

Rapid intervention in the event of loss of appetite

RABBIT DOES NOT EAT



For rabbits' digestion to function properly, they need to eat constantly throughout the day. If they don't eat for several hours and possibly just sit in a corner, this is a medical emergency. Don't wait until the next day, but take your rabbit to your vet in good time.

How does digestion work in rabbits?

To understand why **rabbits' inability to eat** can quickly become a **life-threatening situation**, it is important to know how their digestive tract works. **Rabbits have a so-called gizzard**. This means that new food must always be added from above to keep digestion going. This is necessary because rabbits have very **weak stomach and intestinal muscles**. They are not able to transport food from the mouth via the oesophagus, stomach and intestines to the anus on their own. **Digestion is only possible if they regularly ingest food, which transports the chyme further**



Regular food intake is essential for rabbits (©focus finder -stock.adobe).

If you observe your rabbits, you will certainly have noticed that they are **almost constantly nibbling**. If you want to count, you will come up with **60 to 90 small meals** that a rabbit eats every day.

What happens if a rabbit does not eat?

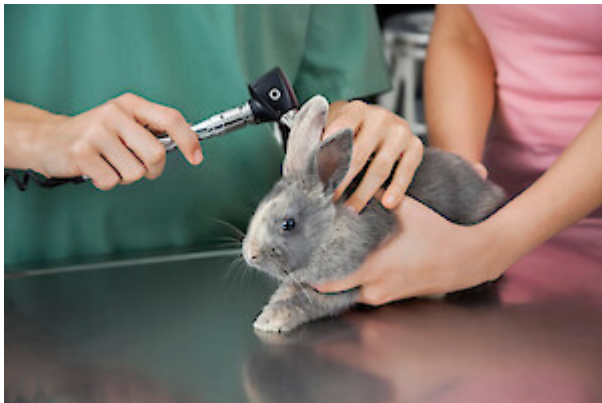
If a rabbit eats significantly less or stops eating completely, the food is no longer transported properly. You can't compare this to a day of fasting for a dog, cat or us. **After 12 hours at the latest, the situation becomes life-threatening!** The problem is that the food starts to ferment in the stomach after a while.

deuka

Rabbits cannot burp, but are dependent on the fermenting food being transported outside. If this does not happen, the gases bloat the organs, which is commonly known as tympanosis.

The accumulation of air can lead to **extreme tension in the stomach and intestinal walls**, which is associated with **severe pain** for the rabbit. The surrounding **blood vessels are constricted** and **circulatory failure** can occur. Loss of appetite in rabbits can therefore be **life-threatening within a few hours** , which is why you should never delay an appointment with your vet for too long.

Can I help my rabbit with home remedies?



If your rabbit has stopped eating, a visit to your vet is urgently needed
(©Tyler Olson-stock.adobe).

If your rabbit is not eating and is barely moving, this is **not the time to look for a solution with home remedies**. The next day, any help may come too late. If you notice that one of your rabbits is not eating or is eating significantly less than usual, the only thing that will help is an **appointment with your vet**.

What causes can make rabbits reluctant to eat?

There are various possible reasons why rabbits no longer want to eat. The most common are as follows:

Gastrointestinal problems

The most common cause of loss of appetite in rabbits is problems with the digestive system. These can be caused by **inappropriate feeding**, for example. Rabbits need food around the clock to keep their digestion going. This primarily includes hay, but also grasses, herbs, high-quality dry food and water. Also make sure that they do not eat any poisonous plants in your house or garden.

Constipation

Especially with long-haired rabbits, it can happen that **swallowed hairs form clumps** and lead to blockages. It is therefore advisable to **comb** rabbits **regularly** during the shedding period. Otherwise, they may tend to shed their fur.

Teeth too long

A rabbit's teeth grow back **for a lifetime!** The reason for this is that in nature they eat food that contains a lot of raw fibre. This leads to constant abrasion of the teeth, which means that their teeth are ground down and theoretically become shorter and shorter. However, they remain roughly the same length due to regrowth. However, this concept becomes unstable if rabbits in hobby husbandry do not **eat enough hay and other raw fibre-containing food**. In this case, the teeth become longer and longer and **injure the gums**. They can also **grow crooked** or lead to **jaw abscesses**. Due to the resulting **pain**, the rabbit eventually refuses to eat.

Parasite infestation

Mites are one of the most common parasites in rabbits. There are various species, which mainly cause hair loss, but can also favour unwillingness to eat. **Coccidia** are also very unpleasant. These single-celled parasites can suddenly multiply en masse due to stress, an unbalanced diet or poor housing conditions. A typical symptom of a coccidia infestation is unwillingness to eat. **Worms** are also parasites. Signs of a worm infestation are diarrhoea, flatulence and loss of appetite.

Permanent stress

Stress can affect the stomach - and that's not just the case for us. **Stress should therefore be avoided**. It can arise, for example, if rabbits **do not get enough exercise**. But the **death of a partner animal** or when rabbits are **kept alone** can also cause stress.

Lack of hygiene

An **unclean environment** brings with it the risk of **parasites multiplying** or leftover **food spoiling**. You should therefore always ensure hygienic conditions. Check daily whether cleaning is required.

Diseases

There are diseases such as **rabbit plague**, which is caused by viruses. In addition to swelling in the facial area, it can also happen that rabbits eat less.

What should I do if my rabbit stops eating?

In most cases, there is no quick fix. If one of your animals doesn't eat for several hours and just sits apathetically in a corner, it's **best** to go **to the vet**. You should tell them what symptoms you have noticed and whether you have any suspicions as to what the cause might be.

Has your rabbit had **stomach problems** for days? Have you noticed that its **teeth** are **unusually long** and crooked? Is it perhaps suffering from **hair loss**? Could it be that your rabbit's **diet** doesn't always include hay? Or is it being **bullied** by other animals in the group? As you have seen above, there are many different possible reasons for loss of appetite. You should support your vet to the best of your ability in finding the cause.

Conclusion: Rabbits do not eat

- Rabbits need continuous food intake to maintain their sensitive digestion. Even a few hours without food can be life-threatening.
- Their unique digestive tract with a stuffed stomach makes them particularly susceptible to food refusal problems.
- Causes of unwillingness to eat range from digestive problems and malpositioned teeth to parasite infestation or stress.
- Initial signs such as apathy or reduced food intake should not be ignored. A quick veterinary examination is crucial.
- Home remedies are not a solution for loss of appetite - any delay can seriously jeopardise the animal's health.
- Prevention through species-appropriate husbandry, a sufficient supply of raw fibre-rich food, hygiene and regular checks of coat and teeth can significantly reduce the risk.
- Keep a close eye on your animals so that you can react to changes at an early stage and give your rabbit the help it needs in good time.