



Try and emulate as natural an environment as you can. It should be warm (28 degrees), quiet and dark with very little disturbance apart from feeding time. Inside a warm beanie or a snug pouch is ideal. If the mother created a nest (often lined with their own fur) then you can continue to use the same nest. A heat mat, heat disc or hot water bottle can be used to maintain a constant temperature but

Make up your milk replacer and keep it warm in a hot water bath. Keep a thermometer with the milk to test the temperature

Weight each baby before their first feed of the day

Keep the baby warm while feeding – cold babies do not eat.

Be very gentle and don't put the rabbit on its back to feed – this is unnatural and increases the risk of aspiration pneumonia

For the first feed, gently place a small amount of milk on the lips to encourage a licking response. Never force milk into the mouth.

If you are using a bottle and teat – remember to puncture a small air hole in the tip (they have no hole when first purchased) Don't make the hole too big or you will drown the baby - too small and they will not get enough milk.

A second hole can be punctured at the side of the teat (a little higher up) to allow air to enter the bottle during suckling. The holes are best





Ears open	5 days
Eyes open	10 - 12 days
Fully furred	7 - 10 days
Eating solids	From 3 weeks
Fully weaned	6 weeks

#### Rattling when breathing or milk from the nostrils

If you see milk from the nostrils during feeding or if breathing becomes laboured or noises occur when breathing these are all possible signs of aspiration pneumonia – a rapidly fatal condition. This occurs when a small amount of milk goes down the wrong way and enters the airway instead of the stomach. The rabbit should be taken to the vet for supportive care including antibiotics.

#### Won't feed

If you have a rabbit who will not accept the milk, then patience is key. Initially some members of the litter may need a little bit of encouragement by increasing the frequency of feeding and just aiming to get smaller amounts in. You may want to try the following:

- Check to make sure the milk is not too hot/cold

- Try a different shaped teat

- Make sure the baby is not too cold

- Make sure they are checked and deemed healthy by a vet

- Feed that orphan first and if they do not eat much offer them a second feed after feeding the others – sometimes they will eat better if given a second chance.

### Not passing poo

As mentioned rabbit babies do not need to be stimulated to pass urine or faeces but you can gently wipe the rectal area with a warm moist cotton ball to stimulate this if you are worried. A change in diet may cause problems so 24 hours of not passing faeces is worth keeping a close eye on. Most kits will urinate and defecate at the edges of the nest as an instinct to keep the area clean and dry so check on the outskirts for wastes. If they are not passing poo for longer than 24 hours, then have them checked.

### Ongoing weight loss

An orphan who has ongoing weight loss with or without a good appetite is of concern. If they have a good appetite, then increase the frequency of feeds until they gain weight. If they have a poor appetite or continue to lose weight, then get them checked by a vet.

### Diarrhoea

This is a common problem and can rapidly lead to fatal dehydration. Offer warm water instead of milk every second feed to maintain hydration if they are not accepting milk or water they need to be seen by a vet.

### Bloat

