



PET ADVICE – AVOIDING FLY STRIKE IN RABBITS

This is a particularly unpleasant and upsetting condition, which we see each year. It occurs when flies lay their eggs on your pet and in a few days these eggs hatch into maggots which then start to feed on your pet's skin and flesh. They can cause extensive damage, as they will penetrate the skin and damage deeper tissue as well. Such is the damage, that sometimes this leads to your pet being put to sleep.

- Flies like to lay their eggs in warm, moist and humid conditions and heavy-coated rabbits are therefore most at risk.
- Generally the maggots strike at the rear end around the base of tail and anus. A usual factor that precipitates the attack is faecal matter getting caught in the hair.
- These attacks can go through the egg/larval stage in less than 24 hours, so daily checks are vital, preferably twice daily in warm weather. The most loved rabbit can become seriously ill in a very short space of time.

How can you reduce the risk of fly strike?

There are a few simple hygiene procedures that can greatly reduce the chance of this happening to your pet.

1. Clean out your rabbit's 'wet patches' daily. Use a hutch spray on the floor to reduce the odour.
2. Remove old soiled food and bedding to a bin that is kept away from the hutch.
3. Check the rear end of your rabbit twice daily, particularly around the tail area.
4. If faecal material does accumulate, wash off immediately and maybe change their diet or have their teeth checked. Rabbits normally eat their soft faeces, so these should not be evident.
5. Put flypaper around the hutch and shed.
6. If your rabbit develops diarrhoea, wash, dry and clip hair away. Check for maggots and investigate why diarrhoea has happened.
7. Apply a product called Rearguard which helps prevent fly strike.

If in doubt, please phone us to make an appointment. After all, we all hate maggots, especially your rabbit!

