

Disease, Treatment, and Prevention Table



Disease	Cause	Signs and Symptoms	Prevention	Treatment*
Abscesses	Bacterial infection.	Enlargements under skin near jaw. Can occur on other parts of the body where there are wounds or scratches.	Minimize fighting. Eliminate sharp objects that can injure a rabbit.	Clip the fur around the abscesses, 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 full feed in 7 days.	Relieve some congestion by partial milking. Massage gland with an anti-inflammatory ointment.
Coccidiosis	Five different species of protozoa (one called animals) that can injure the bile ducts, intestine or cecum.	Affects primarily young rabbits. In severe cases, symptoms are diarrhea, loss of flesh, pot belly, loss of appetite, rough coat fur. Liver may be white spotted and enlarged and there may be small hemorrhages in the intestine.	Keep pens clean and prevent fecal contamination of feed or water. Use wire floor pens.	Sulfaquinoxaline in feed 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 dark 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 eyewash 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 starts forming at base of inner ear. Mites cause considerable irritation and rabbit shakes its head and tries to scratch ears with hind legs.	Do not let unaffected rabbits in contact with rabbits that have ear canker. Place three drops of oil in rabbits' ears once a month.	Use a cotton swab to apply mineral, vegetable or olive oil over all visible crust. Inject or apply an antiparasitic medication.

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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.
Muciod	Thought to result from an irritant, a toxin or other stressors such as dietary changes, antibiotics and travel. Not thought to be contagious.	Characterized by sub-normal body temperature, loss of appetite, depression, rough fur coat, tooth grinding, dehydration, bloated abdomen and diarrhea containing mucus material.	Prevent or reduce the number and intensity of stressors in the environment. Maintain 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 feed. Cull all affected rabbits.
Eye Infection	Several types of bacteria.	The eyes of rabbit kits may stick shut and pus around the eyes may be noticed.	Prevent cold drafts and other stressors.	Apply an antibacterial ophthalmic eye ointment.
Fur Block “Hair Ball”	Rabbit ingests a large amount of its own hair or another rabbit’s 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 ½ oz. mineral oil may be effective. If the fur block is too large, surgical removal is necessary.
Fungus Infection	Fungus	A dry scaly skin (dandruff) on the shoulders and back. Could also manifest itself on other parts of the body near mucosal orifices. (Such as eye and nose.)	Prevent contact with affected rabbits.	Apply tolnaftate to affected area. Other medications are available.

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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 more susceptible.	Provide shade, adequate air movement, plenty of cool water on a hot day. A frozen water bottle tied to the 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 mater cause the skin become irritated and infected.	Usually a brownish crust covers the infected areas and a bleeding exudate may be seen.	Do not allow fecal mater to accumulate in the hutch.	Clean affected area 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. a day for does.
Mastitis “Blue Breasts”	A bacterial infection in the mammary gland caused by an injury from nest box, cage or a bite from a nursing kit.	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 or a similar organism.
Malocclusion “Buck Teeth”	An inherited condition characterized by excessive growth of the front teeth.	Lower teeth protrude and upper teeth curve into mouth.	Do not use rabbits with “buck teeth” for breeding purpose.	Teeth on young rabbits can be trimmed until they reach slaughter weight.

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Pasteurellois "Snuffles"	A chronic upper respiratory ailment cause 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 stressors 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 occurrences 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 rabbits in contact with other rabbits. Wear gloves when handling the infected rabbit.	Clip the fur around affected area and treat with toltate. 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.
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 hair loss, 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 skin mange. Treatment should be repeated in 7 days.

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Sore Hocks	A bruised or infected area on the undersurface of the hock joint. Related stressors are a dirty hutch, rough surfaces on floor constructed with the wrong size wire grid.	Scabs usually appear in the bottom of the rear feet. Pad and toes may become infected. Nervous and heavy rabbits are more susceptible to the sore hock condition. As are Rex breeds.	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 stressors and poor sanitation.	The acute form results in 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 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 where the rabbits are kept in order to keep away the botfly.	Remove the larvae without crushing it. Clean the wound with germicidal soap or apply an antibiotic powder or ointment to prevent infection.
Wry neck	Inflammation of the balance mechanism deep within the ear. The inflammation of the inner ear is usually caused by the organism <i>Pasteurella multocida</i> .	The head will be tilted to one side. The degree of head tilt will vary considerably, can be so severe that the animal will not be able to stand on its feet. They will usually continue to eat and drink.	Wry neck is usually associated with high incidents of "snuffles". Adequate ventilation within the rabbitry decreases the incidents of "snuffles" and Wry neck.	Use injectable terramycin as ear ointment placed in both ears each day for about fifteen to seventeen days. Effectiveness increases the sooner treated.