



# THE IMPORTANCE OF A RABBIT-SAVVY VETERINARIAN

With proper care, and without any unforeseen illnesses, a domestic rabbit can live anywhere from 8-12 years or more. During that time, it's inevitable your rabbit will get sick or may have an accident requiring medical care. It's good to have an established relationship with a rabbit-savvy veterinarian when your rabbit is healthy, so when an emergency happens, you know who to call and where to go, and you have baseline information about your rabbit that can be compared to.

**House Rabbit Society recommends a rabbit see a rabbit-savvy veterinarian once a year, and twice a year or more for senior rabbits (6 years+).**

Your rabbit needs to be examined and treated by a small animal or exotics vet. Paying money to have your rabbit see a veterinarian who doesn't have experience treating rabbits is just throwing your money away and can cost the life of your furry friend. Visit [center.houserabbit.org](http://center.houserabbit.org) to see our list of rabbit-savvy veterinarians and emergency clinics in the San Francisco Bay Area.

## When It's Time to Go to the Vet

Rabbits are experts at hiding their pain and illness symptoms, so you will need to be very attentive to changes in their behavior and eating/pooping. If your rabbit regularly greets you eagerly but is now hiding and/or seems lethargic, or if they turn their nose up at their favorite toy or treat, it's usually a sign it's time to head to the vet.

Other signs and symptoms that could indicate an emergency include:

- Loud tooth grinding (indicates pain)
- Little to no pooping or diarrhea
- Runny eyes or nose
- Loss of appetite or lethargy
- Straining to urinate
- A high or low temperature  
(*a rabbit's normal temperature is 101-103°F*)
- Panting with their mouth open or labored breathing
- Chronic sneezing
- Wet chin or drooling
- Loss of balance or head tilt
- Limping or inability to use hind legs



### Resources to Help Pay Vet Bills

You can look into getting CareCredit or insurance for your rabbit (currently only Nationwide covers rabbits) to be a bit more financially prepared for emergencies.

“When in doubt, go to the vet” is a bunny parent’s mantra. There’s no substitute for seeing a rabbit-savvy veterinarian and getting professional instruction and care. However, it may be difficult to get an immediate appointment to see your vet. It’s a good idea to have a bunny first aid kit with emergency supplies on hand in case you can’t get to a vet right away.

**!** *A first aid kit is not a replacement for going to a rabbit-savvy veterinarian when there’s an emergency. A first aid kit can help you keep your rabbit stable until they can see a vet.*

- **Water-based lubricant**, like KY Jelly, to lubricate the thermometer
- **Stethoscope**, to listen for gut sounds
- **Heating pad or disc, and cooling pad/ice packs**, to keep your rabbit warm/cool, if needed. Only heat/cool a rabbit after taking their temperature!
- **Blanket or cuddle pod** to safely secure your rabbit for syringe feeding and/or medications
- **Recovery food**, like Oxbow’s Critical Care, for syringe feeding
- **Canned pumpkin** (not pie filling) to mix with Critical Care, if needed
- **Infant gas drops** (simethicone) – While simethicone may not do anything if a rabbit has gas\*, it’s unlikely to hurt, and anecdotally some people feel it helps their rabbit.
- **Oral syringes** (1mL syringes for medicine and 35 mL catheter tip syringes for feeding)
- **Pedialyte** (unflavored), or apple juice (diluted) for hydration
- **Hydrogen peroxide**, to clean blood off fur or check for blood in urine, seeing if it fizzes
- **Pet-safe wound care spray**, like Vetericyn
- **Neosporin or Polysporin** for minor cuts/bite wounds (none with added “pain relief”)
- **Q-tips and cotton balls**
- **Gauze and self-adherent bandages**, like VetWrap or CoFlex
- **Tweezers** to remove debris
- **Blunt scissors** to safely trim fur away from a wound or mats
- **Small flashlight** to look in ears, eyes, examine wounds, and backlight nails for trims
- **Styptic powder or cornstarch** to stop bleeding if a nail is cut too close to the quick
- **Saline solution or veterinary eye wash** to flush eyes
- **Washcloth** to do a warm compress for a weepy eye or abscess
- **Rubbing alcohol (isopropyl)** to clean thermometer after use, or to apply to ears of an overheating rabbit (temp over 104°)



Visit [houserabbit.org/supplist](https://houserabbit.org/supplist) for more information. You can also purchase many of the items listed above from our Hop Shop! Visit [shop.houserabbit.org](https://shop.houserabbit.org) to browse our inventory.