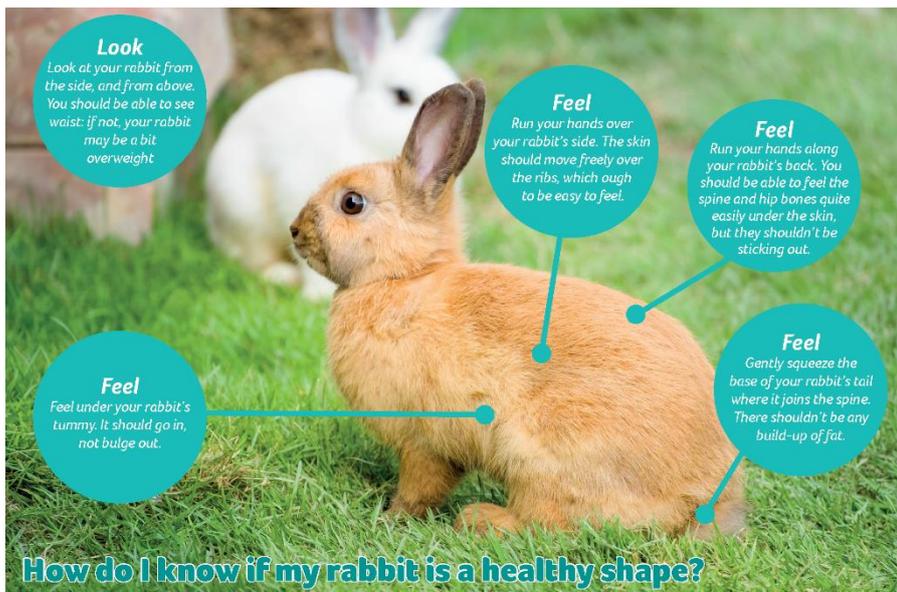


## Obesity in rabbits

### Overview

- A third of pet rabbits in the UK are overweight.
- Overweight rabbits are at risk of health problems and a shorter lifespan.
- It's important to know your rabbits' ideal shape and recognise when they change.
- Rabbits have evolved to eat grass – feeding them too much commercial rabbit food will provide them with too many calories.
- Contact your vet if you are struggling to keep your rabbit at an ideal weight, they will always be happy to help.
- Download our guide: 'Getting your rabbits into shape'.

### Is my rabbit overweight?



The best way to assess your rabbits is to look at their shape; their weight may fluctuate throughout life, but their ideal shape stays the same.

1. **Look** at your rabbit from the side and from above. They should have a waist.
2. **Feel** under your rabbit's tummy. It should go in, not bulge out.
3. **Feel** along your rabbit's side and back. You should be able to feel their ribs, spine and hip bones quite easily but they shouldn't stick out.
4. **Feel** the base of your rabbit's tail where it meets the spine. There shouldn't be a build-up of fat.

Take a look at our video: 'HOW TO: Tell if your pet is overweight'  
[www.pdsa.org.uk/obesityinrabbits](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/obesityinrabbits)

Keep an eye on your rabbits' weight using our body condition chart.



## Causes

Weight gain in rabbits can be caused by:

### Diet and exercise

If your rabbits have gained weight, it's likely that they are eating too much or moving around too little. 'Eat less, move more' – this simple formula really does work.

## Medical

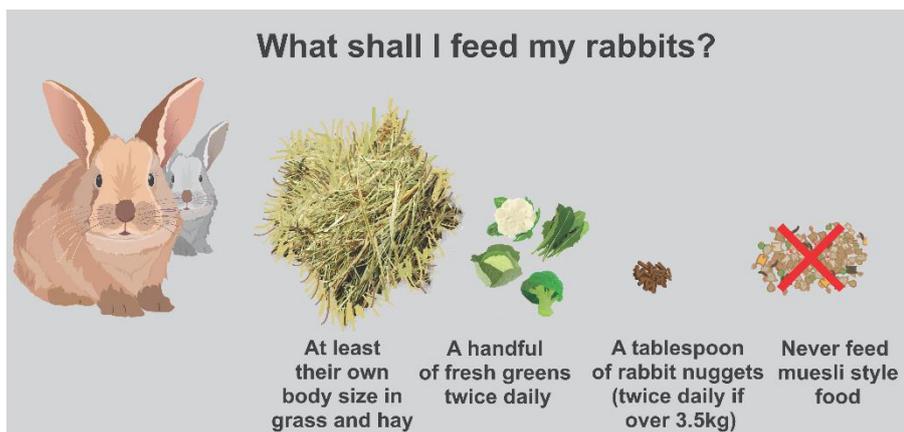
Obesity is rarely caused by a medical condition, but it's sensible to have your rabbit checked by your vet if you notice changes. If you have a female rabbit that's not spayed, it's important to rule out pregnancy.

## Health risks

Obesity puts a big strain on the body; obese rabbits are at a much higher risk of:

- A reduced lifespan
- Arthritis
- Liver disease (Hepatic lipidosis)
- Fly strike
- Skin problems such as (urine scald and infections)

## The best diet for overweight rabbits



Your rabbits' daily diet should be:

- Their own body size in feeding hay and grass
- A small handful of fresh greens
- A tablespoon of commercial rabbit pellets (if necessary)

- Never muesli style diets.

Read our advice on feeding your rabbits.

## Exercise

### Space to move

- Make sure you give your rabbits lots of space to hop, skip, stretch and jump. If your rabbits live in a small hutch and run, they will spend most of their time bored, sitting still and gaining weight.
- Sadly, our research shows that a third of rabbits in the UK live in a space that is too small for them and over half of them spend an average of 12 hours in their hutch per day.
- Why not give them a bigger space or even rabbit proof your garden and let them have free range?

Read our advice on how to exercise your rabbit.

## When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if you are struggling to keep your rabbits in shape, they will be happy to help. Obesity is so common that many veterinary practices now offer specific weight clinics.

Your rabbits should also have regular health checks (at least once a year), when your vet can check their weight and shape.

## Outlook

We know how difficult it can be to get weight off a pet, but trust us, it's worth it! Once your rabbits have reached their ideal shape

they will be healthier, happier and more active. They will also have the best chance of living a long, healthy life.

## Preventing obesity

### Exercise

- Make sure your rabbits have the space to get lots of daily exercise.

### Food and treats

- Remember, rabbits have evolved to eat grass - give your rabbit a balanced diet and not too many treats.

### Monitor regularly

- Know what your rabbits should look and feel like (using our guide) and be sure to check them regularly.

## Cost

Overweight rabbits are likely to develop health problems and rack up vet bills. To keep costs down, ensure your rabbit is a healthy weight.

Consider [insuring your rabbit](#) as soon as you get them, before any signs of illness start. This will ensure you have support to care for them should any problems develop.

Published: March 2019