

Bunny That Refuses Food Is A Bunny In Crisis

There **will** be times in your bunny's life when he rejects food or a favorite treat. What your bunny is telling you is that he is sick. You must be prepared to respond immediately or your bunny may die in as few as 12 hours.

Humans who feel sick can wait and see if they improve and, often, they will feel better later. That doesn't work with bunnies. When a bunny doesn't eat, he enters a downward spiral. The muscles that push food through the intestines are slowing, bacteria are proliferating and creating gas, pain is building and body temperature starts dropping, leading to shock and death.

It's smart to check your bunny's wellness every day by offering him a treat every morning and every evening. If he is not interested, panic!

When your bunny rejects food, you must:

- 1. Stabilize your bunny using the steps on the next page.**
- 2. Take your bunny to a rabbit-experienced vet as quickly as possible.**

A vet can do what you cannot: Give fluids and prescription pain meds; take x-rays to identify the problem. X-rays are costly but necessary so the vet can see if your bunny has gas, blockage, stones, molar spurs, or something else.

Stabilize your bunny until you can get to the vet. To do so, you must have our ***Bunny Emergency Kit***, available in our shelter store, or make your own.

Prepare your emergency kit now for the inevitable crisis. You absolutely must have the first four items in this list. Place this document in your kit.

1. Heating pad of some sort.
2. Infant gas drops (simethicone). Any brand is fine.
3. 1cc syringe (1cc is the same as 1ml.) Ask a vet or pharmacist.
4. Bayer orange-flavored, chewable, 81mg. low dose aspirin. Any brand is fine but Bayer orange flavor dissolves the best.
5. Digital thermometer with a flexible tip (no glass) that will give a quick reading in 10 seconds or less. Watch this how-to video: <http://rabbit.org/how-to-take-a-rabbits-temperature>. Or, ask your vet to show you how to take your bunny's temperature, then practice so you can manage in a crisis.
6. Lubricant to apply to the tip of the thermometer (any alcohol-free lubricating jelly.)
7. Cornstarch or baby powder (not talc). When bunny rips a nail, apply dry powder to stop the bleeding. Use it to knead into and dissolve fecal crust on a bunny butt. Avoid bathing bunny's butt unless necessary.
8. **Do not syringe-feed your bunny unless your vet tells you to do it.** You can use baby food squash or pure pumpkin (not pie filling). Your vet may sell you a bag of Critical Care, an Oxbow food product. Dilute with enough water so it can be easily swallowed. We like 1 part Critical Care to 3 parts water. To avoid choking, insert the tip of the syringe in the **side** of bunny's mouth.
9. 10cc feeding syringe. We like the Monoject brand. It will not clog.

Important: Critical Care becomes toxic after 24 hours so make it fresh.

Do All Of This Immediately When Your Bunny Refuses Food

1. **Call a rabbit-experienced vet.** State that you need an emergency appointment.
2. **Temperature.** If you can take bunny's temperature, do it. Normal is 101° -103°. A low temp (under 99°) can be deadly and you must warm your bunny so he doesn't go into shock. Also, bunny must be warm and alert so he can swallow gas drops and dissolved aspirin or it will dribble into his lungs and he will die. If temperature is over 103°, suspect infection. Do not use heating pad. Get to vet right away.

If you cannot take bunny's temperature: Put a heating pad on your lap, cover it with a towel and place bunny on it. Use a low or medium setting because a bunny's skin is delicate and will burn. If heating pad is too hot to hold your hand on it for 30 seconds, it's too hot for your bunny. In a pinch, you can heat towels in the dryer and wrap your bunny. **Do not force bunny to stay on the heating pad; bunny will let you know when he no longer needs the heat.**
When bunny is alert, proceed to steps 3 & 4.

3. **Gas Relief.** Fill a 1cc syringe from the bottle of gas drops. To avoid choking, insert the tip in the side of bunny's mouth. Gradually empty the syringe. Gas drops will do no harm. You can give a dose every hour for 3 doses, then a dose every 3 to 8 hours.

Do not give aspirin to a bunny with abnormal kidney function or is not drinking well.

4. **Pain Relief.** If you are heading to the vet and will get there within 5 hours, don't give aspirin because the vet will give a more powerful pain med. Otherwise, for bunnies weighing **5 pounds and more**, dissolve **one** tablet of Bayer orange-flavored, 81mg aspirin in 1cc water. Draw into a 1cc syringe and insert tip in side of bunny's mouth. For bunnies **under 5 pounds**, dissolve **one-half tablet** in 1cc water. **GIVE ASPIRIN ONLY ONCE.**

If your bunny refused food because he had a gassy tummy, the gas drops and aspirin should relieve his pain and bunny should start munching greens in a couple of hours.

Call these rabbit-experienced veterinarians in a crisis:

Hope Animal Hospital, Dr. Linda Beisswenger, 636-349-0049, Fenton, Mo,
300 Biltmore, next to Chuck's Boots on Hwy. 30 at Northwest Blvd. HopeAnimalHospital.com
Mon & Tues: 8-6 / Wed: 8-12 and 2-5 / Thurs: 8-7 / Fri: 8-5

On nights and weekends, leave emergency messages on 636-222-3972 and 314-580-3123. Dr. B may be able to meet you at the clinic if she is available.
If she is not, use **VSS Emergency Ctr**, Manchester Rd. & Hwy.141, 636-227-9400.

Creve Coeur Animal Hospital, 314-434-4300. You will not be accepted for an emergency unless you are already a client. 12550 Olive Blvd., west of I-270.
CreveCoeurVets.com **Mon through Thurs: 8-7:30 / Fri: 8-6:30 / Sat: 8-2**

Call these members of our chapter in a crisis - days/nights/weekends

Pat Daly: 618-920-0705 and 618-632-2940

Bobbie Shewmaker: 618-604-3063

Marjorie Manahan: 636-734-3964 - Joy Gioia: 636-541-0256 and 636-349-0606.