



The problem of a barren environment for rabbits

RSPCA COMPANION ANIMALS PET CARE FACTSHEET



FIND OUT WHY RABBITS CAN SUFFER IN A BARREN ENVIRONMENT

A small, barren environment that does not allow rabbits to have a sense of control over their environment can lead problems such as boredom, frustration and deprivation. These negative emotional states are all indicators of poor welfare and signs can include abnormal behaviour including depressed behaviours* and stereotypic behaviour**, and signs of poor physical health such as dull eyes and intestinal disorders.

**Depressed behaviours include a hunched posture, reluctance to move and decreased grooming (leading to a poor coat).*



*** Stereotypic behaviours are behaviours that are repeated frequently without an obvious purpose. Examples include biting, chewing and licking items in their home such as water bottles, walls and bars; pawing or digging at the same location; pulling, chewing or plucking their fur; circling or tracing the same route repeatedly; head swaying or weaving; and pushing items in their home (such as water bottle spouts) with their heads.*

If your rabbit shows any of these signs you should first take it to your [vet](#) to rule out any form of illness or injury that could be causing the problem. Your vet may then refer you to a [qualified animal behaviourist](#) who will be able to offer advice to improve your rabbit's welfare.



Find out more about rabbits' housing needs in our [rabbit housing advice](#). Discover how to improve your rabbit's environment on the [enrichment](#) section of our website.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS:

- **Rabbits' welfare needs:** www.rspca.org.uk/rabbits
- **Rabbits' environmental needs (including downloadable housing advice PDF):** www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/environment
- **Rabbit behaviour:** www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/behaviour
- **Rabbit enrichment:** www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/behaviour/enrichment
- **Find a vet:** www.rspca.org.uk/findavet
- **Find a qualified animal behaviourist:** www.rspca.org.uk/findabehaviourist



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