

## **A Bunny That Refuses Food Is A Bunny In Crisis** ***This is a new document updated and released 12/3/24***

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 ready to respond immediately or your bunny may die in as few as 12 hours.

When a bunny refuses food, he has already entered a downward spiral. Muscles that push food through the intestines are slowing, bacteria are proliferating and emitting gas, pain is building and his temperature is probably dropping, leading to shock and death.

**Make this your daily routine:** Offer your bunny a favorite 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 soon as possible.**

A vet can take x-rays to identify if the problem is gas (common), a blockage (less common and very serious), molar spurs (a painful condition that discourages chewing), or something else. A vet will give fluids to rehydrate the bunny (very helpful).

Until a vet is available, you can help your bunny survive with the Bunny Emergency Kit that we sell in the Bunny House store, or you can make your own kit – but do it now!

**Your kit must have these items:**

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 your vet or pharmacist.
4. Digital thermometer with a flexible tip (no glass) that will give a quick reading in 10 seconds or less. Watch this easy, how-to video:  
**<http://rabbit.org/how-to-take-a-rabbits-temperature>**. Or ask your vet to show you how to take temperature. Practice so you can manage in a crisis.
5. Water-based lubricating jelly to coat the tip of the thermometer.
6. Baby powder with cornstarch (not talc) or cornstarch from your pantry. When bunny rips a nail, apply dry powder or cornstarch to stop the bleeding.
7. This two-page emergency document.

**Important: Your bunny may have a blockage so do not syringe-feed your bunny unless your vet tells you to do it.**

Your vet may sell you a bag of Oxbow Critical Care. Dilute with enough water so it can be easily swallowed. We like 1 part Critical Care to 3 parts water. A similar food product is EmerAid. Or, you can use baby food squash or pure pumpkin (not pie filling). The Monoject 10cc syringe in our emergency kit will not clog. To avoid choking, insert the tip of the syringe in the **side** of bunny's mouth.

**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.**
2. **Take temperature:** If you know how to take your bunny's temperature, do it. If you are uncomfortable, do not attempt it. Proceed to step 3.

A note about temperature: Normal temperature is 101° to 103°. If bunny's temperature is 100° or under, you must warm bunny to prevent him from going into shock, which is fatal. If his temperature is above 104°, suspect infection and rush him to the vet immediately. In most cases of bunny-not-eating, the bunny will be losing temperature so our advice is to provide heat (step 3).

3. **Provide heat:** Choose a comfy chair. Place a towel on your lap. Place a heating pad on the towel. Place a towel on the heating pad. Place bunny on top. 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. Do not force bunny to stay on the heating pad. A bunny will know when he doesn't need the heat. If you don't have a heating pad, heat towels in your dryer and wrap bunny.

While bunny is warming and if he is alert and able to swallow, proceed to step 4. Never give liquid or food to an unconscious or semi-conscious animal because it will dribble into his lungs and he will die.

4. **Give gas relief:** Fill a 1cc syringe from the bottle of gas drops. Insert the tip in the side of bunny's mouth and gradually empty the syringe. Gas drops will do no harm. You can give a 1cc dose every hour for 3 hours, then 1cc dose every 3 hours.
5. **Massage:** With bunny relaxed on your lap, gently massage his abdomen/belly.
6. **Give water if bunny will accept it:** Use nothing larger than a 1cc or 3cc syringe. Use plain water or add 1 tablespoon apple juice to 8 ounces water.

### **Call these rabbit-knowledgeable veterinarians in a crisis:**

**Dr. Linda Beisswenger, Hope Animal Hospital, 636-349-0049, Fenton, MO**

Hope accepts emergencies during normal business hours only.

**Mon & Tues: 8-6 / Wed: 8-12 and 2-5 / Thurs: 8-7 / Fri: 8-5**

300 Biltmore, next to Chuck's Boots off Hwy. 30 at Northwest Boulevard

**Creve Coeur Animal Hosp., 314-434-4300, 12550 Olive Boulevard, west of I-270**

**Monday through Thurs: 7:30-6:30 / Fri: 7:30-5:30 / Sat: 7:30-1pm**

**Open 24/7: Veterinary Emergency Group (VEG) in Brentwood, MO**

**314-970-2545.** 2101 South Brentwood Boulevard. They treat rabbits.

**We Can Help:** These volunteers will answer your questions, but they are not veterinarians. They are available days, nights, weekends, holidays:

Pat Daly 618-920-0705 // Bobbie Shewmaker 618-604-3063

Marjorie Manahan 636-734-3964 // Joy Gioia 636-541-0256