

Red Urine

Red urine — in the absence of clinical symptoms of urinary tract problems — is not normally a cause for concern. A rabbit's normal urine color can range anywhere from clear to pale yellow to dark yellow, brown, orange, and even bright red. Urine color can change for a variety of reasons including dietary changes, medications, and weather changes. Often the color of a rabbit's urine changes for reasons his caretaker cannot identify. As long as your rabbit is not an unspayed female and is acting normal otherwise, it probably is unnecessary to consult a veterinarian. Urine color will probably return to what you consider normal within a few days.

Red urine in an unspayed female is often caused by a bloody discharge associated with uterine cancer. Rabbits do not have menstrual periods. If you notice red urine in an unspayed female, consult your veterinarian immediately. If the urine is red because of blood, an emergency spay will probably be necessary. If no blood is found in the urine, count your blessings and schedule her spay immediately!

The first time most caretakers see red urine, they assume there is blood in the urine and worry about a urinary tract infection (UTI). However, blood in the urine is often not visible to the naked eye. Watching your rabbit's behavior in the litter-box is a much better way to detect a UTI. Is he straining to urinate? If so, you will notice your rabbit sitting in the litter-box for an unusually long time with his tail very high in the air. If your rabbit is straining to urinate, have him checked by his regular veterinarian as soon as possible. A UTI or bladder sludge may be the cause. If he is straining and **no** urine is produced, there may be a blockage; play it safe and consider this an emergency.

Physical trauma — such as a fall or a blow to the body — can also cause blood in the urine. This diagnosis should be made only after urinalysis and blood work have ruled out the possibility of infection **and** if trauma seems possible based on the rabbit's recent history or normal behaviors (e.g., jumping from high places on a regular basis).



Chip is a healthy spayed female whose urine is often red. (Photo by Kathy Smith)