

COMMON RABBIT DISEASES

It is advisable to be aware of the some of the more common ailments breeders can often identify without veterinary counsel. Following are some diseases, their causes, and suggested treatments. For a more complete listing of diseases and treatments see the "Official Guidebook To Raising Better Rabbits and Cavies" published by the American Rabbit Breeders Association. Having a good relationship with your veterinarian before there is a problem is advisable.

CAKED BREAST

Cause - The kits are not consuming as much milk as is being produced by the mother. This can occur just after kindling, if young are not nursing properly, or after weaning.

Signs - Mammary glands are swollen, hard, and feel warm.

Treatment - Withhold all concentrates for a period of 72 hours. Feed only roughage (hay, etc.) and water. Relieve mammary glands of milk periodically.

Prevention - Reduce feed intake 1 to 2 days before kindling, after weaning, or after death of a litter. Gradually increase to a mil feed in 7 days.

EAR MITES (Ear Cranker)

Cause - Small mites burrow into the ear and lay eggs.

Signs - Scabs or crusty accumulation in ears, shaking head, scratching of ears.

Treatment - Place oil (olive oil, mineral oil) directly in the ear once a day for 3 days, then repeat process at 10 day intervals. This will suffocate the mites. Clean ear with cotton swabs.

Prevention - Isolate infected rabbit from herd. Monthly treatment of the entire herd will rid rabbitry of ear mites.

MALOCCCLUSION (Wolf Teeth. Buck Teeth)

Cause - Inherited condition in some animals, caused by injury at times also. Opposite teeth do not meet proper causing an elongation and overlapping upper teeth, elongated teeth, crooked teeth.

Treatment - Eliminate rabbits from herd if hereditary. Teeth can be clipped until animal reaches desired weight. Should not be used in breeding program.

Prevention - Selective breeding and cull to eliminate problem from herd.

MASTITIS (Blue Breast)

Cause - A bacterial infection of the mammary gland caused by a bite from a kit or injury sustained from the nest box or cage. Usually preceded by caked breast

Signs - Swollen or infected mammary glands, tender, arm, discoloration. Can occur kindling or before weaning.

Treatment - Penicillin injections, hot packs on mammary glands periodically, relieving gland of milk.

Prevention - Reduce chances of injury in nest box or cage reduce feed as suggested for cake breast

RED URINE

Cause - Incomplete breakdown of food nutrients in some animals. A normal condition.

Signs - Red discolored urine.

Treatment - None.

Prevention - None, although this seems to appear more commonly on high legume hay contained diets.

SNUFFLES

Cause - A specific bacterial infection in the upper respiratory system. Can be stress related.

Signs - Sneezing, watery eyes, white nasal discharge breathing difficulty, decreased growth rate.

Treatment - Isolate animal from herd. There is no cure this disease. A veterinarian may assist with early treatment.

Prevention - Reduce stress factor, proper ventilation sanitary practices, chlorinate drinking water.

SORE HOCKS

Cause - Thin fur covering on foot pad, small foot pad for weight of animal. Coming into contact with rough places on floor. Too heavy for foot pads.

Signs - Infected sores on the bottom of the feet (usually rear but also found on front sometimes). Rabbits moving nervously, sitting on crotch or other smooth objects in cage, going off-feed or losing condition.

Treatment - Very difficult to treat. Use astringent ointment daily until healed, provide dry, flat surface for rabbit to sit on (board, etc.)

Prevention - Eliminate rough floor areas, select animals with well furred footpads for replacement and breeding stock.

VENT DISEASE

Cause - Infection by spirochete organism. Transmitted through mating or unsanitary cage conditions.

Signs - Blisters, scabs, and pus in genital areas. Possible abortion.

Treatment - Daily application of penicillin ointment or injection of penicillin G.

Prevention - Check breeding animals before mating, never use an infected animal.

WEEPY EYE

Cause - Usually caused by blocked duct between lower eyelid and nasal area, sometimes associated with respiratory infections.

Signs - Discharge from eye, matted fur under eye.

Treatment - Use eye drops 2 to 3 times daily for 3 or 4 days. Seek professional help to open duct.

Prevention - Prevent respiratory disease by providing proper ventilation.

WRYNECK

Cause - Bacterial infection or inner ear. Associated with upper respiratory infections.

Signs - Loss of balance, animal's head twisting to one side.

Treatment - Daily instillation of tetracycline ointment as otic drops. Very difficult to treat. Seek veterinary help early.

Prevention - Proper ventilation to reduce possibility of respiratory infections.

Proper husbandry practices and maintaining a clean environment will prevent most ailments affecting rabbits.