

Looking after your rabbit's teeth

HEALTHY SMILES
HAPPY PETS

Rabbits' teeth have evolved to grind down tough, fibrous vegetable matter such as **grasses**, leaves, stalks and twigs - the natural food of wild rabbits. The need to continuously chew such material means that the teeth of rabbits grow constantly, so you need to be particularly attentive in the care of your rabbit's dental health.

When the teeth are not required to do enough grinding, the top of the tooth (the crown) grows too tall and wears unevenly and will meet its opposite number abnormally. This can lead to the development of sharp edges or 'spurs' (Figure 2) which can cut into the cheek or tongue and are then very painful. These injuries can, in turn, become infected, causing soft tissue abscesses.

What should you look out for:

-  Is your rabbit eating properly and eagerly or having difficulty chewing and eating less hay than normal?
-  Do they have abnormal faeces?
-  Feel the sides of your rabbit's head. If you feel a lump one side but not the other, call your vet.
-  Gently lift the upper lips (see picture overleaf) to see if the incisors meet evenly. If not, call your vet.
-  Check for drooling or excessive wetness under the chin.

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2



How to feed for optimum dental health:

Twice yearly, or even annual, dental checks and plenty of high-quality roughage are the key to a happy bunny.

- ✓ Grass and hay are the single most important element of your rabbit's diet (Figure 1).
- ✓ Limiting the amount of pellet feed will also encourage your rabbit to fill up on roughage.
- ✓ High fibre complete pellets and dark green vegetables are preferable to carrots and fruit, which may be crunchy but not necessarily high in fibre.

- ✓ It can also help to offer your rabbit tough fibrous tree branches, leaves and twigs but these must be rabbit-safe NOT chemically treated.

These include:

Apple trees - branches may be fed fresh or dried

Willow - branches may be fed fresh or dried

Maple, Ash and Pine - branches should be dried

Rose canes (thorns removed) - branches and leaves may be fed fresh or dry

Dandelion - stalks and leaves can be fed fresh



For more advice on taking care of your rabbit's teeth, please contact your vet.

Pets need dental care too...



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