



Runnymede Hill Veterinary Hospital
and Chobham Road Veterinary Centre

Here for you
and your rabbit
whenever you
need us



Whenever you need us

Sharing your life with any pet is both a joy and a privilege, and our aim at **Pets 1st**, is to help you keep your rabbit happy and healthy so that you can enjoy every minute of your time together.

We've put together this guide to answer any questions you may have on a range of common topics:

- Vaccinations
- Parasite control
- Rabbit husbandry
- Insurance
- Diet and nutrition
- Dental care
- Neutering

You might be interested to know that our **Pets 1st Health Club** includes all recommended routine preventative care for your rabbit and allows you to spread the cost through monthly direct debit payments and saves you money offering great value and complete peace of mind. *Please ask at reception for more details.*

In addition, of course we are always happy to discuss specific issues and make recommendations tailored to the needs of you and your rabbit. Please do feel free to speak with any of our team, at any time.

With best wishes from the Pets 1st team



Vaccinations



We recommend routine vaccinations in order to provide protection against two potentially fatal viruses:

- **Viral Haemorrhagic Diseases (VHD).** This can affect rabbits over six weeks old, and sadly most die. As the name suggests, the disease causes internal bleeding, especially in the lungs. It is transmitted by direct contact and so even indoor rabbits need protection
- **Myxomatosis** is passed via blood sucking insects such as fleas, or from direct contact with infected rabbits. Vaccination for both Myxomatosis and VHD is given via a single annual injection

Rabbits can be vaccinated from 6 weeks old, with annual booster vaccinations then given in the coming years to ensure continued protection from these horrible, and all too common, diseases.

There is ongoing discussion as to whether the beneficial effects of vaccinations may last longer than one year. Without any strong evidence to the contrary, we always recommend annual booster injections in order maintain immunity - older rabbits and rabbits with compromised immune systems are perhaps more likely to succumb to these killer diseases.

A full health assessment is carried out at the time of every vaccination, and this is always a good opportunity to examine your pet for any underlying problems - early diagnosis of any condition is generally the key to successful outcome!



Parasite control

Flystrike is a nasty condition affecting rabbits that is often more prevalent in the summer.

Flies lay their eggs directly on the rabbit, which then hatch into maggots and feed off the host rabbit. You can reduce the risk of this condition developing by keeping your pet clean and well groomed, removing any matted fur or faecal matter that might be stuck to your rabbit's bottom, and checking regularly for sores.

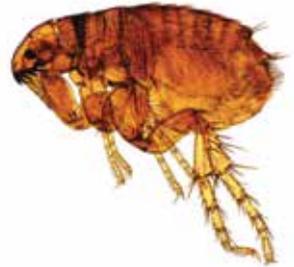
Flystrike is potentially fatal and therefore it is very important to seek advice from us immediately if you suspect that your rabbit may be affected.

Rabbits do not generally suffer with worms, but if you suspect that this might be the case, then you should bring a sample of fresh faeces in and we can check it out for you.

Fleas can be passed on to your rabbit by wildlife or other pets and therefore it's a good idea to get into the habit of checking for these when grooming your rabbit. Most rabbits will happily tolerate a flea comb, so place your pet on a sheet of paper of light surface and look for any telltale dark specks dropping off when you groom.

Other signs of a potential flea problem are:

- Excessive scratching
- Small scabs and spots on the skin
- Small brown specks of flea dirt in the fur (particularly around the bottom)



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Effective flea control requires a three-pronged attack:

1 Killing the adult fleas. Treat all the rabbits, dogs and cats in your house. We recommend a prescription-strength 'spot-on' treatment that lasts for up to one month, as we have found that many non-prescription preparations simply do not work.

2 Killing the immature fleas. This step is very important - fleas develop in warm, dry places and therefore it's important to treat your rabbit's hutch with a rabbit-safe product formulated especially for this purpose (we can advise you further here if required).

3 Stopping the eggs from hatching. Treating your rabbit with a special tablet breaks the flea's life cycle by damaging any eggs present and preventing them from hatching.

Encephalitozoon Cuniculi is a parasite that lives inside a rabbit's cells and attacks the central nervous system, brain, kidneys, lungs and heart. Affected rabbits often display one or more of the following symptoms:

- A characteristic head tilt
- Blindness
- Paralysis
- Seizures

Some rabbits look perfectly healthy but can still pass the parasite on to others. Fortunately, Panacur for rabbits can be given twice a year (this is especially important when first acquiring or introducing new rabbits) and is very effective.



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Rabbit husbandry

Rabbits evolved to live in groups, and really enjoy the companionship of their own kind. Contrary to popular thinking, rabbits and guinea pigs should not be kept together - the different needs and characteristics of each species are not compatible, and can thus cause stress.



In order to encourage sociable behaviour and keep your rabbit occupied, you should aim to interact daily with your rabbit, ideally at ground level where they feel safest. You can bring your pet indoors for a daily cuddle and a run around, but please do keep a close eye out to ensure that electric cables don't get nibbled!

Give your rabbits plenty of things to play with, such as cardboard boxes, plenty of hay and plastic tunnels, and encourage foraging to mirror natural behaviour - hiding food under straw and inside toys for example.

Provide a large, secure hutch for them to sleep in, with access to a covered run where they can exercise freely each day. Choose a hutch that allows your rabbit to make at least three continuous hops from one end to the other, and which is tall enough for him / her to stand on the back legs without the ears touching the roof. Clean the toilet area every day, and the whole hutch at least once a week.

If possible, bring your pets indoors over the winter into a garage or shed. Otherwise, move the hutch to a more sheltered place facing away from the wind. Place extra newspaper at the bottom of the hutch, and check that the roof is watertight and there are no draughts. Fill a cardboard box with hay and make a hole in one side, then place more hay around the outside of the box in the sleeping area for a cosy place for your bunny to snuggle.

**rabbits and guinea pigs
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Insurance

We all want the best for our pets, especially when they are injured or sick. Advances in modern medicine allow us to treat more cases, more successfully, but the fact remains that excellent veterinary care is not cheap.



The costs of treatment can quickly mount up, and price is the last thing you want to have to worry about when your pet is seriously ill. Which is where pet insurance comes in. As with most things, you get what you pay for so do make sure that you read the small print before choosing a policy.

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There are three main types of insurance:

- 1 12-month / annual policies.** These policies cover a condition for 12 months from diagnosis; after that time the condition will be excluded. You should be aware that when conditions are diagnosed, even if no treatment is given, they are excluded from cover after 12 months.
- 2 Maximum benefit policies** (Individual Condition Cover). With this type of policy you can claim a maximum amount for each condition, without a time limit.
- 3 Lifelong cover.** The huge advantage of a lifelong policy is that common conditions such as arthritis, heart and kidney problems, and skin disease requiring long-term treatment are all covered. These policies are more expensive but offer the best peace of mind in safeguarding your pet.

Please be aware that our practice has no vested financial interest in recommending or selling insurance - we are very happy to advise on the general principles and practicalities of insurance, but ultimately you must choose the policy that best suits you and your pets.



Diet and nutrition

Rabbits are obligate herbivores and require a high fibre diet - hay and/or grass should therefore make up 80% of your rabbit's food intake.



Cereal-based muesli diets are generally high in sugar and lower in minerals so should be avoided. Carrots, spinach, watercress, broccoli, celery, apples and dandelion leaves are all good foods instead, and of course fresh water must always be available (do check every day to ensure that this has not frozen solid during colder weather.)

Our nursing team run regular weight management clinics to help your rabbit stay trim and are always happy to give advice on the right type of diet, and the correct amount of food to give.

Please contact reception to book an appointment.

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Dental care

Your rabbit's teeth grow around 3mm every week, and in some cases this can have potentially fatal consequences, and so feeding a high-fibre food is important in preventing excessive growth. Unfortunately rabbit's teeth cannot be brushed, and therefore it's essential to ensure that you feed the correct diet in order to keep your rabbit's teeth and gums healthy and in good condition:



- Good quality hay should make up at least 80% of a rabbit's diet, as it grinds the teeth down as your rabbit chews
- Access to grass is also important as the phytoliths it contains effectively help clean the teeth
- High quality pellet diet

There are some tell-tale signs to look out for, which could indicate potential dental problems:

- Small droppings. Tooth and jaw pain results in a rabbit grazing less and eating predominantly pellet food, reducing the amount of waste produced.
- Weight loss
- Reduced appetite or not eating at all
- Watery eyes
- Wet chin
- Nasal discharge
- Bulging eyes
- Dirty bottom
- Tooth grinding
- Lumps in the jaw



By regularly checking your rabbit and ensuring a good quality balanced diet, the risk of dental problems developing can be minimised. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about your rabbit's nutritional needs.

Neutering

Unless you are planning to breed from your rabbit, we highly recommend that you have him/her neutered.



Neutering is a routine procedure and your rabbit will not be required to stay in overnight. We will carry out a post-operative check on females two to three days after the operation to ensure that she is healing well.

Neutering has a number of benefits:

- Preventing unplanned baby rabbits being born
- Removing the risk of several types of cancer and diseases
- Reducing aggression and other anti-social behaviour

**Neutering
is a routine
procedure**



In **males** the procedure is called 'castration'. The testicles are the main producer of the hormone testosterone, which can influence behaviour - by removing them, the level of testosterone is reduced, which should lower the chance of your pet showing dominant behavior such as fighting.

In **females** the procedure is known as 'spaying', removal of the ovaries and the womb (the uterus). This means that the female can't produce any eggs, come into season or become pregnant.

Spaying removes the risk of:

- Unwanted pregnancies
- Uterine Cancer
- Infections in the womb

We recommend that male and female rabbits are neutered from the age of 4 months.



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**Runnymede Hill Veterinary Hospital
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**Runnymede Hill
Veterinary Hospital**

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Opening hours

Tuesday, Wednesday and

Friday 8.30am – 7.00pm

Monday and Thursday 8.30am – 8.00pm

Saturday 9.00am – 2.00pm

Sunday 10.00am – 1.00pm

**Chobham Road
Veterinary Surgery**

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Opening hours

Monday to Friday 8.00am – 7.00pm

Saturday 9.00am -12.00 pm

Sunday - Closed

