

# RABBIT DISEASES

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 abscess, then lance and remove the pus. Disinfect with peroxide and use an approved 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 or more of the mammary glands may become swollen, hot and firm. Often mistaken for mastitis.	Reduce ration by one-half the day the doe kindles and 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 ( <i>one celled animals</i> ) 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 and prevent fecal contamination of feed and water. Use wire floor pens.	Sulfaquinoxaline in food or drinking water continuously for 2-weeks.
Conjunctivitis "Weepy Eye"	Inflammation of eye lid. Can result from irritation by dust, sprays, fumes or by bacterial infection.	Excessive tear formation and fluid runs down cheek. Rabbit rubs eyes with its front feet which further aggravates the condition. Rabbits with snuffles frequently have "weepy eye".	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.
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 and 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, vegetable or olive 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.	Develop a program to control coccidiosis. Do not feed "greens" to rabbits.	Keep rabbits comfortable and encourage feed consumption. A medicated or vitamin fortified feed may be helpful.
Mucoid	Thought to result from an irritant, a toxin or other stress factors such as dietary changes, antibiotics and 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 and diarrhea containing mucus material.	Prevent or reduce stress factors and have strict sanitation of hutches, feeding and watering equipment.	No successful treatment known, but mortality may be slightly reduced by feeding a medicated or vitamin fortified food. Eliminate all affected rabbits, and purchase breeding stock that are free of the disease.
Eye Infection	Several types of bacteria.	The eyes of baby rabbits may stick shut and pus around the eyes may be noticed.	Prevent cold drafts and other stress conditions.	Apply an antibacterial ophthalmic eye ointment.
Fur Block "Hair Ball"	Rabbit ingests a large amount of its own hair or that from another rabbit in a short period of time.	Rabbit will sporadically eat small amounts of feed. A firm mass can be palpated in the stomach.	Fur block is noted more often in Angora rabbits.	An oral dose of 1/2 oz. mineral oil may be effective. If the fur block is too large, surgical removal is necessary.

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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.
Heat Exhaustion	Excessively high temperatures (above 85° F) and high humidity (above 70%), obesity, poor ventilation, insufficient water and crowding.	Increased respiration rate (panting) prostration, and excessive saliva discharge. Pregnant does and young in the nest box are most susceptible.	Provide shade, adequate air movement, and plenty of cool water on a hot day. Wet burlap in cage will aid in cooling.	Rabbits suffering from heat exhaustion can be immersed in lukewarm water to reduce body temperature to the normal 101-104°F. Apply a cool compress to the ears.
Hutch Burn	Usually associated with wet and dirty hutches. Urine and fecal material cause the skin to become irritated and infected.	Usually, a brownish crust covers the infected area and a bleeding exudate may be seen.	Do not allow fecal material to accumulate in the hutch.	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 to 6 oz. daily for does.
Mastitis "Blue Breast"	A bacterial infection in the mammary gland caused 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"	An 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.
Pastaurellosis "Snuffles"	A chronic upper respiratory ailment caused by bacterial infection.	Typical early signs are a nasal discharge, watery eyes, head shaking, sneezing or rattling noise in breathing and a loss of weight. Continual infection may cause rabbits to become sterile.	Quarantine all new rabbits for a 3 week period. Cull rabbits that show continuous chronic symptoms of the disease. Reduce stress factors and have good management and sanitation practices.	Tetracycline in feed may be effective in an uncomplicated case. For accurate treatment, the organism needs to be cultured and identified.
Pneumonia	A bacteria or virus infection usually associated with other respiratory diseases or stress factors such as damp, drafty and unsanitary hutches.	Elevated temperature, labored breathing, nasal discharge and loss of appetite are symptoms.	Control of "Snuffles" reduces chances of pneumonia. Eliminate drafts and wet conditions.	Treatment may vary depending upon the causative agent. A broad spectrum antibiotic may be helpful.
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 and 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 and treat with tolnaftate. 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, and rapid breathing.	Good husbandry practices and a quarantine of new rabbits.	Tetracycline in the feed may be effective.

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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 some loss of hair, scaly skin and intense itching and scratching.	Infected rabbits should be separated and treated. The premises should be disinfected.	Dust with an insecticide approved for the purpose. Treatment should be repeated in 7-days.
Sore Hocks	A bruised or infected area on the under-surface of the hock joint. Related stress factors are a dirty hutch, rough surfaces on the floor, or a floor constructed with the wrong size wire-grid.	Scabs usually appear on the bottom of the rear feet. Pad and toes of the front feet may become infected. Nervous and heavy rabbits are more susceptible to the sore hock condition.	Do not let wet litter and manure accumulate. Eliminate sharp objects on the floor.	Wash the hock with a germicidal soap and apply an antiseptic such as tincture of iodine.
Spirochetosis "Vent Disease"	Infection by a spirochete and can be transmitted by mating.	Blisters or scabs occur on the sex glands.	Always check the breeders before mating. Isolate all new rabbits.	Injection of penicillin is the best treatment. Do not breed until all lesions disappear.
Tyzzer's Disease	A bacterial infection usually associated with stress conditions and poor sanitation.	The acute form results with diarrhea, dehydration and death within 48 hours.	The best preventative 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 rabbit.	Remove the larvae without crushing it. Clean the wound with a germicidal soap or apply an antibiotic powder or ointment to prevent infection.

\*Ask your local veterinarian for dosage levels when using antibiotics and for names of antibiotic powders and ointments.

\*\*When antibiotics are a part of the treatment program, follow the withdrawal period of the medication before the animal is slaughtered for food.

\*\*This information on diseases and treatment was reviewed by Dr. David J. Black, University of Tennessee, College of Veterinary Medicine; and by Dr. T. J. Lane, University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine.