



Brambleley Hedge

RABBIT RESCUE

HOPpenings

May - June 2011



Rabbit HEALTH Issue

Monthly Rabbit Wellness Exam

We all want our companion rabbits to be happy and healthy, and to have the best care we can give them. Watching a beloved rabbit run, jump and play - bursting with joy and good health - is truly one of life's little pleasures. When you have a bunny for a while you will begin to notice what is normal behavior for him or her - amount of food consumed or water they drink, bathroom habits and activity level - and you will quickly be able to notice any changes to this normal behavior. While we always recommend seeking the professional assistance of a qualified, rabbit-savvy veterinarian for any rabbit health or behavior concerns, there are some things you can do on your own which will go a long way to assuring that your bunny stays in peak health.

DID YOU KNOW? *Brambleley Hedge Rabbit Rescue offers a list of experienced, rabbit-savvy veterinarians on their website: <http://www.bhrabbitrescue.org/links/vets.htm>*

A wellness exam can be given to your bunny on a monthly basis to help discover and avoid common rabbit health concerns before they get out of control. This is a simple, easy-to-do series of checks that do not require extensive bunny medical knowledge or experience - just sharp eyes and sensitive fingers! It can be an enjoyable "one-on-one" time for you with your rabbit and can even include a bunny massage, a pleasant and relaxing experience for you both.

You should already have your bunny on a regular grooming schedule, which includes routine brushing and combing and fur trimming for the breeds with longer hair. We recommend grooming at least once a week, and more often during shedding periods. But once a month, it is a good idea to include the following in your rabbit's health checklist:

Skin and Fur: Check your rabbit's fur all over the body, especially around the ears and along the spine. The coat should be soft and shiny, not brittle or dull. You can blow softly on the fur or gently spread the topcoat open to look at the undercoat and skin. The skin should be free of cuts, abrasions and scabs. If you happen to notice clumps of whitish flakes resembling dandruff, your bunny may have some dermatitis. If you can easily pull shafts of fur out of the skin and the base of the hairs have clumps of white flakes, your bunny may have a case of skin mites. Skin mites are a relatively common problem with rabbits can be successfully treated, but you will need to see a veterinarian for the required medication.

Eyes, Ears and Nose: Your bunny's eyes should be bright and clear, with no signs of watering, discharge or cloudiness in the pupil. The eyelids and surrounding tissue should be free of redness or inflammation. Check the outside your rabbit's ears for white flakes or crustiness around the edges. Look down into the ear canal, using a small flashlight if necessary. The bottom of the ear canal should be free of excessive wax buildup. If you see black or dark brown material down

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Monthly Bunny Wellness Exam *Continued from Page 1*

there, your bunny might have ear mites. As with skin mites, ear mites can be successfully treated but you should take your bunny in for a vet visit as soon as possible. The rabbit's nose should be free of discharge or wetness. Also, check the insides of your bunny's front paws. If your rabbit is having a nasal discharge, they most likely wipe it away with their front paws and you will probably see a stain on the fur of their paws.

DID YOU KNOW? *A case of ear or skin mites is best treated by your experienced rabbit veterinarian, instead of with over-the-counter medications available in pet stores.*

Under-the-Tail Area: The anal-genital area of your rabbit should be dry and clean of any urine or urine stains. It should also be free of feces. A build-up of feces or cecotropes may indicate an imbalance in your rabbit's diet. Also, overweight rabbits may not be able to fully turn around and clean their own backsides and may benefit from a better diet or increased exercise to shed a few excess ounces and increase flexibility. Sometimes carefully trimming the extra long or thick fur from the area will go a long way to keep your rabbit clean.

DID YOU KNOW? *"Cecotropes" (or "cecal") are the product of the cecum, part of the rabbit's digestive system. They are a naturally concentrated form of nutrients which the rabbit consumes.*

Teeth and Nails: You should examine the rabbit's front and back paws to see if the toenails are in good shape. The nails should be trimmed to just above the "quick," or the nail's blood vessel. If the nails are long, curving under, or growing in an unusual direction, a nail trim is in order. Check the base of the nail to ensure there is no redness or irritation. Sometimes just "tipping" the nail with a nail trimmer will reduce the sharp nail point, prominent in younger bunnies. If you can lay your bunny on its back without stressing him or her, a quick check of the incisor teeth can be done. Gently pull the upper and lower lips apart to see them. They should be white with clean, straight edges. If the incisor teeth appear crooked, cracked or growing too large, your rabbit should be seen by a veterinarian for a dental evaluation.

DID YOU KNOW? *You can bring your bunny to any of Brambley Hedge Rabbit Rescue's adoption events for a nail trim. The service is free; donations are graciously accepted!*

Body Check: Gently feel your rabbit's body all over with the tips of your fingers. You will be looking for bumps, lumps, scabs or anything unusual. This is the part that can be combined with a bunny massage and you'll find most rabbits really enjoy the experience. It is important to know your rabbit's body so you can notice any new or quickly-appearing lumps or abscesses and take prompt preventative action should they be spotted. Some breeds of rabbits may develop fatty pockets as they get older, often around the "armpit" area of the front legs. These are usually not anything to worry about but it is a very good idea to know where they are and monitor them for any sudden changes in size or shape. Be sure to check your bunny's jaw line for any jaw abscesses, which may take the form of hard, pea-shaped bumps. Above all, any unusual or strangely-shaped bumps on your bunny should be brought to the immediate attention of your rabbit veterinarian. Don't take chances with anything like that - it is always better to err on the side of caution when it comes to such things.

These are some simple, easy and quick checks you can do on your bunny which may allow you to detect a number of potential health concerns before they get too advanced. It's just a matter of getting into the habit of doing them once a month, and sometimes it helps to pick a certain day, like the first of every month, to do them. You will find a monthly bunny wellness check to be well worth the time and effort.

- Stephen Guida

FOR MORE INFORMATION *about trimming your rabbit's nails, please read "The Perfect PAWdicure" article on the next page!*



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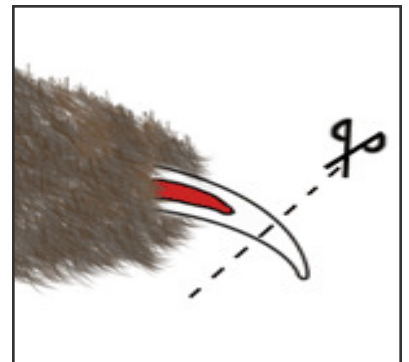
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The Perfect PAWdicure

What Your Human Needs To Know

Clippers plus bunny often equals fear on both the part of the learning “bunny nail tech” and the rabbit who has claws that belong in the Guinness book (either for length or sharpness category). Confidence is gained with experience, but this brings up the age-old question: “How does one get confidence without experience?” We’ll get to that in a second. First, let’s start you out right with some basic facts and tips so that each subsequent experience induces more confidence.

- * Watch someone cut bunny nails. There are plenty of opportunities for this at Brambley Hedge Rabbit Rescue adoption events. Ask questions. Notice the way the handler is holding the rabbit’s body, the rabbit’s paw, & the tools used. Observe different techniques of various volunteers who are skilled in clipping nails.
- * Keeping styptic powder or cornstarch with a cotton swab next to you is being prepared for any “quick” accidents. Murphy’s Law usually prevails with this – if you are prepared, you won’t need it!
- * Use sharp cutters; dull cutters will cause chipping & fraying of the nail, which can expose the quick at some point and create an opportunity for infection to occur. Scissor style cutters (for cat nails) are preferred by some, while others prefer the “guillotine” style cutters. Try both.
- * Understand basic anatomy of the nail:
 - ▶ There is a “quick”, which is the pink part of what is essentially a rabbit’s “finger”. Cutting the quick is what causes bleeding. The part that extends past the quick is the nail. Leaving a small amount of space between where you cut and the top of the quick is ideal.
 - ▶ Going with the natural curve of the nail will rarely steer you wrong. The part where the nail is curved will usually not have “quick” in it, unless it’s an abnormally long quick. Go with the penlight or rabbit reaction to tell if this might be the case.
 - ▶ Nails come in colors that usually are close to the rabbit’s coat color. It’s easiest to start out with white rabbits, since their nails are very close to “see-thru”. With darker rabbits, a penlight held behind the nail will usually illuminate the dark part (the quick) and the lighter part (the nail).
- * Holding the rabbit with its shoulders against your bent inner elbow (“like a baby”) allows you easy access to all paws. Some rabbits do not allow you to hold them this way at all, so try having them in the natural all 4 paws down position, and extend one paw at a time. For the most unruly rabbits, you can wrap them in a towel “burrito” style & extend one paw out of the towel at a time. Having someone else hold the rabbit while you cut nails is convenient also.
- * Starting with the nails of the back legs is usually easiest. The “thumb” (or dewclaw) nail is usually the hardest to cut due to the angle. In general, the back nails will be slightly thicker.
- * The first cut is the most fear inducing. Every cut after that is confidence building, & you will get a “feel” for the right amount of pressure needed. Be ready too for the nails to go flying in all directions!
- * If a rabbit starts to squirm while you are trying to cut a particular nail (and was relatively calm for other nails), you may be too close to the quick. Try moving up the nail away from the paw and cutting at that point.



Hopefully, with all of these tips, you should be able to get your (wink) “bunny nail tech certification”. Nails should ideally be cut every 4-6 weeks, with more frequent cutting with younger bunnies. Come on down to the barn or an adoption event for some practice or a mini training session!

- Wendy Frushon



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Summertime Safety Tips

When the temperature goes up, so do the dangers!

As residents of Arizona, we have all learned to treasure the cool winter months, enjoying time outside with our friends and family. Often we like to share this enjoyable experience with our lagomorph counterparts, watching them run, play, and binky in the fresh air. When the weather turns warm, most of us turn up the A/C and hide indoors. We need to offer the same comfort to our bunnies. Just like humans, rabbits are susceptible to heat stroke, but at much lower temperatures. Temps higher than 85 can kill your rabbit quickly. Here are some suggestions to help your bunny beat the heat:



1. Be even more cautious with bunnies that have dark colored fur than with bunnies who have lighter colored fur; dark fur heats up faster than light fur.

2. Sun exposure can raise a rabbit's body temperature quickly. Even if the air feels cool, beware of the sun. Make sure there is always a shady spot for your bunny to hide, no matter where the sun is in the sky. Trees, shrubs, and physical structures for shade are a good idea if you really must allow bunny to romp outside.

3. If your rabbit's indoor home is located near a window that gets sun during the day, and you keep your home a little warmer in the summer months to conserve energy, consider putting up blinds or moving your bunny's pen to a shadier spot.

4. If your A/C goes out, move your bunny quickly. It may be miserable for us, but it can be deadly to your furry friend.

5. Always provide cool, clean water for your bunny, whether he is enjoying the outdoors or the A/C.

6. If you believe your bunny has heat stroke, wrap his ears in a cool, damp towel and bring him indoors immediately. Call your vet and rush your bunny for treatment right away.

OTHER OUTDOOR CONCERNS

Predators, insects, and pesticides can all pose a real threat to your rabbit, especially outdoors. If your bunny is outside, you must constantly be on the lookout for other animals trying to make a meal out of your bunny. Snakes, dogs, cats, hawks, owls, and eagles can all pose a threat to your rabbit. Provide ground cover to combat aerial predators and build high fences to keep out ground hunters.

Your rabbit is also susceptible to the threat of insects such as spiders, scorpions, external parasites (ticks and fleas), and internal parasites (coccidia and worms). Fly strike can easily be deadly to rabbits and is more often seen in elderly, overweight, and/or incontinent rabbits. These tiny predators can strike in less than a minute, and you may not even notice it. Always do a check of your yard before bunny playtime.

The best way to avoid many of these issues is to simply keep your bunny indoors!

- Emilia Prosser



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Lapine Lucy Explains the Holidays!

Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day, Memorial Day and more - Lucy's Got The Answers!



"Lapine Lucy here...I'd like to share with you humans how bunnies think and feel about your holiday celebrations. Sure, we have Easter, when we can pick up shifts at the mall posing with your children & enjoy idol worship when chocolatiers imitate our form in their molds, but what about those other, non-rabbit-centric festivities?"
- as told to Wendy Frushon

Cinco de Mayo: This tends to be a loud holiday, with lots of something called "tequila" and Mexican food. We have heard that the Chihuahuas at the bunny shelter have a wild party, and at least one of them ends up with the runs. We can't eat beans, we can't eat peppers, and we certainly don't appreciate Corona in our water bowls, so keep the celebration out of our pens, please.

Mother's Day: This is a strange day for us, since most of us are not with our moms anymore. Wild bunnies share stories about their moms, coming by to feed them only a couple of times a day, since her "adult" scent might attract predators. They knew she was watching from nearby, though, looking out for them. Domestic bunnies share some of the same instincts. For the most part, we just enjoy the couple of hours of "quiet time" in the house while the humans are out taking their moms somewhere for food.

Memorial Day: Humans are usually off having fun this day, the unofficial start of summer, and/or remembering other humans who died in battle. White is now in season, so New Zealand bunnies remind us how cool they look.

Father's Day: This holiday is a mystery to us, since very few of us know our dads. In fact, we heard that if Dad hangs around Mom, she can get pregnant on the same day she gives birth! We like our littermates, sure, but too many brothers and sisters mean no one is well-nourished, including Mom.



Spotlight On HIMALAYANS



The Himalayan is an old breed long-known in Asian countries in the region of the Himalayan Mountains. However, there is no solid proof of where the Himalayan rabbit actually came from and little tangible evidence to substantiate that it even came from the Himalayan Mountain area. Himalayans are also known by as many as 20 other names. They are sometimes referred to as Chinese, Russian, Egyptian and the Black Nose. Himalayans are one of the oldest established breeds with a wider distribution throughout the world than any other breed.

Himalayan rabbits are the only breed that has an extremely long, narrow and flat body. This breed is the only one classified as "cylindrical." Their bodies are like a cylinder or tube, and when viewed from the top, its body is very straight with the hips the same width as the shoulders. These bunnies have a long head, with thin, upright ears. Their coat is short and easy to care for. During its history, some Himalayans were bred for their fur.

A male Himalayan is generally between 3.5 to 5.5 pounds; the same is true for the female. They are gentle, extremely calm and tolerant rabbits, and they enjoy attention. Often they are simply content to sit in your lap, thus making them a great pet for first time rabbit owners.

- Tina Tegtmeyer



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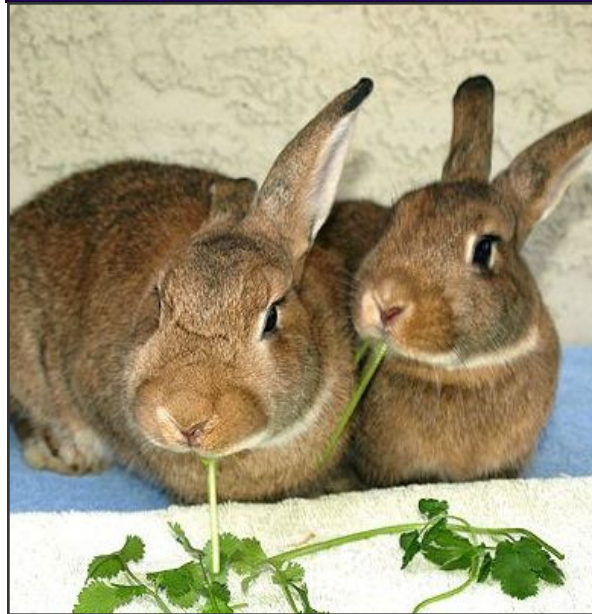
ASK DOCTOR BUNSLEY

Dear Dr. Bunsley,

The other evening, the humans were watching something called "Dancing with the Stars" on television. It had a bunch of other humans dressed in scary outfits who appeared to have seizures when some loud music started. One big lady fell down and I think I saw her backside. When they were done, they got yelled at by three more humans sitting at a table, and lots of other humans jumped up and down and screamed some more. I thought the whole thing was pretty upsetting, not to mention noisy, but my humans thought it was the best thing ever. What is up with that?

Binkying with the Buns

Bunny Laffs



Bunny Models: Cass and Joni

"You're not our server! What do you mean, 'She quit'?"

THE DOCTOR IS IN! Do you or your bunny have a care or behavior question for Dr. Bunsley? Email it to: hoppenings@bunnyman.net

Dear Binkster,

It's so hard to figure out human television shows these days. Things that send us running from the room, they lap up like carrot ice cream. There is a disturbing lack of shows featuring the wonders of the rabbit. We think television is the human equivalent of a dirty litter box.

Dr. B



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