

Rabbit vaccines during the Covid-19 crisis

Overview

Vaccinating your rabbits protects them from deadly diseases such as:

- [Myxomatosis](#)
- [Viral Haemorrhagic Disease \(VHD\), otherwise known as Rabbit Haemorrhagic disease \(RHD\)](#)

Can I have my rabbit vaccinated during lockdown?



Yearly vaccinations are an important part of keeping our pet rabbits healthy and protecting them from deadly diseases such as [Myxomatosis](#) and [VHD/RHD](#).

At the moment, the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) have advised that vets across the UK should only carry out urgent and essential treatment for pets, meaning that many routine procedures such as vaccinations, are mostly being suspended. While this may put our pet rabbits at a higher risk if their vaccination protection runs out during lockdown, it will enable vets to treat the most poorly pets, comply with social distancing guidelines and protect the health of the general public as well as veterinary staff.

How to keep your unvaccinated rabbits safe during lockdown.

Myxomatosis and VHD spread through direct contact with wild rabbits and also via insects such as flies and mosquitos.

Consider where they live

- If your rabbits' boosters are overdue, you may want to consider moving them indoors until they are protected again. However, you should only do this if you have enough space for them. Your rabbits need to be able to exercise and perform normal behaviours, such as digging.
- Rabbits need an **absolute minimum** living area of 10ft x 6ft x 3ft high (3m x 2m x 1m) whether they live inside or outdoors.
- Your rabbits will also need places to hide (with two entry points), and access to plenty of hay.

Insect netting

- If you are keeping your rabbits indoors, put mosquito screens over any open windows
- If you can't keep your rabbits indoors, cover their outdoor living space with mosquito netting to keep insects out.

Keep wild rabbits away

- Make sure your rabbits' outdoor space can't be accessed by wild rabbits: build extra barriers outside the normal barrier if needed. Ideally, your rabbits should be separated from the outside world with two barriers (i.e. double fences).
- Any rabbit food picked from the garden should be washed.

Cleanliness

- Make sure your rabbits and their living space stays clean so not to attract insects.
- Check your rabbits over daily – if they poo gets stuck to their bottom, gently clean it off with lukewarm water and cotton wool.
- Clean their living space regularly, using water or a rabbit-safe disinfectant such as 'Virkon S' or 'Anigene HLD4V'.

- Put your rabbits in a different enclosure until their space is clean and dry.

When can I have my rabbit vaccinated again?

Once lockdown is over and the government guidance for social distancing has been lifted, veterinary practices will start vaccinating pets again. Once your vets are offering a full service again, contact them to discuss how to get your rabbits back up-to-date with their vaccinations.

Entertainment and downtime

While we are in lockdown, it is understandable that family members, especially children, will want to play more with their pets. However, this could cause your rabbits stress if they aren't used to the attention.

- Supervise all interactions and make sure your kids are gentle and quiet around your rabbits.
- Monitor for early signs of stress such as hunching down, thumping or hiding away - a stressed rabbit is more likely to scratch or bite.
- Most rabbits don't like being picked up. Instead, try stroking them gently when they are relaxed on the ground. If you want a cuddle, sit on the floor and encourage them onto your lap using treats.

When your rabbits want to play, there are many ways you can keep them entertained.

- Stuff vegetables and hay into empty toilet rolls and pack them with paper at either side; poke small holes into the toilet roll so your rabbits have to pull the treats through them. You might have to show them how to do this.
- You could also try building a small obstacle course for your rabbit and guide them around with a treat.

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