you notice their **front incisor teeth look too long**, or a strange angle, or they are **struggling to eat** please book them in for a check.

Gut Stasis

- 🥕 Rabbits should be eating all day every day! They are constantly foraging and passing faeces. Their gut is always in action, and it can be a real problem if it stops.
- 🥕 **If you notice your rabbit has a reduced appetite or is passing small or few faeces, or maybe none at all, they must be seen at the practice as soon as possible.**

Rabbit Wellness Clinics

Our nurses are happy to see your rabbit for a **health and husbandry check** at our rabbit wellness clinics.

We can give your rabbit a health check, and look at issues such as **diet, weight management and behaviour** as well as **senior rabbit care**.



Rabbit Wellness
Clinics

For more information on all aspects of rabbit care have a look at the Rabbit Welfare Association website: rabbitwelfare.co.uk