



Rabbit Urine

Rabbit urine is a very important, yet often confusing topic for both new and seasoned rabbit owners. A quick internet search will provide an overwhelming amount of information regarding the appearance, color, and odor of your rabbit's urine, but which sources are providing the correct information? Sifting through the websites, studies, and blog posts about rabbit urine can be a tedious and confusing task. Luckily, the BBSC Team has done this job for you!

This document is intended to serve as a guide for rabbit owners to reference when they have general questions or concerns about their rabbit's urine. Please note that the information provided in **this document is NOT intended to be a substitute for veterinary care** and that your rabbit should be examined by a rabbit-savvy veterinarian if they are ill or if they are experiencing a medical emergency.

1. Red Rabbit Urine

First things first: rabbit urine is not a "one size fits all" issue.

Each rabbit has a vast range of urine colors, consistencies, and odors that is considered "healthy" for them. Rabbit urine is typically pale or bright yellow, orange, or yellow-orange in color. Keep in mind that your rabbit's water intake and diet have a significant effect on the color of their urine and factors such as dehydration or a sudden change in diet may lead to an abrupt change in the color or odor of their urine.

One of the most common concerns regarding rabbit urine is red colored urine. Red urine is actually quite common in rabbits and is typically not due to blood in the urine (hematuria). Red urine is most commonly due to consumption of foods like carrots, kale, spinach, and red bell peppers that are high in plant pigments called beta-carotenes. Additionally, red colored urine can be due to organic compounds produced by the bladder, called porphyrins. Dehydration can also cause dark (almost red) and strongly smelling urine. It is typically not necessary to take your rabbit to the veterinarian if they are experiencing a bout of red urine as the condition typically resolves in a matter of days to a week. If your rabbit is eating, drinking, and acting normally, it is advised to keep an eye on the appearance of their urine and monitor their activity. If your rabbit's urine does not return to a normal color within about a week or if they begin to develop other symptoms, it is advised to take them to a veterinarian to be examined.



Rabbits have a wide range of urine colors and consistencies that are considered normal and healthy. Each of these urine samples is considered "normal," with the sample in the middle serving as a good example for red colored urine – NOT bloody urine (as discussed above).

Image from:
<https://wabbitwiki.com/wiki/Urine>

2. White Rabbit Urine

If you have ever noticed a chalky white substance in your rabbit's dried urine, you are not alone. Noticing a small amount of white or chalky material in your rabbit's urine is usually normal, as rabbits have much higher blood calcium levels than many other animals. This chalky material is simply the body's way of eliminating unnecessary calcium. As long as your rabbit is acting normally and is not experiencing any other symptoms, there is likely no need for concern. If your rabbit is experiencing "white urine" in addition to other symptoms such as frequent urination, frequent accidents, straining or struggling to urinate, loss of appetite, or if they develop a rash around their inner thighs and tail area, they should be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible as they may be suffering from bladder stones or bladder sludge (usually extremely thick—almost a paste consistency). These conditions are usually quite rare, but always keep an eye out for any concurrent symptoms that your rabbit is experiencing and report any suspicious symptoms to your veterinarian. Keep in mind that feeding your rabbit large quantities of greens high in calcium such as collard greens, parsley, and kale may contribute to excess levels of calcium and lead to "white urine" and chalky deposits.

3. Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Urinary tract infections are caused by bacteria that gain entry to the urinary tract and lead to infection.

Rabbits with compromised immune systems or other underlying conditions may be predisposed to developing urinary tract infections. Symptoms such as thickened and brown colored urine, frequent urination, producing small amounts of urine, lethargy, and decreased appetite can all be signs of urinary tract infections in rabbits. If your rabbit is showing signs of a urinary tract infection, they need to be seen by a veterinarian asap. You should never attempt to treat a rabbit with a urinary tract infection at home as they need to be examined by a veterinarian. Your veterinarian may want to perform further diagnostic testing, such as a urinalysis or urine culture to properly diagnose and treat your pet. There are certainly measures that you can take to prevent your rabbit from contracting a urinary tract infection. Rabbit should have constant access to fresh water, be provided with a diet rich in leafy greens and vegetables, and they should have a clean litter box that is changed regularly.

References:

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