

Rabbit Vet FAQ

Know when and where to take your pet rabbit to the vet.

By Laura Doering

Rabbit Vet Question 1: How do I find a rabbit-savvy vet?

Rabbits are very different from cats and dogs in terms of veterinary care, so find a vet qualified to treat rabbits. Check the veterinary listings at the back of this issue, search the phone book or Internet listings for vets who advertise as seeing exotics, or ask for a vet referral from a cat/dog vet. Rabbits USA magazine and the House Rabbit Society also keep lists of rabbit vets.

Certain medical emergencies, like a rabbit that hasn't eaten in 24 hours, warrant immediate attention — regardless of whether it occurs during off hours. Therefore, ask your regular rabbit vet for the number of the nearest emergency clinic that treats rabbits. Keep this information in a visible place, like on the refrigerator or near the phone.

Rabbit Vet Question 2: How can I tell if my rabbit needs to be seen by a vet?

If your rabbit stops eating or drinking, it needs to go to the vet. Rabbits are grazers (eating small amounts of food several times a day), so a dramatic decline in eating should raise a red flag that something is wrong.

Aside from obvious injuries caused by mishaps (bleeding, broken bones), many more subtle symptoms warrant a visit to a rabbit-savvy veterinarian.

Dr. Gregory A. Rich, DMV, of the West Esplanade Veterinary Clinic in Louisiana recommends taking your pet rabbit to the vet if you recognize the following symptoms:

Discharge around the eyes

Abnormal hair loss (bald spots) not attributed to shedding

Excessively scaly or scabby skin

Swollen joints, feet or body surfaces

Bloody urination

Loose stools

A decrease in the size of stools

Nasal discharge and/or sneezing

Tooth grinding and/or abnormal tooth formation (grinding teeth can indicate stomach pain)

Anorexia for more than 24 hours A rabbit that hasn't eaten in 24 hours needs to see a vet immediately.