

## Diseases & Ailments

*Referenced from the ARBA guidebook*

One of the first things I do if a rabbit goes off-feed is immediately start them on plain yogurt. The bacterial cultures aid with digestion, it is easy on the stomach, and most will eat it even if not feeling well. Pedialyte is very good for any animals with diarrhea to replace electrolytes. I have good luck with the apple flavor. Other things to have on hand are Terramycin eye ointment for weepy eye and corn starch (cheep version of "Quik Stop" for when clipping nails if you nick the quick). Ivermectin is a good wormer that is safe to use.

### Coccidiosis

There are two forms: intestinal and hepatic.

#### **Intestinal:**

Cause: Protozoan parasite

Signs: Diarrhea, poor fur and flesh condition, secondary infections, weight loss or low weigh gain

Prognosis: Excellent as long as it is caught early and appropriate treatment is given.

Treatment: Sulfaquinoxaline solution-usually water soluble-follow label instructions

#### **Hepatic:**

Cause: Protozoan parasite

Signs: Diarrhea, poor fur and flesh condition, white spots (large) on the liver

Prognosis: Excellent as long as it is caught early and appropriate treatment is given

Treatment: Same as above

### Mites

#### **Fur Mites:**

Cause: Cheyletiella parasitivorax or Listrophorus gibbus mites

Signs: Fur loss on neck, face, and back

Prognosis: Excellent

Treatment: Cat flea powder or shampoo-follow label instructions DON'T USE DOG POWDERS because dogs don't groom themselves like cats and rabbits do!

#### **Ear Mites:**

Cause: Ear canker, or ear infestation of the mite Psoroptes cuniculi

Signs: Scratching the ear often, shaking the head, scabby and crusted looking ears, large waxy buildup, secondary bacterial infection of the ear

Prognosis: Excellent with aggressive and early treatment

Treatment: Apply oil (cooking) in the ear once a day for 3 days, repeat at 10-day intervals. Mitacide will increase effectiveness. Also, cat ear mite medications can be used.

### **Mucoid Enteritis**

Cause: Unknown

Signs: Jelly, mucous-like secretion in the stool, teeth grinding, pot belly

Prognosis: Very high death rate, most die within 24 hours

Treatment: High fiber diet immediately (hay and other roughage helps), broad-spectrum antibiotics can be put in the water to help prevent infection.

### **Conjunctivitis**

**a.k.a. "weepy eye"**

Cause: Inflammation of the conjunctiva, often caused by blockage of the tear duct, can be associated with upper-respiratory infections

Signs: Matted fur under the eye, excessive tearing

Prognosis: Early treatment=good chance of recovery

Treatment: Ophthalmic ointment 2-4 times a day for 3-4 days, as needed.

Terramycin ointment is available from most cage supply companies. If it is not caught and treated quickly the tear duct may need to be opened surgically.

### **Heat Stroke**

Cause: Fast increase in temperature and humidity

Signs: Increase breathing speed, mouth open/drooling, the head may be held up, blue tinge to the ears and mouth.

Prognosis: If not cooled immediately death will occur

Treatment: Move to cool place, if necessary fill a bathtub with cool water (not freezing) about 1 inch deep and place the rabbit in it. If the rabbit is completely prostrate, immerse it totally in cool water. Don't place the rabbit in direct drafts. It can be prevented by keeping the rabbitry cool and keeping the air circulating

### **Mange**

Cause: Mange mites

Signs: Scratching often

Prognosis: Excellent

Treatment: Seek professional help for proper treatment

### **Malocclusion**

Cause: Can be genetic, the teeth do not grow properly as the bottom incisors overlap the top incisors (which is backwards).  
Signs: Drooling, poor eating, weight loss, just look at the teeth to see if the bottom overlap the top!  
Prognosis: Can't be treated, but the teeth can be filed down by a vet every so often  
Treatment: None-except getting them filed and/or clipped

### **Hair Blockage/GI Block**

Cause: Buildup of fur in the stomach and intestines  
Signs: Diarrhea then no excretion, poor eating habits, weight loss, excessive molting  
Prognosis: Good with early treatment  
Treatment: 1/2 teaspoon of mineral oil for 3 days, repeated once/week. It can be prevented by weekly dose of Petromalt-a hairball de-blocker for cats. BenBac is also a good remedy, as well as giving them lots of good fresh hay. Water is essential, make sure they keep drinking! Pedialyte and yogurt help.

### **Myxomatosis**

Case: Myxoma virus, spread by mosquitoes, flies, gnats, or fleas, primarily a problem by the Western coast of the USA  
Signs: Loss of appetite, inflammation of edema, conjunctivitis, respiratory infection  
Prognosis: Not good  
Treatment: Seek professional help, affected animals should be killed, burned, and buried and the herd placed under strict quarantine. Contact local authorities to report the outbreak.

### **Red Urine**

Cause: Incomplete metabolism  
Signs: Red colored urine that does not contain blood flecks or clots  
Prognosis: Good-as it is not a disease  
Treatment: none. Most common when rabbits eat a lot of legume hay

### **Ringworm**

Cause: A fungus  
Signs: Hair loss in circular pattern with a sore in the middle, most often on the feet and legs

Prognosis: Fair with aggressive treatment

Treatment: Daily application of iodine to affected area, and professional consultation if needed

### **"Snuffles"**

Cause: *Pasteurella multocida* alone or with *Bordetella bronchiseptica*

Signs: Sneezing, "blowing snott", nasal discharge that is thick and white, yellow, or greenish

Prognosis: Can be controlled, but is hard to totally cure and is often re-occurring

Treatment: Nothing specific that always works, but Vet RX and Rabbit-mycin helps. Also, broad-spectrum antibiotics aid in treatment and prevention (often 1/2-1 teaspoon per gallon water). It is debated whether or not it is truly curable. One should breed for health, and any animal that is afflicted should be quarantined and not breed.

### **Splay Legs**

Cause: Slippery floor in the nestbox, can be genetic, abnormal growth of the legs/feet

Signs: Legs that splay out to the side instead of allowing the animal to stand up straight

Prognosis: Not curable, but they can live comfortable healthy lives

Treatment: While it isn't curable, a splint can be made to hold the legs in place-most effective at the most early stages of life. Go to <http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/splayleg.html> to find out how to make the brace.

### **Spine Problems**

The most common is a broken spine

Cause: The rabbit probably threw itself, startled, against the cage

Signs: Not hopping, just laying refusing to get up, not excreting at all

Prognosis: Grave-will die painfully within a few days

Treatment: None

### **Sore Hocks**

Cause: Lack of fur on the footpad, a problem more so in the larger breeds

Signs: Sores on the back of the bottom of the rabbit's hind feet (called the hock)

Prognosis: Excellent if treated

Treatment: Put a solid board in the cage for the rabbit to rest on, apply Neosporin on it twice a day until healed.

### **Wet Dewlap**

Cause: Dragging the dewlap (large fold of skin on does below the chin) in the water bowl

Signs: A wet, matted dewlap

Prognosis: Excellent if treated right away or a secondary infection can occur

Treatment: Clip the wet fur and elevate the water bowl or use a water bottle

### **Worms**

#### **Pin Worms**

Cause: The parasite *Passalurus ambiguus*

Signs: Slow growth, poor condition (including fur)

Prognosis: Excellent

Treatment: Seek professional help for a dewormer

#### **Tapeworm Larva**

Cause: A tapeworm from a dog or cat

Signs: Normally no signs are visible, as rabbits can be a carrier of the dog or cat tapeworm

Prognosis: Seen only if a necropsy is done

Treatment: None-just keep the rabbit's food in a sealed container

#### **Whipworms**

Cause: *Trichuris??*

Signs: Poor fur condition, possibly increase diarrhea

Prognosis: Go to a veterinarian for help

### **Wry Neck**

Cause: Otitis media, which is an inflammation of the middle ear

Signs: Tilting of the head to one side, loss of balance, can accompany a respiratory infection

Prognosis: Not good

Treatment: Consult a veterinarian

### **Vent Disease**

Cause: It is an STD

Signs: Red, scabby, inflamed genitalia, scabs around the nose/mouth area

Prognosis: Excellent if all animals are treated, as it is a STD

Treatment: Intramuscular injections of Pen-G for three days at 20,000 to 40,000 IU per pound of body weight. Contrary to what some think, topical PenG doesn't work, it will treat symptoms but it leaves the disease, allowing your animal to continue to spread it.

### **Urine Scald**

Cause: Dirty, wet cages

Signs: Similar to those of vent disease: scalded, chapped external genitalia

Prognosis: Excellent

Treatment: Clean the cage well and disinfect it, apply antibiotic ointment to affected areas will help

### **VHD: Viral Hemorrhagic Disease**

Cause: Calicivirus

Signs: Loss of appetite, lethargic, high fever, and spasms

Prognosis: Grave-rabbit will usually die within 48 hours of contact with a rabbit that has it

Treatment: None, get an official diagnosis and the place should be quarantined and proper authorities contacted to report the outbreak.