



Common Illnesses in Rabbits

Rabbits are generally healthy and active pets, but like any animal, they can develop a variety of health issues. It's important to monitor their behavior and recognize the early signs of illness to provide timely care. Below are some of the most common illnesses and health problems that rabbits can experience:

Gastrointestinal Stasis (GI Stasis)

- **Description:** Gastrointestinal stasis is one of the most serious and common health issues in rabbits. It occurs when the digestive system slows down or stops functioning properly, often due to stress, dehydration, or an improper diet.
- **Symptoms:** Loss of appetite, lethargy, a decrease in stool size or no stools at all, bloating, and teeth grinding (a sign of pain). A rabbit in GI stasis may appear uncomfortable and less active.
- **Treatment:** Veterinary intervention is required, and treatment usually involves rehydration, medications to stimulate the digestive system, and possibly changes to the rabbit's diet to promote gut health. Providing unlimited hay and fresh water is key to prevention.

Respiratory Infections

- **Description:** Respiratory infections in rabbits are commonly caused by bacteria or viruses, often affecting the upper respiratory tract (sinuses and nasal passages).
- **Symptoms:** Sneezing, nasal discharge (clear or thick), coughing, wheezing, labored breathing, and in severe cases, a loss of appetite and lethargy.
- **Treatment:** Antibiotics (prescribed by a veterinarian) may be necessary for bacterial infections, and supportive care such as humidifiers and ensuring the rabbit stays warm is also important. Preventing respiratory issues includes maintaining a clean environment and avoiding exposure to drafts or irritants.

Dental Problems

- **Description:** Dental disease is common in rabbits, particularly because their teeth grow continuously throughout their lives. Overgrown or misaligned teeth can cause severe pain and difficulty eating.
- **Symptoms:** Excessive drooling, difficulty eating, reduced appetite, weight loss, and sometimes visible misalignment of teeth or sores in the mouth.
- **Treatment:** A veterinarian will likely need to trim the teeth or address any misalignment. Providing a high-fiber diet with plenty of hay can help wear down teeth naturally and

prevent dental issues.

Rabbit Abscesses

- **Description:** Abscesses are collections of pus that can form under the skin, often caused by bacterial infections. They can develop after an injury, or even internally as a result of infection.
- **Symptoms:** Swelling, heat, and tenderness in the affected area. If the abscess is located near the skin, it may be visible as a lump.
- **Treatment:** Abscesses typically require veterinary care to drain the pus and may involve antibiotics. In some cases, surgery may be needed to remove the abscess or the underlying cause.

Ear Mites and Ear Infections

- **Description:** Ear mites (*Psoroptes cuniculi*) are a common parasite that affects rabbits, causing itching and inflammation in the ears. These mites can lead to secondary bacterial infections if left untreated.
- **Symptoms:** Head shaking, scratching at the ears, crusty or dirty-looking ears, and possible discharge. In severe cases, rabbits may have difficulty balancing or appear to be in pain.
- **Treatment:** Anti-parasitic medication prescribed by a veterinarian can treat ear mites. If an ear infection is present, antibiotics may also be needed. Regular cleaning of the ears can help prevent further issues.

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) and Bladder Stones

- **Description:** Urinary tract infections and bladder stones are common in rabbits, especially those with a diet too high in calcium.
- **Symptoms:** Difficulty urinating, blood in the urine, straining to urinate, and increased frequency of urination. Rabbits with bladder stones may show signs of discomfort or lethargy.
- **Treatment:** Antibiotics are required for UTIs, while bladder stones may require surgical removal. A proper diet, including a balance of calcium, is important to help prevent urinary issues.

Fleas and Other External Parasites

- **Description:** Fleas, ticks, and mites are external parasites that can cause irritation, itching, and in some cases, anemia in rabbits.
- **Symptoms:** Scratching, fur loss, visible fleas or mites, and scabbing or inflammation of the skin.
- **Treatment:** Anti-parasitic medications or treatments (prescribed by a vet) are necessary to eliminate external parasites. Regular grooming and a clean living environment can help reduce the risk of infestations.

Rabbits are sensitive animals that require a balanced diet, a clean environment, and proper healthcare to stay healthy. Recognizing the early signs of illness and seeking timely veterinary

care is crucial for preventing long-term health issues. Regular check-ups, proper hygiene, and vaccinations are important preventive measures. If your rabbit shows any signs of illness or behavioral changes, it's essential to consult a veterinarian with experience in treating rabbits for proper diagnosis and treatment.