

Feeding Rabbits: *Continued...*

Water

Always ensure there is unlimited fresh clean water. This can be supplied in water sipper bottles or in a bowl. Ensure to clean all feeding equipment daily to prevent disease.

Foods to Avoid

Beans (any kind), breads, cereals, chocolate, corn, nuts, oats, peas, potatoes, refined sugars, seeds, wheat (and any other grains) and Lettuce (causes diarrhoea). Too much of any of these foods can be fatal!

Poisonous Plants

Bunnies love to graze, ensure to keep your rabbit away from these plants: Jack in the Pulpit, Milkweed, Boxwood, Oriental

Bittersweet, Poison Hemlock, Lily of the Valley, Toadstools, Jimson Weed, Delphinium, Foxglove, English Ivy, Mountain Laurel, Lontana, Lupine, Daffodil, Oleander, Azalea, Black-eyed Susan, Black Locust, Buttercup, Castor Bean, Sumac, American Elder, Nightshade, Bird of Paradise, Yew and Arrowgrass.

Introducing New Food

Rabbits have very sensitive tummies and if their diet is changed too suddenly it can cause diarrhoea and a painful gut. It is important to introduce new foods very gradually e.g. in small amounts gradually increasing over a week.

If you are unsure about what to feed, call your local VetEnt clinic today,



Are you due for your Annual Pet Health Check?

Our pets are important members of our families. However pets age much more rapidly than humans and they can't tell us when they are feeling unwell. This makes regular check ups for our pets the most important step in preventative health care.

A regular veterinary examination ensures health problems are detected and treated early and more effectively. This means a happier, problem free and longer life for our four-legged family members. What can you expect from a regular examination?

Weigh In

When you arrive at the clinic your pet will first be weighed. Once in the examining room your vet will assess the pet's general body condition, coat and skin health. Your vet may 'body score' your pet and if necessary estimate their ideal weight and discuss a weight management plan.

A nose to tail examination

- Examination of the ears, eyes and mouth, including the teeth.
- Your vet will listen to your pets chest to detect any irregularities in the heart or lungs.
- Your vet will examine your pets abdomen to feel in for any organ changes.
- The limbs will be checked, including the joints, for any indication of arthritis.
- The entire body will be felt over and examined for irregularities or growths.
- Older dogs may also have a rectal examination to detect any anal growths and to check the prostate gland in the male.
- Any particular areas of concern you have related to your pet's health will be examined and discussed.

A more thorough examination may also include the following:

Blood and urine tests

These tests allow your vet to understand what

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FIT OR FAT?

Did you know that just by being 5% over the healthy ideal weight can shorten our pet's lives by up to **2 years**.



We're here to help, ask your Vet or Nurse for a weight check today!



Are you due for your Annual Pet

Health Check? *Continued...*

the baseline is for your pet and also to the opportunity to detect any abnormalities that may not be detected through a physical examination.

The veterinary examination is also a great time for your veterinary team to assist you with any of those tasks that are difficult for you to do at home such as giving them worm pills or clipping problem toe nails. Your vet healthcare team can also check that your pet is on a suitable flea and worm programme.

Older pets and pets under treatment

As pets age a regular health check becomes even more important as the likelihood of cancer, heart disease, organ disease, arthritis and other age related problems increase and disease can progress rapidly. A three to six monthly check ensures early diagnosis and treatment. Pets that have already been diagnosed with health problems will also

need more regular check-ups. This includes animals with conditions such as diabetes, heart diseases, kidney disease, hyperthyroidism or arthritis. More regular examinations are important to monitor the progress of disease and to ensure that the pet is on the optimum type of nutrition and medication for the best quality of life.

Preventative healthcare is about feeding and caring for our pets as well and detecting and treating any illness early. One of the most important steps in preventative health care is an annual veterinary examination.

Make sure to stop into your local clinic during the month of April for your pets FREE lump check. Bookings essential.



Have you got a Podgey Pet?

In parallel to the human population, our companion animals are becoming increasingly over weight. Some overseas studies are quoting figures of up to 41% of pets being overweight or obese. In New Zealand, the statistics are also alarmingly high and as veterinarians we do see a large proportion of our patients with obesity problems.

Quite simply, animals become overweight when their energy intake exceeds their energy expenditure. The excess energy is stored primarily as adipose fat. So the solution to weight loss is increasing energy expenditure, decreasing their intake or both...right?



In theory yes, but this is a very simplistic view. Before embarking on any weight loss program a number of factors need consideration including breed, gender, age, neutering, environment, feeding regimes and also underlying medical problems.

Like humans, obesity is linked to many detrimental effects on health and life expectancy. Fat will put undue pressure on all physiological functions of internal organs, particularly the heart and the lungs which have to work much harder. Functional effects include joint stress causing osteoarthritis changes and spinal disk herniation. These conditions cause exercise intolerance which then exacerbates the obesity problem and often rely on anti-inflammatory drugs which are not advocated for long term use. Fat also alters metabolic function of internal organs leading to liver disease, diabetes, hormonal diseases and skin problems. Obesity has been proven to increased likelihood of death and significantly reduces life expectancy.

Prevention is better than cure! Things to consider:

Body Condition Score: This is a subjective assessment of an animal's body fat and takes into account the skeletal frame of your pet.

Age: As animals age their metabolic requirements reduce accordingly,

Lean body mass naturally declines decreasing daily energy needs. Total energy needs of a 7 year dog can be up to 20% less when compared to a young adult.

Neutering: Multiple studies show that neutered pets are more prone to obesity. Neutering usually co-insides with a time period of slowing growth (6-12 months) and without the sex hormones some animals reduce the amount of voluntary physical activity. It is important to adjust the calorie intake accordingly. Studies suggest reducing food intake by about 25%.

Genetics: Unfortunately some breeds appear to be more prone to obesity than others. Those who own Labrador and Golden Retrievers, Cocker Spaniels, Chihuahuas, Basset Hound and Pugs all need to be aware that their pets are more susceptible to weight gain and adjust their diets accordingly.

Hormonal Diseases: There may actually be a medical reason why your pet has gained weight. It is important that a clinical exam is

conducted including a biochemistry blood test to screen disorders like Diabetes, Hypothyroidism and Liver disease etc. These types of diseases can not only be life threatening, but they can also be the underlying cause of weight gain making weight loss very difficult. Get your pet checked out by a veterinarian if you have concerns.

Feeding practices: Inconsistent feeding compared to controlled portions. Lean pets with good muscle mass usually regulate their dietary intake better than overweight pets. Consider feeding small amounts and often. Think about placing portions at different sites around the house so your pet has to find it's food. In multiple pet houses, you may have to get creative with monitoring what your pet is eating. Pets should be kept out of the kitchen and dining room to avoid begging behaviour and ultimately curve our impulse to submit to their demands! An alarmingly high proportion of calories are actually feed through treats given in this manner.



Feeding Rabbits:

Quality meadow/grass hay should be freely available and make up the majority of your rabbit's diet (70%). Hay is incredibly important for digestive health as it provides correct fibre levels and helps gut movement and also exercise for the teeth. Hay encourages natural behaviours such as foraging which can help reduce boredom. Note: Alfalfa hay is NOT recommended for rabbits. Grass and green leafy vegetables (1 compacted cup per Kilogram per day, i.e. a 2Kg rabbit will need 2 cups of greens a day). Examples: Dandelion greens/ flowers, parsley, bok choy, silver-beet, spinach, mint leaves, basil, broccoli, carrot tops, green peppers, alfalfa sprouts and watercress.

Safe Treats

Rabbits have a serious sweet tooth but like humans, bunnies can run into trouble if they have too much sugar. Even though fruit is full of natural sugars it is important to feed these sparingly i.e. table spoon amounts! Safe treats include: Apples slices without seeds (these are toxic), kiwi fruit, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, watermelon and carrot pieces.

Pellets

High fibre uniform pellets are best for your bunny. We recommend NRM Rabbit Pellets (available from Farmlands). Rabbit 'Mixes' that include seeds or cereals are not recommended as bunnies tend to select certain items which will lead to an unbalanced nutrition. Pellets are often fed as a convenience food but should only make up no more than 10% of a rabbits diet. Pellets are high in calories so can cause obesity which is a leading cause of premature death in rabbits. The recommended feeding rate is 20 grams of pellets per Kilogram per day i.e. a 2Kg rabbit will require 40grams a day.



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