



HIGHGATE VETERINARY CLINIC

Happy bunny bulletin

Clinic opening times

Monday—Friday

8.30am—7.30pm

Saturday

9.00am—12.30am

Sunday

Closed, emergencies only

Appointment times

Mon-Fri

9.00am—10.30 am,

2.00pm— 3.00pm,

4.30pm—5.30pm,

6.00pm—7.30pm.

Saturday

9.00am—10.00am,

12.00—12.30pm.



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Discounted Neutering

We recommend neutering of both male and female rabbits to promote happy and healthy rabbit keeping. **This is why we would like to offer our clients 10% off rabbit neutering as part of National Pet Month.**

Neutering rabbits not only allows happy mixed sex groups of rabbits to be kept without risk of unwanted breeding, it also controls aggression between rabbits. In the case of females neutering prevents uterine cancer, which 50-80% of does can develop by 5 years old. In male rabbits (bucks) it prevents unwanted male behaviour whilst also improving their temperament.

Once male rabbits become sexually mature they become aggressive and rivalry between them often result in fighting. Entire females (does) can also be aggressive and are almost constantly in season. If left unchecked rabbits can produce around 3 litters a year, with an average of 7 kits per litter. This certainly has the potential to increase the already high number of unwanted rabbits.

Bucks can be neutered as soon as their testicles appear (around 14-16 weeks) and does at around 6 months in larger breeds and 4 months in dwarf breeds.

To receive 10% discount for neutering your rabbit come into the clinic between 3rd April and 3rd May 2010 and ask for a voucher.

Preventative medicine

Preventative action against the following four diseases are important in keeping your rabbit healthy.

Myxomatosis

This virus which is well known in wild rabbits is also extremely harmful to pet rabbits and all breeds are susceptible. Clinical signs include swelling around the head and eyes which cause blindness, making eating and drinking extremely difficult. The virus is spread by blood sucking insects such as fleas and mosquitoes. Therefore using flea control products supplied by a vet can help to protect your rabbit but an annual vaccination offers the best chance of immunity should your rabbit be exposed to the disease. Rabbits can be vaccinated from 6 weeks of age.

VHD

Viral haemorrhagic disease is highly infectious and as there is no cure it holds a mortality rate

of 90-100%. Symptoms include depression, collapse, difficulty breathing, convulsions, high body temperature, lethargy and bleeding from the nose. The virus is spread by both direct contact between rabbits and indirect contact such as via clothing, contaminated hutches and bedding or insects such as fleas. An annual vaccination is available which is usually started at 10-12 weeks of age. Unfortunately myxomatosis and VHD vaccinations cannot be given at the same time and a minimum 14 day interval is required.

E. cuniculi

This microparasite lives in the brain and digestive system of affected rabbits. It is widespread across the UK and many apparently healthy rabbits have been exposed. It can cause seizures, kidney disease, hind limb weakness, head tilt, loss of vision and balance. It is spread by infected urine, or from mothers to their young. A rabbit wormer available from your vet

can be used as prevention every 3 months.

Fly Strike

This occurs when flies lay their eggs on sore or dirty areas of the rabbit's body, usually around the anus. The eggs develop into maggots which can eat through skin causing great pain and suffering to the rabbit. This condition develops very quickly and often results in euthanasia.

The likelihood of disease is higher in the summer as there are more flies, so during these months the rabbit's bottom should be checked twice daily for signs of fly eggs or maggots. If either eggs or maggots are seen contact the vets immediately. Rabbits most at risk are overweight, or have dental disease, diarrhoea, arthritis, skin wounds and those enduring poor hutch hygiene. A product called Rearguard is available from the vets which prevents maggots developing and gives 8-10 weeks protection.

Did you know....?

- There are approximately 2 million pet rabbits in the UK, meaning that rabbits live in around 5% of households.
- Rabbits love company. It is best to keep them in mixed sexed groups.
- 33 000 rabbits are handed into rescue centres annually.
- There are 67 breeds and 531 varieties. The smallest breeds include the Netherland Dwarf and the Polish rabbit which each weigh around 1kg, yet the Flemish Giant weighs 10kg.
- Rabbits are not rodents, they belong to the group 'lagomorph' which also includes hares.
- Rabbits can chew 120 times per minute.
- The average lifespan is 7 to 8 years although some may live to be over 10.



- Many common plants are poisonous to rabbits so ensure you keep your rabbit healthy by being aware of safe foods to give them.
- Rabbits need as much exercise as a toy breed of dog and so the best enclosure is the largest one you can provide. An adapted shed is ideal.
- Rabbits can be house-trained and make great house pets. Indoor rabbits get far more exercise and human company than rabbits kept exclusively outdoors.
- It is possible to microchip and insure rabbits, ask the vet for more details.

Free rabbit health checks

As part of National Pet Month Highgate Veterinary Clinic are offering clients FREE rabbit health checks.

During the health check we will check for common medical problems, assess your pet's weight, offer advice on preventative medicine and answer your questions on diet and rabbit care.

For your free rabbit check-up call 01539 721344 to

Obesity

It is estimated that 80% of rabbits are not fed correctly and 30% are obese. This is largely due to differences in a wild rabbit's lifestyle and diet compared to a pet. **Rabbits require a diet which is 80-90% fibre such as hay and grass.**

This:

1. Ensures food continues to move through their digestive system;
2. Wears down their continuously growing teeth, helping to prevent dental problems;

3. Provides mental stimulation which can reduce boredom and behavioural issues.

Overweight rabbits struggle to groom themselves properly and so face a higher risk of fur matting and flystrike. Also they are more susceptible to foot ulcers, fatty deposits on the liver and poor nutrition, all factors which decrease a rabbit's lifespan.

The chance of obesity and behavioural problems can be reduced by

make an appointment to see us between April 3rd and May 3rd 2010. Medicines and procedures required will be charged as usual.



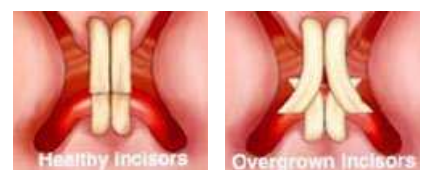
ensuring your rabbit has enough space to exercise. The minimum required size for a hutch is 3 hops long and 2 hops wide and high enough for the rabbit to stand on its hind legs.

Rabbits which are fed a cereal type mix may eat selectively, where they consistently choose the items they prefer which prevents them from receiving the correct nutrient balance. This can be prevented by diets where each pellet is the same and 'light' diets are also available.

Rabbit dentistry

Pet rabbits often experience dental problems. Their teeth grow 2-3mm per week (10-12cm annually) and must be worn down to prevent the teeth from developing spikes which cause ulceration of the tongue and cheeks. Facial abscesses are also common and often stem from unhealthy teeth. Symptoms of dental problems include weight loss, dribbling from the mouth causing a wet chin and stopping eating. Rabbits may suffer malocclusion where the front incisors don't meet correctly and/or become overgrown making it difficult or painful to eat. Problems

with teeth can be fatal for rabbits as they may lead to severe malnutrition. **Make an appointment for a free health check between 3rd April and 3rd May to have your rabbit's teeth assessed.**



The picture on the left shows healthy incisors, however the right demonstrates malocclusion.

