

HOW TO TELL WHEN YOUR BUNNY NEEDS A VET



Rabbit Run
Caring for Nature's Creatures

Bunnies are prey animals and are very good at hiding illness; therefore bunny owners must watch their bunnies closely to identify if the bunny is unwell. This is why bunnies should be inside, so that they are part of the family and you become familiar with their normal temperament and behaviours. Your bunny can also go into shock from heat, noise or fright. If your bunny is unwell, you must take them to a bunny savvy vet immediately.

CAUTION: not all vets see enough bunnies to be experienced with bunny health diagnosis and medications, as they are different to cats and dogs. Bunnies need to be treated by a bunny savvy vet who can identify the different conditions in bunnies. Bunnies must continuously eat for gut mobility. The anatomy of a bunny is mostly gut and if the gut stops working then your bunny could die quickly.

What to Look For

The most common symptoms that your bunny is unwell include:

- Not eating or a disinterest in their favourite foods
- No droppings or loose droppings
- Sitting hunched for extended periods
- Walking dandruff (mites)
- Any swelling or lumps
- Sudden weight loss.



Some bunnies may also display other serious symptoms such as:

- Bloated stomach
- Head tilt
- Unable to stand or lethargic or weakness in legs etc
- Other conditions such as sneezing, nasal discharge should also be investigated (NOTE: this does not mean that the bunny has snuffles, some bunnies can sneeze from hay, dust and other causes – also see a bunny savvy vet)
- There may be other symptoms not mentioned here.

If your bunny shows any of these symptoms you need to seek vet help immediately from a bunny savvy vet or go to Animal Emergency at Hallam. With any of these symptoms your bunny may be in pain, have teeth problems that make it painful to chew, have bloat, heatstroke, worms or other parasites or suffer from a number of other conditions that can potentially kill them within a few days if not treated. These conditions can cause the bunny to stop eating then their gut can stop working and they can die. If treated early the bunny can recover from most conditions or partly recover to still live a quality bunny life.

Treatments

An annual visit to the vet is a necessity to have their calici vaccination and the teeth checked and claws trimmed to ensure your bunny is well. If a bunny stops eating this can be caused by a range of conditions –

the vet will try to stabilise the bunny first with pain relief, fluids and critical care (a nutrient rich feed mixture), and possibly treat with gut mobility drugs or other medications depending on the diagnosis. Further tests may also be done if the bunny does not respond. Bunnies are fragile and will not recover by themselves from these conditions.

What You Can Do

For bunny owners it is frightening when the bunny gets sick, and this often happens at night and on weekends when the bunny savvy vets are closed and a trip to the Animal Emergency centre is inevitable to save the bunny from dying. As emergency centres cost a bit more, we suggest that you set up a pet account to deposit money for unexpected vet visits so that this money is on hand for emergencies.

- Feed your bunny greens morning and night and monitor if they are eating enthusiastically
- Always introduce new foods gradually in very small amounts to prevent upset tummies
- Have a regular check-up with a bunny savvy vet. The checkup should include vaccinations, teeth check and a claw trim.
- Always bring your bunny inside into an air conditioned room if the temperature heats up or their area becomes warm. Do not have the bunny enclosure in direct sun during the day.
- Always house your bunny inside at night to protect them from predators and mosquitoes and supervise them if they are outside in the day.
- Only feed pellets as a treat (for example no more than a tablespoon morning and night). Pellets cause the bunnies to put on weight and therefore they cannot clean themselves properly or get out of the way of their urine. This can lead to painful conditions such as urine scald and fly strike.
- Make sure that your bunny has unlimited supply of fresh oaten or grass hay and fresh water. This keeps the teeth ground down and the gut moving normally.

Some Bunny Savvy Vets are listed on our websites www.rabbitrun.com.au and www.rabbitrunaway.org.au. Please contact us **Judi and Bryce** on 9751 1229 at any time for support or referrals. **IMPORTANT:** If you can no longer look after your bunny please bring them to our orphanage where they will always have a home.

Vets in Victoria

Melbourne Rabbit Clinic 745 Burwood Highway Ferntree Gully Ph: 9758 9879, Dr Narelle Walter

Warranwood Veterinary Clinic 1 Colman Rd Warranwood Ph: 9879 0900, Dr Brendan Carmel

Animal Emergency Centre (Hallam 24 hours) 18/151-159 Princess Hwy Hallam Ph: 8795 7020, Dr Gerry Skinner

Essendon Veterinary Clinic 89 Buckley St Essendon Ph: 9375 1039, Dr Siena Capp and Dr Kylee Woods

Middle Brighton Veterinary Centre Hampton Rd Brighton Ph: 9592 9811, Dr Murray Collins

Springvale Animal Hospital 570 Springvale Rd Springvale Ph: 9546 5022, Dr Ruth Barrett and Dr Shirleen Lebek

Highton Veterinary Clinic 88 Barrabool Rd Highton (Geelong) Ph: 5243 0077, Dr Rodney Collins