

# Disease in Rabbits

(from the RSPCA Website)

## Myxomatosis

### What is it?

- Virus spread by fleas/mites/biting flies e.g. mosquitoes.
- Early symptoms - puffy swellings around face/ears/eyes which can cause blindness, spreading around the anus/genitals.
- High fever. Eating/drinking becomes increasingly difficult.
- Death within 10-14 days.
- Occasionally myxomatosis is more prolonged - multiple lumps appear.

### How is it spread?

- Insects
- Contact between infected rabbits
- Persists in the environment (e.g. hutches)

### Treatment and prognosis

- No specific treatment, recovery is rare.
- Euthanasia is often the best option.
- Vaccinated rabbits can catch milder forms, often recovering with intensive veterinary care.

## Rabbit (Viral) Haemorrhagic Disease (R(V)HD)

### What is it?

- Extremely serious causing high fever/internal bleeding/liver disease.
- Almost always fatal.
- Pet rabbits are often found dead with bloodstained fluid at mouth/nose, or there may be no visible signs (cause of death only confirmed by post-mortem).
- Doesn't affect rabbits under six weeks but causes severe disease in older rabbits.

### How is it spread?

- Rabbit-rabbit contact
- Persists in the environment (e.g. carriers/clothing/shoes).

### Treatment and prognosis

- There is no effective treatment. Vaccination is essential.

## Flystrike in pets

Flystrike is a painful, sometimes fatal, condition caused by flies laying eggs on another animal, which hatch into maggots and eat their 'hosts' flesh. If an animal becomes infested, **seek immediate veterinary advice.**

### Which pets are most at risk?

Pets with dirty rear ends or generally dirty fur are particularly at risk. This may occur in animals which:

- are unable to clean themselves properly
- are ill, they may produce abnormally smelly urine or have diarrhoea
- are fed inappropriate diets
- have internal parasitic infection
- have open wound(s).

### Prevention methods include:

- Check for signs of illness/injury/abnormal behaviour daily.
- In warm weather check your pet all over their body, especially around their rear end and tail area at least twice a day.
- If your pet's back end is dirty, clean immediately with warm water; ensure the area is dried thoroughly. It may be necessary to clip the fur; if you're unsure how to do this, seek advice from a specialist.
- Clean toilet areas daily.
- Clean housing and change bedding at least once a week.
- Ensure your pet is not overweight and is fed a correct diet.
- Consider insect-proofing the housing of pets living outside, putting net curtains over hutches and runs etc.
- Neuter female rabbits, entire females may be more prone to flystrike