

# Pets with Dr. Jyl

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Dr. Jyl can be seen each Wednesday on the KOVR 13 News at Noon.

RABBITS AND THE HEAT (4/25/01)

Our furry friends are most comfortable in temperatures in the seventies, but are usually fine as temperatures move into the eighties. Ninety and hundred degree temperatures, combined with the effect of the sun in heating the cages themselves are killers for bunnies.

If you think about it, when the temperatures get up above 90 degrees, most people head for air conditioning or a swimming pool. Our bunnies can't do this. It's up to you to make summer more enjoyable for our pets.

Rabbits can develop heat stroke with very little warning. Once symptoms appear, you have to cool down the rabbit VERY quickly or he will die. Young bunnies, older bunnies, and longer haired rabbits are even more sensitive to the sun.

In the early stages of heat stroke, the rabbit will stretch out and breath rapidly. As heat stroke progresses, they can start sweating around the nose, become lazy and unresponsive, and may eventually start turning blue around the nose.

A bunny with heat stroke is a life threatening emergency (to the bunny, at least!). Immediate first aid treatment is needed. As soon as you notice that your bunny is showing signs of heat stroke, try to cool him down. Get him in a cool place at once! Take him indoors, into the air conditioning.

If you notice the heat stroke early enough, you may be able to stop it from getting worse, and help the bunny get back to normal by giving him plenty of water, preferably containing ice cubes. You can put crushed ice and water in a water bottle. You can also try giving water and ice cubes to him in a bowl. Spray the bunny, especially the ears, with a spray bottle of cool water. Place the bunny in front of a fan. Rub water on the ears.



Nibbles seemed to enjoy the cool studio and a chance to get out of the rising temperatures.



Both Jake and Nibbles did quite well under the bright light of television.

Contact your vet to determine if any other measures need to be taken. For example, if your bunny is severely dehydrated, he may need fluid replacement.

**Prevention of Heat Stroke** Water. Even in winter rabbits must always have fresh water to drink. In the summer time, water is even more critical. Every bunny loves ice cubes in the water. This is a good time to give the bunny an extra water bottle. It's also not a bad idea to place a bowl of ice in his cage in the morning or early afternoon. As the ice melts, the bunny will have fresh cold water available.

**Shading.** If your bunny is outdoors, he needs lots of shade. Make sure he has a shelter in his cage where he can escape the sun. The cage itself shouldn't be in direct sunlight - make sure it's under some trees, for example.

**Ice Bottles.** Many breeders take plastic soft drink bottles, fill them with water, and freeze them. In the mornings, the frozen bottles are placed in with the rabbits. The rabbits can lean up against the bottles to cool down. As the bottles thaw, they cool the surrounding air, making the bunny more comfortable.

**Don't miss each week's segment with Dr. Jyl on the News at Noon!**