



Rabbit dental care sheet

Rabbit teeth grow continuously throughout their lives at up to 2-3mm per week. Dental problems can occur from birth if the teeth are not aligned properly or develop due to incorrect diets. This can cause a lot of pain and distress to your rabbit.

The incisors (the teeth at the front of the mouth) can become long and curly. The upper incisors usually curl inwards and can penetrate the roof of the mouth or cause lip or gum sores. The lower incisors usually curl outwards and upwards. The overgrown incisors are both painful and make it hard for the rabbit to eat. The incisors have to be clipped regularly or in extreme cases removed under general anaesthetic.

The back teeth (molars) can also wear unevenly. Sharp edges called spurs can form which cut into the cheek or tongue, causing raw wounds or ulcers. These need to be filed or clipped under a general anaesthetic. Dental problems can also result in facial abscesses which are challenging to manage.

Feeding the correct diet of hay and grass from when you first get your rabbit will dramatically reduce the chances of them having dental problems.

Signs of mouth trouble

- Not eating well or avoiding hard foods e.g. carrots
- Dribbling
- Dropping food
- Grinding teeth
- Front incisors look overgrown
- Rabbit producing few or smaller faecal droppings
- Weight loss
- Matted fur and scurf as they are not able to groom properly
- Watery eyes (the elongated tooth roots block the tear duct)
- Wet sticky faeces under the tail (as they are not eating their caecotrophs)
- Swelling along the lower jaw

What to do if you suspect trouble

- Get a vet to check your rabbits mouth, sooner rather than later.
- It is not possible to see all dental problems in the awake rabbit – obvious problems can be seen conscious but to rule out dental disease a general anaesthetic and skull x-rays may be needed.

Diet to feed your rabbit to help

- Hay – feed hay in a rack and also bed your rabbit on hay not straw to encourage hay intake. The more they chew hay the better.
- We recommend 'Excel Suparabbit' as the dry diet. This is high in fibre and is better than mixed, muesli type diets. If you swap your rabbit onto this do it gradually, by mixing and matching the old diet in with the new.
- Feed some veggies every day in the same amount. Varying types or amounts can cause stomach upsets.
- Try grated carrot if whole ones aren't managed, cabbage leaves, small amounts of broccoli florets, broccoli stems, etc. Avoid lettuce.
- Do not feed treats e.g. sticky chews or toast.
- Give fruit tree twigs to chew on e.g. apple tree twigs

Allow your rabbit to graze outside as much as possible and lie in the sun – this ensures high levels of Vitamin D which is important for mineralisation of teeth and bones.

If your rabbit has had a dental

- Make sure your rabbit eats well after coming home. Ensure he is producing droppings and ones that are not too small. It is vital that your rabbit continues to eat as their gut can stop working very quickly.
- Give any medication you have been dispensed. If you have any questions, ring for advice.
- Keep a regular check so you recognise dental problems early. Most rabbits with dental problems need regular attention.

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