

# Vaccination in rabbits

## Why does my rabbit need vaccinations?

If your rabbit is not vaccinated, it is at risk of developing severe and possibly fatal diseases. These can be easily prevented by regular vaccinations.

## Does my rabbit really need booster vaccinations?

Immunity does not last forever and will gradually fall leaving your rabbit vulnerable. Every pet responds differently, and our recommendations are based on the minimum period of protection for any animal for the specific vaccine. Major studies have been carried out to determine whether this minimum period can be increased, and occasionally we are able to increase the time interval for certain diseases on recommendation from the authorities.

## When do I vaccinate my rabbit?

- Myxomatosis – from 6 weeks of age (takes up to 2 weeks to take effect)
- VHD – from 10-12 weeks
- Regular boosters - the myxomatosis vaccine needs boosting every 6 months, and the VHD vaccine every year.

## What can my rabbit be vaccinated against?

- **Myxomatosis** – is caused by a virus. The signs of infection are puffy, fluid filled swellings around the head and face, “sleepy” eyes, swollen lips, ears, anus and genitals. The swellings can be so severe that they cause blindness and prevent eating. Death usually follows within 12 days.  
It is spread by fleas and possibly mosquitoes, so prevention of disease includes controlling insects along with vaccination. Any rabbit that goes outside can be susceptible. Not all affected rabbits die – although in the wild fewer than 10% survive.  
Although no vaccine can ever guarantee 100% protection, it offers the best possible chance of producing immunity against myxomatosis.
- **Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD)** – is a deadly disease that any rabbit over 6 weeks old can catch. It is spread by direct contact between rabbits (wild and domestic), but also by indirect contact such as from people, clothing, shoes, other objects and fleas. Most infected animals die very quickly, often with no warning at all or only a very short period of obvious illness. There is no effective treatment and the only way to ensure that your rabbit is protected is to make sure it is vaccinated.