

## How to Examine a Rabbit

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This paper summarizes how to examine a rabbit, which should be done monthly. It is intended for rabbit owners (not vets) who know how to do an exam & simply summarizes the steps. It is not intended to give "how to" details, diagnose diseases, nor give information about what to do if anything is found wrong (contact your vet for that). Note: turn a rabbit on its back ONLY if you know how to do this safely; otherwise, the rabbit could be gravely injured.

### Hands On

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**Fur, Skin, Body** (run hands along bottom of jaw & dewlap, chest; around eyes, along head, neck, back, sides, rump, tail, legs, abdomen)  
bad: dandruff; fleas; black specks (flea poop); dirty or rough coat; matted fur; thin/bald spots, skin red or with dry crust; cuts; scabs; lumps (especially with small hole); fluid collecting under skin; abdomen swollen or very hard; any body part sensitive to touch, e.g., abdomen, base of ear, jaw; one side different from other side

**Ears** (inside & outside)

bad: wax; scabs; red; oozing; swollen; odor

**Eyes**

bad: red, cloudy, discoloration, spots on eyes; mucus; runny; bulging or swelling; crusty; partially open; matted fur at corner (small "sleepers" in corners ok); red eye lids; cyst under eyelid (check upper & lower)

**\*\*\* Turn rabbit on back for rest of this section \*\*\***

**Mouth, Teeth**

good: gums pale pink; breath sweet

bad: teeth not aligned, overgrown, broken, loose, discolored; drooling; wet chin, chest or dewlap; gums bright red, blue, gray or white; sores; fur loss under chin

**Nose**

good: membranes pale pink

bad: wet; mucus; dirty; membranes bright red, blue, gray or white; sores

**Feet** (check bottoms of feet & between toes; move fur to examine skin)

bad: poop; sore hocks (red bare skin, scabs, open wounds); missing or crooked toes; long, torn or bleeding nails; inside of front legs wet or matted

**Genital Area**

good: determine sex

bad: anything unusual when checking sex; caked secretion or tumor in anal glands; stained or wet fur; urine scald; red or inflamed skin; poopy butt; sores; small, white firm projections; mucus discharge

## Hands Off

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### Weight

bad: over/under weight

### Poop

bad: irregularly shaped or sized poop; poop strung together like beads; soft stool; diarrhea; contains blood, mucus, undigested food or maggots; having no poop in 12 hrs.; goopy cecals

### Urine

good: various colors, including red, is often ok

bad: toothpaste like consistency; blood clots (red spots or flakes); gritty; straining to urinate; having no urine; leaking urine; holding butt very high when urinating

### Gait, Movement

good: sits, hops & moves normally; good balance

bad: limps; wobbles; odd movements; head tilt; difficulty eating; odd mouth movements; frequent head shaking (quick head binky ok); excessive ear or body scratching; excessive licking of chest or dewlap

### Noises

bad: loud teeth grinding (soft teeth purrs ok); unusual vocalization; frequent sneezing; noisy breathing; rattle in chest; labored breathing (long hard breaths); very loud or no gut sounds

## Daily Observations

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If you are able to observe the rabbit daily, you can also make these observations.

### Eating Behavior, Poop

bad: eating less than usual; not eating at all for 12 hrs.; not eating favorite foods; change in poop (size, color, odor, consistency, shape, amount); stops pooping in litter box

### Drinking Behavior, Urine

bad: drinking more or less water than usual; not drinking at all for 12 hrs.; change in urine (color, texture, odor, amount); stops peeing in litter box; difficulty peeing

### Movement

bad: lethargic; different attitude; sitting in hunched position; less active; difficulty moving

### Temperature (take temperature if seems sick and know how to do it)

good: 100 – 103 deg. F.

bad: anything else

### Other

bad: sudden change in weight (weigh once a month); different respiration rate; different heart sounds; different coat condition (e.g., rough fur)