

RABBIT

AWARENESS WEEK



At Cherry Tree Vets we are doing a special rabbit awareness month. **WE ARE HAPPY TO EXTEND IT TO THE ENTIRE MONTH OF MAY.**



We invite every rabbit owner to a **FREE HEALTH CHECK** during which we will review diet, husbandry, health and care advice and answer any of your queries rabbit-related. We will advise on preventative care, like worming, flea control and vaccination.

RABBITS versus HARES

Hares are generally larger and faster than rabbits.

Rabbits' youngs are born blind and hairless unlike hares which are able to see and fend for themselves very quickly after birth.

A young hare is called a leveret and a young rabbit is called a kitten, kit

Rabbits and hares both molt twice a year, hares from cold regions may turn white in the winter.

Hares are not domesticated, while rabbits are often kept as house pets.

All rabbits (except the cottontail rabbit) live underground in burrows or warrens, while hares live in simple nests above the ground.

4 to 8 litters per year
Rabbits and hares bear

Hares rely on running rather than burrowing for protection.

Rabbits are very social animals and live in colonies and hares live most of the time alone. They come together in pairs for mating only. Whilst male rabbits fight for females, hares don't, they just pair off.

Rabbits prefer soft stems, grass or vegetables. Hares eat harder food: bark and rind, buds, small twigs and shoots.

Both rabbits and hares breed prolifically.

CONFUSING!

The Jackrabbit is actually a hare. The Belgian hare is actually a rabbit

DID YOU KNOW?

Rabbit's eyes are positioned on the sides, so they can see behind them without turning their heads.

A male rabbit is called a buck, a female - a doe. Jackrabbits are strong swimmers. They dog-paddle with all four feet

MYXOMATOSIS

This is a disease that affects rabbits and is caused by the myxoma virus. At first, the disease is visible by lumps and puffiness around the head and genitals and skin tumors. It then may progress to acute conjunctivitis and possibly blindness. The rabbits become listless, lose appetite, and develop a fever. Then bacterial infection occurs in most cases causing pneumonia. In cases where the rabbit has little or no resistance, death may take place in as little as 48 hours; most cases result in death within 14 days. There is no treatment for rabbits suffering from myxomatosis, when affected, the kindest act is to put them to sleep. Myxomatosis is spread by direct contact with an affected animal or by being bitten by fleas or mosquitoes that have fed on an infected rabbit. The myxomatosis virus does not replicate in these insect hosts, but can be physically carried by an insect's mouthparts, i.e. from an infected rabbit to another susceptible animal.

Vaccination is highly recommended twice a year.

31 days gestation period

RABBIT HAEMORRHAGIC DISEASE

Transmission of RHD occurs by direct contact with an infected animal and fomites. The virus may also be carried by the wind. Fomites are clothing, contaminated food, cages, bedding, feeders and water, all of which will harbour the virus. Even though the virus cannot reproduce in other mammals, predators and scavengers such as foxes, ferrets and some birds can excrete the virus through their faeces after ingesting an infected rabbit carcass. Flies, rabbit fleas, and mosquitoes can also spread the virus between rabbits.

RHD primarily infects adult rabbits. The incubation period for the virus is 1 to 3 days, with death 1 to 2 days after the infection. Although there is a wide range of RHD symptoms, most rabbits will show no signs.

RHD causes rapid development of blood clot formation in major organs such as the heart, lungs and kidneys causing those to fail.

VACCINATION

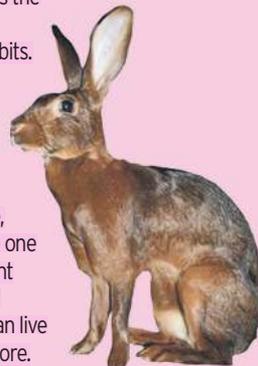
In the UK a live combination vaccine, for Myxo and RHD, has recently become available offering a duration of immunity of 1 year against both RHD and myxomatosis.

3 to 8 young per litter

BREED IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Belgian Hare is a fancy breed of domestic rabbit, and therefore follows the same vaccination pattern as other rabbits.

The Belgian hare developed through selective breeding to closely resemble the wild hare in physical appearance, and is believed to be one of the most intelligent and active breeds of domestic rabbit. It can live up to ten years or more.



Due to their difference from other breeds of domestic rabbit, the Belgian Hare may require different dietary and housing requirements to other rabbits, and as a result, they may demand more attention and care.

Due to their size and energetic nature, it is recommended that the Belgian Hare be provided with a large hutch or cage to enable them to move freely.

All rabbits must have an adequate exercise area, whether it is an outside run or an enclosed area in the house. The rabbit home should be cleaned out weekly and any old food removed.

The Belgian Hare has a short coat and if kept clean, requires little grooming other than an occasional rub over to remove any dead coat.

Rabbits can become trained to learn their name. Due to their active nature and alert temperament, they can very easily be startled by sudden noise or movement, and a recommended practise by owners of this breed is to have a radio constantly playing near them, so they can get used to noise. As the Belgian Hare has a very high metabolic rate, it may require more food and more consistent feeding than other breeds of domestic rabbit. The specific dietary requirements of a Belgian Hare do not differ significantly from other breeds of domestic rabbit, and like the majority of rabbits, the most important component of the diet of a Belgian Hare is hay, a roughage that reduces the chance of blockages and malocclusion whilst providing indigestible fiber necessary to keep the gut moving. Grass hays such as timothy are generally preferred over legume hays like clover and alfalfa. Legume hays are higher in protein, calories, and calcium, which in excess can cause kidney stones and loose stool.

6 months sexual maturity

TIP OF THE DAY

Giving pills to your rabbit: hide the tablet in a green leaf or a piece of banana and hand feed it to the rabbit. Reward the rabbit with a small piece of carrot or a treat after giving medication.

NEUTERING

Male rabbit will fight for females. A female rabbit ovulates whenever she is mounted by a male, immediately and every time. Controlling this is important otherwise you can end up with loads! Male rabbits living with other rabbits will pee on everything in sight to mark it as their territory. They may be aggressive and taming might not be enough to control their unwanted behaviour.

HOUSE TRAINING

Rabbits can easily be potty trained to use a litter box. Make sure to get a deep box and put it in a place where they feel secure, like a dark corner.

BEWARE of Fly strike.

Fly strike (Myiasis) is predominantly caused by the green bottle fly and related fly species which lay eggs on living rabbits. The green bottle flies are attracted to damp fur, urine, faeces or the odour of rabbit scent glands. They lay their eggs on or around the rabbit's rear end where they hatch within hours into maggots that eat into the rabbit's flesh, eating it alive and releasing toxins in the process. Fly strike in domestic rabbits is a common problem throughout the summer months.



CHERRY TREE VETS

Cherry Tree Stables, Roydon Road, Diss, Norfolk IP22 4LN

Tel: 01379 870 999 • Email: info@cherrytree-vets.co.uk • www.cherrytree-vets.co.uk



FIND US ON FACEBOOK



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/cherrytreepets

at Cherry Tree Vets, social platform where we share daily our posts, photos, word of advice and stories.