Nibbles Rodent & Rabbit Rescue
www.nibbles.org.uk
Reg Charity No. 1068657

Our Guide to



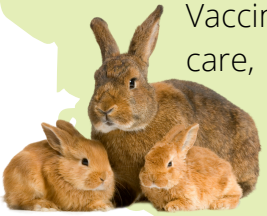
Rabbit Vaccinations

Why Rabbits Need to be Vaccinated



Vaccinations protect rabbits from myxomatosis and strains of rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease (RVHD). These viruses have no cure, spread easily through wild rabbits, insects, hay, and even our clothing, and the only effective defence is an annual vaccination covering these diseases.

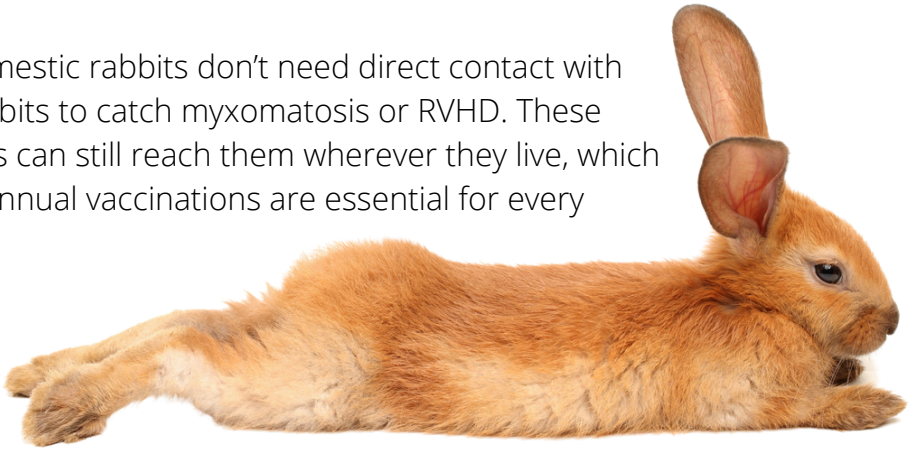
Rabbits can begin their vaccinations from around five weeks of age and will need yearly boosters throughout their lives. Vaccination is an essential part of responsible rabbit care, and something many new guardians aren't made aware of. This guide will help you understand why vaccinating your rabbits is so essential.



Do All Rabbits Need to be Vaccinated?

Yes — every rabbit needs to be vaccinated. It's a common myth that indoor rabbits, or those living in towns and cities, are safer. Their overall risk may be slightly lower, but they are still vulnerable to these serious viruses.

Our domestic rabbits don't need direct contact with wild rabbits to catch myxomatosis or RVHD. These diseases can still reach them wherever they live, which is why annual vaccinations are essential for every rabbit.





How These Viruses Spread





Myxomatosis spreads through close contact with an infected rabbit and by biting insects such as mosquitoes and midges. In warmer months, when these insects are more active and we have windows and doors open, they can easily find their way indoors — which means house rabbits are just as at risk as those living outside.



Myxomatosis is an extremely severe disease that affects many parts of the body, including the skin, eyes, genitals, lungs, and liver. Sadly, it is almost always fatal once contracted, and there is no cure or effective treatment, making vaccination essential.

RVHD has two strains in the UK — ***RVHD1 and RVHD2*** — and there are now ***two known variants of RVHD2,*** making the disease even more widespread and unpredictable. RVHD spreads through almost anything the virus touches. Simply walking through a field can bring it into your home, and it can be carried on hay, wild birds' feet, or even your dogs' or cats' paws. The virus is also incredibly hardy and can survive on many surfaces for close to a year, even in cold weather.



Many rabbits are sadly lost to RVHD without their guardians realising, as the disease shows very few signs. Rabbits may seem a little quiet and may stop eating only hours before death. Many people simply wake up to find their rabbits have passed away overnight and assume it was just "one of those things". The most devastating part is that these deaths could have been completely prevented with annual vaccinations. This silent, deadly virus targets internal organs — especially the liver — and causes severe internal bleeding.



How do vaccines work

Vaccinations don't stop rabbits from being exposed to these viruses. Instead, they prepare the immune system to recognise and fight them if infection occurs. Vaccines help rabbits build immunity to myxomatosis and RVHD, giving their bodies the tools they need to respond effectively and survive. Vaccinated rabbits have a much higher chance of survival and many show no symptoms at all. In some cases, the only way you'd know they had been exposed is if they hadn't been vaccinated.

Let's Get Vaccinated



The most common vaccine in the UK is **Nobivac Myxo-RHD PLUS**, which is given once a year and protects against myxomatosis, RHD1 and RHD2. This is the core vaccine most rabbits will receive.



However, Nobivac does not protect against the new variant of RHD2 now present in the UK. To cover this, rabbits now require the **Yurvak RHD vaccine**. Yurvak protects against both variants of RHD2 and needs to be given two weeks after the Nobivac vaccine.



If your rabbits haven't been vaccinated, book them in with your vet as soon as possible. Vaccination is the only reliable way to protect them from these deadly viruses — please don't wait until it's too late.