

Urine Scald, Dirty Bottoms and How to Clean a Rabbit

Overview

- Rabbits are naturally clean animals that spend a lot of time grooming, they only tend to develop a mucky bottom or urine scald if they are unwell, unable to groom themselves, or if they live in a dirty environment.
- Having a dirty bottom and/or urine scald can also lead to serious problems such as skin infections and fly strike.
- Check your rabbits' bottoms daily and contact your vet if you notice any of them have a dirty back end.

What causes urine scald/ a dirty bottom in rabbits?

Rabbits are naturally hygienic animals that groom regularly to stay clean and healthy. If your rabbit has developed a dirty bottom, or urine scalding (wet,



Urine scald causes the skin to become red, raw and painful.

red, raw skin caused by urine soaked fur) it's likely to be a sign that something is wrong. Common causes include:

- [Dental disease](#) - dental disease can make grooming very difficult and painful (sometimes impossible).
- [A poor diet](#) - a poor diet can quickly lead to digestive problems and soft stools. Check out our [feeding guide for rabbits](#).
- **Arthritis** - arthritis is a painful condition of the joints that can make grooming very difficult. It can also make moving around painful, which means rabbits suffering with it are more likely to sit in their own pee/poo.
- [Obesity](#) - overweight rabbits often struggle to clean themselves, and tend to move around less/sit in dirty bedding.
- [Diarrhoea](#) - if your rabbit has diarrhoea, they are very likely to develop a dirty bottom, especially if they are feeling too unwell to groom.
- [A dirty environment](#) - if your rabbit lives in a dirty environment they will struggle to stay clean and dry.
- **Urine problems** – if your rabbit has a urine problem such as an infection or bladder stones, they might start leaking urine and develop urine scald around their backend.

Dirty, matted fur, and urine scald puts your rabbit at risk of further complications such as infected skin, and [flystrike](#).

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet as soon as you notice your rabbit has a dirty bottom or urine scald. A full health check will be necessary to find out why. It will help if you can tell your vet about any other symptoms you have noticed, for example:

- [Trouble eating/ a painful mouth](#)
- [Reduced appetite](#)
- Weight loss or [weight gain](#)
- [Soft faeces or diarrhoea](#)
- Poor coat condition
- Low energy/hiding away/being quieter than usual

Treatment

Treating urine scald

If your rabbit has urine scald, it's likely that they will need to be clipped, cleaned and dried by your vet (usually under anaesthetic). They may also need [antibiotics](#), [anti-inflammatories/pain relief](#), and a barrier cream for the sore area of skin. It's important that you keep your rabbit on clean, dry bedding whilst their skin heals, ideally something doesn't stick to them (such as washable towels or puppy pads).

Treating the underlying cause

Your rabbit will also need some treatment for whatever caused them to develop urine scald/a dirty bottom. Follow the [links above](#) for more information.

How to clean a rabbit

Only clean your rabbit if your vet has advised your to. It's unnatural and potentially very stressful or a rabbit to be bathed, so it's important to do it calmly and carefully. It's especially important to be careful if you need to trim any of their fur because rabbits have thin skin that tears easily.

- Ask someone to carefully hold your rabbit. You may want to wrap them in a towel to help keep them still.
- Fill a bowl with 2-3 inches of lukewarm water (check the temperature is okay on the underside of your wrist). **CARE: hot water may scald your rabbit.**
- Only use a shampoo or product if it's been recommended by your vet. It's important to follow your vet's instructions carefully because then wrong product could make the problem worse.
- Using a sponge or flannel, soak their dirty fur. Be patient and keep soaking the area until the dirt is soft and removable (if the dirt isn't loose, soak their fur for longer).
- Start by soaking the fur round the base of their tail by gently lifting their back legs, then gently lift their front legs so you can soak their tummy and underside.

- Never turn your rabbit upside down as this can be very stressful for them. Read our advice on [‘How to hold your rabbit’](#)
- Gently sponge away the dirt, use a soft bristled brush if necessary.
- To keep your rabbit calm, you may need to do short sessions of bathing (5-10 minutes) and let your rabbit rest inbetween.
- Make sure the water stays clean by replacing it as often as necessary.
- Dry your rabbit using a clean dry towel. Keep your rabbit indoors, in a warm, dry environment for a few hours afterwards to ensure their fur dries out fully.
- **Never attempt to trim any clumps of dirty fur away. It’s very common for rabbits to suffer cuts and skin-tearing injuries. If you’re struggling to clean your rabbit, contact your vet for advice and help.**
- Only wash dirty patches, and never put your rabbit’s head under water. Having a bath is unnatural for a rabbit and can be very stressful.

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