

Rabbit Diseases and Treatments

Disease	Cause	Symptoms	Prevention	Treatment
Abscesses	Bacterial infection	Enlargements under skin near jaw. Can occur on other parts of body where there are wounds or scratches.	Minimize fighting. Eliminate sharp objects that can injure the rabbit.	Clip the fur around the abscess. Lance and remove the pus. Disinfect with peroxide & use wound antibiotic ointment or powder to promote healing.
Caked Mammary Gland	Milk production is in excess of utilization. Too few young or the young are not nursing.	One of more of the mammary glands may become swollen, hot or firm. Often mistaken for mastitis.	Reduce ration by 1/2 the day the doe kindles & gradually increase to full feed in 7 days.	Relieve some congestion by partial milking. Massage gland with an anti-inflammatory ointment.
Coccidiosis	Five different species of protozoa (1 celled animals) can injure the bile ducts, intestines or cecum	Affects primarily young rabbits. In severe cases, symptoms are diarrhea, loss of flesh, pot belly, loss of appetite, rough fur coat.	Keep pens clean & prevent fecal contamination of feed & water. Use wire floor pens.	Sulfaquinolaxaline in food or drinking water continuously for 2 weeks. 1 tsp per gallon of drinking water. Also can treat with Amprol, Corrid or Albon. Treat routinely every 3 - 6 months to prevent.
Conjunctivitis "Weepy Eye"	Inflammation of eye lid. Can result from irritation by dust, sprays, fumes or by bacterial infection.	Excessive tear formation & fluid runs down cheek. Rabbits rub eyes with it's front feet which further aggravates the condition. Rabbits with snuffles frequently have weepy eyes.	Minimize sources (dust, dirt) of irritation. Remove chronically affected rabbits.	Use a commercial eye-washing product to remove dust, dirt or other foreign object. If inflammation persists, an ophthalmic ointment containing antibiotics may be helpful. 1 drop of Pen-G in eye for 3 days or use Terramycin eye ointment.
Coprophagy "Eating of night feces"	No cause, normal practice.	Usually seen at night or early in the morning. Resemble clusters of grapes.	None	Rabbit needs to eat fecal droppings. Fecal droppings helps the rabbit absorb certain nutrients. You can give an unhealthy rabbit the fecal droppings of a healthy rabbit.
Ear Canker	Ear mite	Scabs or a crust start forming at base of inner ear. Mites cause considerable irritation and rabbit will shake its head & try to scratch ears with hind feet.	Do not let unaffected rabbits in contact with rabbits that have ear canker.	Use a cotton swab to apply mineral oil over all visible crust. Usually one or two treatments is sufficient.
Enteritis (Diarrhea)	Likely caused by coccidiosis or other intestinal inflammation. In young rabbits, excessive greens will cause diarrhea.	A watery diarrhea may be only symptom. May sit in water bowl, grinding teeth, does not eat.	Develop a program to control coccidiosis. Limit hay to small babies.	Keep rabbits comfortable and encourage feed consumption. A medicated or vitamin fortified feed is essential. Put probiotics in water, use electrolyte replacement with pedialyte. A few drops of Kayopectate on paws.
Eye Infection "Nest box Eye"	Several types of bacteria.	The eyes of baby rabbits may stick shut & pus around the eyes may be noticed.	Prevent cold drafts & other stress conditions. Sanitize nest boxes with Vanodine regularly.	Apply antibacterial eye ointment. 1 drop of Pen-G can be used for 3 days. NFZ Powder is pink eye medicine for dogs and cats. Very effective.
Fur Block "Hair Ball"	Rabbits ingest a large amount of their own hair or from another animal in a short period of time.	Rabbit will sporadically eat small amounts of feed. A firm mass can be palpated in the stomach. May see stool hanging from cage floor. Resembles strings of pearls.	Fur block is noted more often in Angora rabbits. 1 Papaya tablet per day helps fur moving in the digestion system. Increase fiber in diet.	An oral dose of 1/2 oz mineral oil may be effective. If the fur block is too large, surgical removal would be necessary. Can give fresh pineapple juice in water bottle. Meat Tenderizer helps dissolve hair. 1/4 teaspoon in water each day until rabbit is done molting.
Fungus Infection	Fungus	A dry scaly skin (dandruff) on the shoulders and back.	Prevent contact with affected rabbits.	Apply tolnaftate to affected area. Other medications are available.
Fur Mites	Mites on skin.	Bald areas on skin, may be scaly. Rabbit may itch or have dandruff.	Regular treatment practice.	Ivomec or flea / mite powder. Listerine rubbed into the fur.
Gas	Change in diet.	Lack of movement, not eating.	Keep diet consistent.	Simethicone Drops. Sold near baby aspirins. One dropper full 2 to 3 times a day.

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Heat Exhaustion	Excessively high temps above 85°F & high humidity obesity, poor ventilation, insufficient water & crowding	Increased respiration rate (panting), prostration & excessive saliva discharge. Pregnant does & young in the nest box are most susceptible.	Provide shade, adequate air movement and plenty of cool water on a hot day. Wet burlap or frozen water bottles aids in cooling.	Rabbits suffering from heat exhaustion can be immersed in lukewarm water to reduce their body temperature. Normal body temperature for a rabbit is 101 - 104°F. Apply cool compress to their ears.
Hutch Burn	Usually associated with wet & dirty hutches. Urine & fecal material cause the skin to become irritated & infected.	Usually, a brownish crust covers the infected area & a bleeding exudate may be seen.	Do not allow fecal material to accumulate in the hutch / cage.	Clean affected skin with a germicidal soap and keep the area clean.
Ketosis	Obesity, large litter, lack of exercise.	Usually occurs just before or just after kindling. Does go off feed and will not eat.	Prevent young does from getting too fat and make sure the does are eating at kindling time.	Obesity can be prevented by limiting feed to 4 - 6 oz daily for does.
Mastitis "Blue Breast"	A bacterial infection in the mammary gland cause by an injury from nest box, cage or a bite from nursing young.	The mammary gland will become red in color, swollen, tender and dark blue streaks may appear.	Reduce any chance of injury to mammary gland as the doe enters the nest box. Do not transfer the young to another lactating doe.	Penicillin is effective against staphylococcus or streptococcus organisms.
Malocclusion "Buck Teeth"	A inherited condition characterized by excessive growth of the front teeth.	Lower teeth protrude and upper teeth curve into the mouth.	Do not use rabbits with "buck teeth" for breeding purposes.	Teeth on young rabbits can be trimmed until they reach slaughter weight. Rabbits that have trimmed teeth are not showable.
Mucoid	Thought to result from an irritant, a toxin or other stress factors & travel stresses. Not thought to be contagious.	Characterized by sub-normal body temperature, loss of appetite, tooth grinding depression, rough fur coat, dehydration, bloated abdomen & diarrhea containing mucous material.	Prevent or reduce stress factors and have a strict sanitation of cages, feeding & watering equipment.	No successful treatment known, but mortality may be slightly reduced by feeding a medicated or vitamin fortified food. Eliminate all affected rabbits.
Off Feed	Change in atmosphere, diet. stress.	Sits in back of cage and is not approachable.	Hands on attention.	Mix 1 tsp Bounce-Back in 1/2 cup warm water. Use large syringe and squirt directly in mouth. 5 cc yogurt in mouth. Can give (1) disease free Oak tree leaf once a day.
Pastaurellosis "Snuffles"	A chronic upper respiratory ailment caused by a bacterial infection.	Typical early signs are nasal discharge, watery eyes, head shaking, sneezing or rattling noise in breathing and loss of weight. Continual infection may cause rabbits to become sterile. Matted fur on inside of paws.	Quarantine all new rabbits for 3 week period. Cull rabbits that show continuous chronic symptoms of the disease. Reduce stress factors & have good sanitation practices.	Tetracycline in feed may be effective in some cases. For accurate treatment, the organism needs to be cultured & identified. Rabbits will always be a carrier. Euthanasia is best policy.
Pinworms	Contaminated feed or hay.	Small "bean sprout" like worms may be seen on rectum, fur or on stool.	Routine worming.	Treat with Ivomec or Piperazine wormer to prevent or treat. 2T Wazine wormer in 1 gallon of water. You can also put a pea size amount of Ivomec on the back of the bunny's neck. You can also squirt 1/2 cc Wazine directly into their mouth. Repeat in 12 to 15 days.
Pneumonia	A bacteria or virus infection usually associated with other respiratory diseases or stress factors such as damp, drafty & unsanitary hutches / cages.	Elevated temperature, labored breathing, nasal discharge & loss of appetite are most common symptoms. May have blue-ish color to lips due to lack of oxygen.	Control of "snuffles" reduces chances of pneumonia. Eliminate drafts & wet conditions.	Treatment may vary depending upon the causative agent. A broad spectrum antibiotic may be helpful. LA-200 can be used. 22 gauge needle 1/2 cc for 4 lb rabbit into butt muscle. Repeat in 8 hours if needed.
Preening Glands	No cause, part of the rabbits body.	Rancid smell created by build-up of musk oil secreted by gland.	Regular cleaning.	Use Peroxide to clean preening glands. Glands are located on either side of the genital openings. If rabbit does not groom their selves well, dip Q-tip in peroxide and clean area.
Red Urine	Too much protein in diet.	Red or orange discolored urine that does not contain clots.	Feed a quality pellet. Do not feed hay too much to rabbits that tend to have red urine.	No treatment, just maintenance.

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Ringworm	A fungus infection that can appear on any part of the body but most often will occur on the head. This fungus infection can be transmitted to humans.	Loss of hair in circular patches. A yellowish crust forms & sloughs off in about 3 weeks. If infection goes untreated, considerable scratching will occur.	Do not allow infected rabbit in contact with other rabbits. Wear gloves when handling the infected rabbit.	Clip the fur around affected area & treat with toinaftate. Other medications are available.
Salmonellosis "Scours"	Several members of the Salmonella group of bacteria can affect rabbits.	General symptoms are diarrhea, loss of weight, conjunctivitis & rapid breathing.	Cleanliness of rabbitry essential in treating scours. Quarantine new rabbits.	Tetracycline in feed may be effective.
Skin Mange	An infestation of mites that burrow through the skin and cause considerable irritation. Mange mites that affect dogs and cats can infect rabbits.	There will be loss of hair, scaly skin and intense itching & scratching.	Infected rabbits should be quarantined and treated. The premises should be disinfected.	Dust with insecticide approved for the purposes. Treatment should be repeated in 7 days.
Sore Hocks	A bruised or infected area of the hock joint. Related stress factors are dirty hutch, rough surfaces on the floor, constructed with wrong size wire.	Scabs usually appear on the bottom of the rear feet. Pads & toes of the front feet may become infected. Nervous & heavy rabbits are more susceptible to the sore hock condition. Rabbits with poor bone structure are more susceptible to the sore hock.	Do not let wet litter & manure accumulate. Eliminate sharp objects on the floor. Give bunny a piece of drywall or resting mat to sit on.	Wash the hock with germicidal soap & apply an antiseptic such as tincture of iodine. Athletes foot medicine can also be used to treat sore hocks.
Spirochetosis "Vent Disease"	Infection by a spirochete & can be transmitted by mating.	Blisters of scabs occur on the sex glands.	Always check the breeders before mating.	Injection of penicillin is the best treatment. Do not breed until all lesions disappear.
Tyzers Disease	A bacterial infection usually associated with stress conditions & poor sanitation.	The acute form results with diarrhea, dehydration & death within 48 hours.	The best preventive measures are clean stock and good husbandry practices.	Treatment with antibiotics is not very effective.
Warbles	The growth of the botfly larvae under the skin.	Warbles can be observed as enlargements under the skin with a small hole in the center. The condition is painful and the rabbit may lick the area.	Screen the area to keep the botfly away from the rabbits.	Remove the larvae without crushing it. Clean the wound with a germicidal soap or apply an antibiotic powder or ointment to prevent infection.
Wry Neck	Parasite	Twisting of head, bunny will roll when excited, loss of balance May see a runny eye at the beginning.	Regular worming.	Can use Dramamine tablets to help dizziness. 1/4 tablet 2 - 3 times a day until you see it working. Then 1/4 tablet once a day for about 3 weeks. Worm with Ivomec. Pea size amount on back of neck. Repeat in 10 days. Will take a very long time to get rabbit healthy again. May have to force feed and water.

Resources:

Rabbit Talk in Ohio: <http://www.rabbittalkinohio.net/>

Barbi Brown's Medicine Chest: <http://www.barbibrownsbunnies.com/meds.htm>

Angel Fire Rabbitry: <http://www.angelfire.com/ny2/crescentvalley/rabbitdiseasesandtreatments.html>

4-H Rabbit Leader Resource Guide - Your Rabbits Health: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/agri/4h/manuals/rabbits/sec2.pdf>

Management and Disease Prevention: <http://www.4-hcurriculum.org/projects/rabbit/c3-4.pdf>