

Ear-tags and leg rings

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Breeders have the habit of marking their animals with tags or rings. A ring is used and pushed along the hind limb of a rabbit, when it is still young. In some countries, it is also permitted to use tags that are "punched" through the ear of the rabbit. With house-rabbits, it is recommended to remove the ear-tag or the leg-ring, as both can lead to future problems and accidents. Indeed, house-rabbits tend to grow a bit heavier than those of breeders. The ring around the foot thus becomes too small, hinders a good blood circulation and damages deeper lying skin structures. In rare

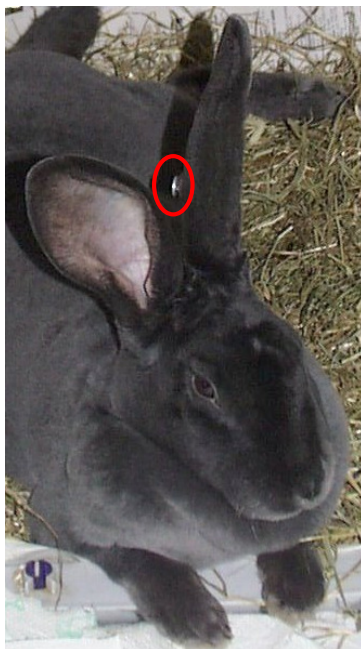
cases with severe tissue damage, the rabbit needs to be euthanized.

Ear tags must also be removed from the ear, as they can tear out the ear when the rabbit scratches itself or get caught between the bars of a cage.

Treatment

The tags and rings are made of hard aluminum and can only be removed with a strong pair of pincers, to avoid hurting the skin. It is advisable to sedate the rabbit slightly, to avoid reaction of escape or pain.

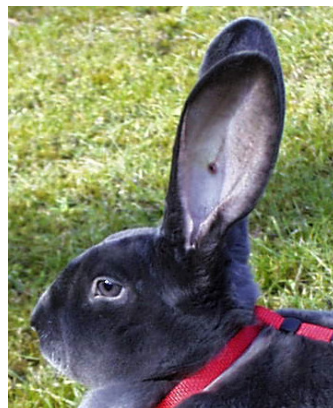
The best tool is a flat nippers that cuts sideways, as used in electro-



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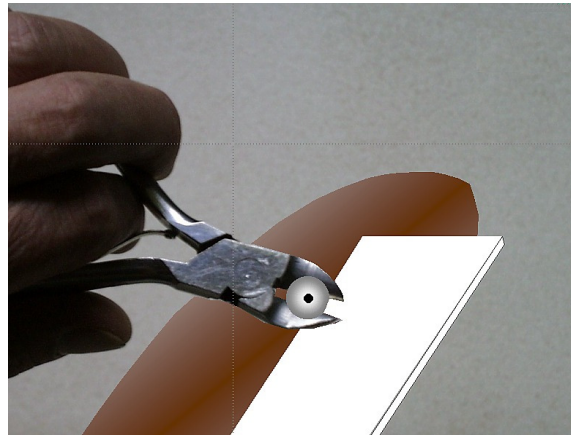


Ear tag punched through the ear of a Rex rabbit, in the ear, 24 hours later and a month after removal.





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A flat nippers and the cutting procedure of the tag from the ear.

engineering or in electronics. To avoid further damage to the ear a thin piece of cardboard (1 mm) is inserted between the ear and the nippers (see illustration).

If the skin is hurt or wounded, it should be disinfected with povidone-iodine, after which an antiseptic cream should be applied. If a bacterial infection is present, it might be necessary to administer systemic antibiotics.

Further Information

Harcourt-Brown F. Textbook of Rabbit Medicine. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann; 2002 p 142-147, 198A.

Hart G, Hart R. A potential danger from show rings. Check your rabbit's leg. http://www.lecoeurrabbitrescue.co.uk/from_top_to_tail.htm. Accessed: November 2008.

Acknowledgement

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