



# Rabbits Health and Wellness

## House Rabbits and Other Animals

House rabbits and indoor cats can get along fine, as do rabbits and well-mannered dogs. Dogs should be trained to respond to commands before being trusted with a free-running rabbit and supervision is needed to control a dog's playful impulses (this especially true for puppies). Adding a second rabbit is easiest if the rabbits are sterilized adults of opposite sexes, and they are introduced for short periods in an area unfamiliar to both rabbits.

## Major Health Problems

### Intestinal Blockage

Because rabbits groom themselves constantly, they get hairballs just as cats do. Unlike cats, however, rabbits cannot vomit and excessive swallowed hair may cause a fatal blockage. Rabbits can also develop a serious condition known as GI Stasis which has many of the same symptoms and is much more deadly.

If your rabbit shows a decrease in appetite and in the size of droppings, get advice from a rabbit veterinarian.

### Prevention

- Keep your bunny brushed (less hair is swallowed)
- Provide exercise time/space at least 30 hours a week
- Give a fresh handful of hay daily
- Add fresh vegetables gradually to the diet

### Bacterial Imbalance

A rabbit's digestive tract is inhabited by healthful bacteria. If the "good" bacteria balance is upset by stale food or a sudden change in diet, harmful bacteria can take over the digestive tract and kill the rabbit.

### Prevention

- Keep all rabbit food in a cool, dry place and make dietary changes slowly
- Give new foods in small amounts. If no abdominal gurgling or loose stool results in 24 hours, the food may be offered again.

- If your rabbit goes outside, check for pesticides and poisonous plants

### Infectious Bacteria

Many Rabbit diseases are caused by bacteria, not viruses, and can be treated with antibiotics. If your rabbit shows symptoms of a “cold”, take him to a veterinarian familiar with antibiotics that can be safely used in rabbits. Oral drugs of the Penicillin family, such as Amoxicillian should not be given to a rabbit, since there is risk of destroying the good intestinal bacteria.

### **It's Up to You**

Find an experienced rabbit veterinarian *before* a problem develops. If your rabbit has been harassed by a predator, take him to a veterinarian even if no injuries are apparent. When it is over, keep your rabbit cool with nearby wet towels or ice.

Regularly check your rabbit's eyes, nose, ears, teeth, weight, appetite and droppings for signs of injury, sickness and illness.