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Fly-strike

What is “fly-strike”?

Fly-strike occurs when flies lay their eggs around the bottom area of your rabbit. The eggs hatch out into maggots which then start to feed on the animal.



How can I tell if my rabbit has fly-strike?

You can usually see the maggots around the bottom area of your rabbit and they cause nasty open wounds. They may also be hiding in the folds around the genitals. You may notice your rabbit frantically grooming at this area in an attempt to get rid of the maggots. It may also be feeling so poorly that it just sits very quietly and not moving much.

Why does it happen?

Any animal can suffer from fly-strike but sadly rabbits are the most common and regular victims of this terrible condition. There is usually an underlying cause such as a dirty bottom or a dirty environment.

How is fly-strike treated?

All the maggots must be removed. Once this has been done, the wounds need to be cleaned and any dead tissue removed.

Removing the unhealthy, dead tissue promotes healing and may be done whilst your rabbit is conscious. However, sometimes the wounds are so severe that a general anaesthetic is required. Your rabbit may also go into shock so in order to stabilize them, pain killers, antibiotics and fluids are often used.

Unfortunately, sometimes fly-strike can be so devastating that the only humane option is euthanasia.



How do I prevent fly-strike?

- Keep your rabbit's environment clean. Hutches should be cleaned out regularly.
- If you have trained your rabbit to use a litter tray, this is great as it can then be cleaned out easily on a daily basis.
- Fly netting or flypaper can help to prevent flies accessing your rabbit's living area. Please take care to make sure your rabbit can't get caught in the netting.
- Regularly check your rabbit's bottom for signs of fly eggs at least once a day, twice a day in warm weather. Fly eggs can hatch out in less than 24 hours.
- If your rabbit's bottom is dirty, it will need cleaning and drying immediately.
- You should seek your vet's advice if your rabbit's bottom is soiled. This could be a sign of an underlying disease or care problem, such as inappropriate diet, dental disease or diarrhoea.

There are also some products available which can be used to prevent or slow the progression of fly-strike so if you are concerned, please come and discuss the options available.

