





*Administering emergency aid to a sick rabbit requires knowledge, patience and a gentle, caring touch.*

rabbit ahead of time from your vet; however, approximate dosages (based on the weight of the rabbit) calculated by very experienced rabbit vet Dr. Keith Gold are provided below for use in the event you don't have individualized dosages ahead of time.

First, administer the LRS fluids. (You will need a bag of Lactated Ringer solution, an IV drip set and 18 or 20 gauge needles.) It is important to have a trained professional at your vet's office show you how to perform this procedure ahead of time. To administer the LRS fluids, place your rabbit on your lap, wrapped snugly in a towel to restrain her while you administer the fluids. Hang the bag of fluids (with the IV drip set attached to the bag of LRS fluids and the needle attached to the end of the IV drip set) from something much higher than you. (I like to sit on the bathroom floor with the IV drip set hanging from a door hook or shower curtain rod.) Pull up the skin on your rabbit's shoulder area to create a "tent" of skin; insert the needle at a 45 degree angle into the tent of skin (being careful not to poke the needle through the other side of the tent of skin); roll open the release valve on the IV drip set (which will allow the fluids to flow) and watch the 100-cc markers on the bag of LRS fluids to determine when the appropriate amount of fluids has been administered. Once the appropriate amount of fluid has been administered, roll the release valve closed and remove the needle from the rabbit's skin.

- Lactated Ringer solution (LRS) sub-Q (usually in the shoulder area) if you have it and know how to administer it. Give 100 cc of LRS for rabbits weigh-

ing up to ten pounds; 150 cc for rabbits weighing over ten pounds

Next, administer the appropriate drugs. (You will need a 1-cc syringe and the drugs listed below.) To administer the drugs, place your rabbit on your lap, wrapped snugly in a towel to restrain her while you administer the drugs. Gently insert the syringe in the side of the rabbit's mouth. Slowly syringe a small amount of medicine into her mouth. Always give her time to swallow before giving her more. Do not give more than the recommended amounts. If your rabbit is not swallowing the medicine, STOP giving the oral medication and proceed to Step 3.

- Maalox Multi to help break up gas. **Dosage:** 0.4 cc for all size rabbits.
- Metacam for pain. **Dosage:** 0.05 cc for rabbits weighing up to five pounds and 0.1 cc for rabbits over five pounds.
- A gut motility drug to get her gastrointestinal system moving, Propulsid (generic name, cisapride) or Reglan (generic name, metoclopramide). **Dosage:** 0.1 ml/cc per pound of body weight.
- Antibiotic to start to control possible infection, either Baytril 0.1 ml/cc per pound of body weight or SMZ TMP 0.25 ml/cc per pound of body weight. You can use either antibiotic but do not use both.

### STEP 2: FOOD AND ORAL LIQUID.

(You will need two monoject 10-cc oral syringes or two monoject curved-tip syringes and the liquid and food listed below.)

Since rabbits need food and liquid moving through their system to stay healthy, give her the food and liquid listed below. If you are using the monoject curved-tip syringes, cut the end off one syringe, leaving a small nub to insert into her mouth to use with the Critical Care. Then cut just a snip off the end of the other syringe to administer the Pedialyte, Gatorade or water. (A set of animal nail clippers works well to cut the monoject curved tip syringes.)

Place your rabbit on your lap, wrapped snugly in a towel to restrain her while you administer the Critical Care and the liquids. Alternate giving Critical Care (or V8 juice) and liquids (Pedialyte, Gatorade, or water). Gently insert the syringe in the side of the rabbit's mouth. Slowly syringe a small amount of food or liquid into her mouth. Always give her time to chew and swallow before giving her more. Do not give more than the recommended amount. If your rabbit is not swallowing the food or liquid, STOP syringe feeding and proceed to Step 3.

- Pedialyte, Gatorade, or water to moisten her stomach contents and help things move through her system. **Dosage:** 5 ml/cc for rabbits weighing up to two pounds; 10 ml/cc for rabbits weighing between two and five pounds; and 15 ml/cc for rabbits weighing over five pounds.
- Critical Care, food to be syringe fed. Mix according to the directions on the package; you will probably have to add more liquid to make a slurry that can be drawn into the syringe. Give around 15 ml/cc (V8 Juice, 15ml/cc, can be used if Critical Care is unavailable).

**STEP 3: COMFORT.** Once you have given her the sub-Q fluids, medicine, food, and oral liquids, it is time to put her in her cage where she feels comfortable and safe. It is important that the cage and litter box be clean so you can tell whether or not she is pooping and peeing. If your rabbit has a partner, some vets suggest separating a rabbit from her partner briefly, to determine if the ill rabbit is pooping and peeing or not. Separating must be done with caution because separating bonded rabbits often causes additional stress. It should be done so that they can still see and touch each other through a divider. If possible, obtain that same information through careful observation without separating the rabbits.

Warm a Snuggle Safe disk in the microwave, wrap it in a clean towel (so she won't be burned by it), and place it near her to allow her to snuggle up to it to get warm. Warming instructions come with the disk. Do not overheat the disk. Although it is very hard to do, it is very important to leave her alone and not hover over her too much. Hovering will make her worry and hinder her recovery. Now it is time for you to relax as much as possible, get some sleep, and pray to whatever you believe in for her recovery.

**STEP 4: VETERINARY CARE.** Last and most important take her to an experienced rabbit vet AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! If your rabbit is bonded to other rabbits, it is important to take the other rabbit(s) along on the trip to the vet. The sick rabbit will be comforted having her partner(s) with her and often rabbits who are separated during a trip to the vet fight when they are put back together. If your rabbit requires hospitalization, it is important to leave her partner(s) with her during the hospital stay for the same reasons. 🐰

This article is intended for use as advice in an emergency situation only. It is not a substitute for professional veterinary care.