

RABBIT-SAVVY VET SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Rabbits require specialized veterinary care due to their unique physiology. Use the following questions to ensure your vet is truly rabbit-savvy and can provide the best care for your bunny. If the vet's answers don't match the expected responses, consider looking for another vet.

1. How many rabbits do you see per month?

Expected Answer: A rabbit-savvy vet should see at least 15–30 rabbits per month, depending on the size of their practice. A higher number indicates more hands-on experience with rabbits, which is critical since they are considered "exotic" animals in veterinary medicine and require specialized care.

2. How many rabbit spay/neuter procedures do you perform per month?

Expected Answer: They should perform at least 5–10 spay/neuter procedures on rabbits monthly. This shows they are comfortable with rabbit surgery, which is more delicate than in other animals due to rabbits' sensitive physiology (e.g., their inability to be fasted before surgery and their risk of stress-related complications).

3. What type of anesthesia do you use for rabbits?

Expected Answer: The vet should use isoflurane or sevoflurane. Isoflurane is the most commonly used and safest anesthesia for rabbits, while sevoflurane is a newer option that some vets use with excellent results. Avoid vets who suggest outdated or unsafe anesthetics like ketamine alone, as rabbits can have adverse reactions.

4. What do you recommend as a healthy diet for an adult rabbit?

Expected Answer: A rabbit-savvy vet will recommend:

- Unlimited grass hay (e.g., timothy, oat, or other grass hays) as the primary food source.
- Limited high-fiber, low-protein pellets (e.g., 1/4 cup per 5 lbs of body weight daily).
- A daily assortment of fresh vegetables (about 1–2 cups per 5 lbs of body weight), such as leafy greens (e.g., romaine lettuce, parsley, cilantro).
- Fresh water at all times.
- They should warn against high-sugar foods (e.g., carrots, fruits) as treats only and avoid alfalfa hay for adult rabbits due to its high calcium content.

5. Which antibiotics are dangerous for rabbits?

Expected Answer: The vet should immediately identify that amoxicillin, penicillin, and other "-cillin" drugs (e.g., lincomycin, clindamycin) are dangerous and can be deadly to rabbits. These antibiotics disrupt the rabbit's gut flora, leading to fatal digestive issues. A rabbit-savvy vet will use safe alternatives like enrofloxacin (Baytril) or trimethoprim-sulfa when antibiotics are needed.

6. Have you ever treated common rabbit conditions like GI stasis, Pasteurella, E. cuniculi, or abscesses?

Expected Answer: The vet should say yes to treating at least some of these conditions, as they are common in rabbits:

- **GI Stasis:** A potentially life-threatening condition where the digestive system slows or stops.
- **Pasteurella:** A bacterial infection often causing respiratory issues or abscesses.
- **E. cuniculi:** A parasitic infection that can lead to neurological symptoms like head tilt.
- **Abscesses:** Common in rabbits due to their thick pus, often requiring surgical intervention.

If the vet has never treated any of these, they likely lack sufficient rabbit experience or may not be diagnosing these conditions correctly.

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7. If my rabbit is showing signs of GI stasis, what would you recommend?

Expected Answer: The vet should describe a thorough approach:

- Conduct a physical exam (e.g., palpating the abdomen for blockages, checking ears for related issues, assessing the rabbit's demeanor for signs of pain or lethargy).
- Ask about recent behavior (e.g., changes in eating, drinking, or litter habits).
- Recommend immediate treatment, which may include:
 - Fluid therapy (subcutaneous or IV) to rehydrate the rabbit.
 - Pain relief (e.g., meloxicam, a rabbit-safe NSAID).
 - Gut motility drugs (e.g., cisapride or metoclopramide) to stimulate digestion.
 - Syringe feeding with a critical care formula (e.g., Oxbow Critical Care) if the rabbit isn't eating.

8. What's the best way to prevent GI stasis in rabbits?

Expected Answer: The vet should emphasize:

- Providing unlimited hay (available 24/7) to keep the digestive system moving.
- Ensuring daily exercise to promote gut motility.
- Frequent brushing to prevent hair ingestion, especially during molting.
- A balanced diet (as described in question 4) to avoid dietary imbalances that can lead to stasis.

9. Should food be removed the night before surgery for a rabbit?

Expected Answer: No. Rabbits should never be fasted before surgery. Unlike dogs or cats, rabbits cannot vomit, and their digestive systems must remain active to prevent GI stasis. A rabbit-savvy vet will ensure the rabbit has access to food and water up until the procedure to keep their gut moving.

10. What would you do if my rabbit has an ear infection?

Expected Answer: Expected Answer: The vet should outline a detailed protocol:

- Perform a physical exam, including using an otoscope to look into the rabbit's ears for signs of infection (e.g., redness, discharge).
- Ask about behavior changes (e.g., head shaking, scratching, or head tilt, which could indicate a deeper issue).
- Recommend treatment with a rabbit-safe antibiotic (e.g., Baytril) and possibly ear drops.
- Schedule a follow-up appointment (typically 2 weeks later) to ensure the infection has cleared.
- They may also check for underlying causes, like ear mites or *Pasteurella*, which can complicate ear infections in rabbits.

11. Which conferences have you attended recently that included talks on rabbit medicine, and what journals do you read to stay updated?

Expected Answer: A rabbit-savvy vet should stay updated through continuing education, such as attending ExoticsCon or NAVC conferences (which include rabbit medicine) and reading journals like the Journal of Exotic Pet Medicine or House Rabbit Society publications. If they can't name specific sources, they may not be current on rabbit care.

12. Where should I take my rabbit for after-hours emergencies?

Expected Answer: The vet should provide a specific recommendation for an after-hours emergency clinic that has rabbit-savvy staff. They might suggest a 24/7 exotic animal hospital or a vet they trust who handles rabbit emergencies. They should also encourage you to do a "drive-by" of the location in advance so you're prepared in a crisis.