

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS



Does My Rabbit Need to Have His Teeth Trimmed?

Rabbits belong to an order of mammals known as lagomorphs. Unlike rodents, a rabbit's teeth continue to grow throughout its life. If the teeth are aligned properly, normal eating and chewing cause them to wear down naturally as they grow and there should be no problems. However, if the teeth are misaligned, they do not wear down properly. The teeth can become too long or develop "spurs" or sharp edges which can cause pain and difficulty chewing.

Rabbits can be born with malocclusion, or the misaligned teeth may be caused by trauma or dental infection which can affect how the teeth grow. It is important to provide a proper diet and sufficient materials to gnaw and chew to help the teeth wear down. Rabbits have a total of 28 permanent teeth. They have front or incisor teeth and cheek teeth (premolars and molars).

Signs of dental problems include drooling or slobbering, difficulty picking up or chewing food, pawing at the mouth, grinding teeth and decreased appetite.

So, if your rabbit is showing any signs of malocclusion, he or she should have the teeth trimmed. Sometimes a clipper can be used but usually the teeth are ground down with a dremel device or a dental bur. The teeth are shortened and the rough edges are removed. Occasionally, a tooth may need to be extracted under general anesthesia. Not all rabbits have dental issues, but it is a common problem. Since serious health issues can develop if your rabbit is not eating properly, please make sure to see your veterinarian if you notice any potential dental problems. Your veterinarian can trim the teeth if needed or recommend proper care for any dental problems.

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