


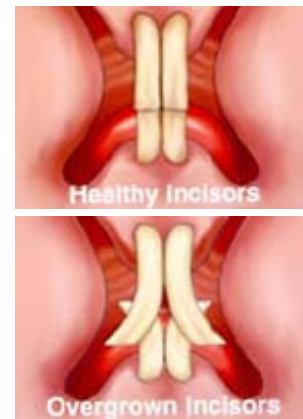
Veterinarians May Need to Trim the Overgrown Teeth of Rabbits

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Q. Is it necessary to trim rabbit teeth?

- A.  Rabbits are distinguishable from rodents in that they have two pairs of upper incisors. The second pair, located immediately behind the larger incisors, are small and peg shaped, often referred to as the "peg teeth". They have two lower incisors. Unlike dogs and cats, a rabbit's teeth continue to grow throughout the life of the animal.

Generally, the wear on the teeth through gnawing and eating is equal to the growth of the teeth, so the teeth basically stay the same length. Some rabbits may have malocclusion, which means their teeth do not meet each other normally. When this happens, the teeth do not wear down like they should, and small spurs can develop. A veterinarian will trim off the excess. A clipper is sometimes used for this procedure. However, that carries a risk of causing a tooth fracture. A better option is to use a small rotary power tool like a hobby Dremel or a dental burr. Removing the excess tooth does not cause pain to the rabbit. In some cases, the misaligned teeth need to be surgically removed while the rabbit is under anesthesia. A veterinarian will be able to determine the best treatment option for each rabbit.



Multiple factors can contribute to malocclusion. These include:

- Genetics: Some rabbits may be born with teeth that do not align properly.
- Injury: Trauma to teeth, roots of teeth, or the mouth can cause permanent malalignment.
- Infection: Infections of the teeth or bone can lead to abnormal tooth growth.
- Diet: Rabbits rely on gnawing and chewing to wear teeth down. If appropriate gnawing materials and diet are not provided, teeth may overgrow.

Monitor your rabbit's teeth and eating habits on a regular basis to be sure malocclusion has not developed. Signs of malocclusion include:

- Decreased appetite
- Inability to pick up food
- Food falling from the mouth
- Drooling



- Pawing at the mouth
- Grinding teeth
- Swelling of the face or jaws
- Bad breath
- Change in what the rabbit will eat (e.g., avoids harder foods)
- Irritability, seeks isolation

