

RABBIT

HEALTH CHECKLIST

As prey animals, rabbits are very good at hiding illness and injury. Daily health checks help you spot any signs that something may be wrong early on.

Basic needs checklist


Many common health issues in rabbits can be avoided by meeting their basic care needs correctly:

- Ensure your rabbits have plenty of space to move and explore —their enclosure should be at least 3 m x 2 m x 1 m so they can hop, stretch up, run, jump and dig.
- Provide enrichment such as toys, tunnels, hiding places and digging trays to encourage natural behaviours.
- Feed your rabbits unlimited hay, a handful of fresh greens and a tablespoon of good-quality nuggets each day.
- Provide a calm, safe environment where your rabbits can feel secure.
- Rabbits are social animals and should always be kept in bonded pairs or groups.
- Keep vaccinations up to date and attend regular check-ups with a rabbit-savvy vet.

What to check

Daily

- **Activity:** subtle changes can indicate illness or pain, including lethargy, reduced activity, a hunched posture, teeth grinding, avoiding interaction, reluctance to move or pressing the abdomen against the ground.
- **Appetite:** eating less, or only selecting favourite foods, can be a concern; not eating at all is an emergency.



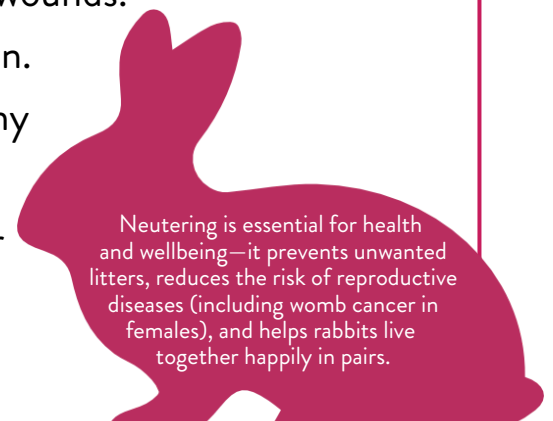
Perform the health check on your rabbit at ground level, on a towel to keep them comfortable. Offer a small treat to help keep them calm and relaxed.

What to check

- **Faeces:** changes in frequency, size, shape, colour, smell or consistency—especially fewer or no droppings alongside reduced eating—need urgent veterinary attention and may indicate gut stasis.
- **Urine:** usually pale yellow to orange and may look slightly cloudy (if cloudy, reduce calcium in diet); watch out for blood, straining, wetness around the back end, strong smells or a reduced appetite. Make sure your rabbit is drinking and urinating regularly.
- **Tail and bottom:** clean and dry, with no droppings stuck to the fur (this will reduce the risk of flystrike)

Weekly

- **Eyes:** bright, clear and shiny, with no discharge or things like grass seeds caught in them.
- **Ears:** clean and free from cuts, mites, fleas or discharge; signs of problems may include scratching, head shaking, redness, excess wax, pain, a bad smell or a head tilt.
- **Mouth and teeth:** front teeth should be white, smooth and evenly worn, with no overgrowth; watch for drooling, reduced eating, discharge from the eyes or nose, misaligned or overgrown teeth, jaw swelling or abscesses.
- **Nose and breathing:** clean with no discharge; signs of illness include sneezing, wheezing or crackling sounds, rapid or laboured breathing, mouth breathing, or holding the head tilted upward.
- **Coat and skin:** clean and free from mites (white flakes), bald patches, sores, lumps or bumps.
- **Feet:** regularly check for hair loss, redness, sores or wounds.
- **Nails:** trim regularly so they don't become overgrown.
- **Weight:** monitor your rabbit's weight regularly, as any changes can be an early sign of illness.
- **Grooming:** grooming helps prevent matting and hair ingestion; rabbits are naturally clean animals and should not be bathed.



Neutering is essential for health and wellbeing—it prevents unwanted litters, reduces the risk of reproductive diseases (including womb cancer in females), and helps rabbits live together happily in pairs.