

Care For Older Rabbits

Make changes to the environment and diet to help older rabbits.

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Q: I have owned my rabbits for seven years and the oldest, 7 years old, is really starting to show his age. I have been trying to find information on how to care for geriatric rabbits and if they need anything special. He has arthritis in his hips so he cannot jump into his litter box. He also can't see or hear very well. He still eats and drinks very well, and he has lots of energy for a guy of his age. I was wondering if you had any info about old age bunnies or if you know where I could get information. I have found a lot of info on caring for rabbits but none on senior rabbits.

A: Congratulations for having a rabbit at 7 years of age that is doing so well. Care for older rabbits is not so different than care for younger rabbits. We do worry about arthritis and other chronic potential conditions such as heart disease, urinary tract disease, liver disease and lung diseases.

What I worry about in the older rabbit concerns how these conditions affect its quality of life. For example, if your rabbit has spinal, hip or rear leg arthritis, even if it is being treated with anti-inflammatories, can your rabbit still enter the litter box? You might need to re-design the litter box to make it easier for a less mobile bunny to get into it. Does your older rabbit have dental issues and have teeth been removed? If so, diet may have to change to accommodate that. How often do you visit your veterinarian to check on your older rabbit? Should blood work and urine examinations be performed every six months instead of yearly? Soon, you'll be able to access articles on the SmallAnimalChannel that will help you with some of these conditions in the older rabbit. Meanwhile, visit your veterinarian and discuss how best to treat the chronic conditions in your older rabbit.

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