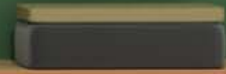
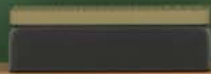


Raising Rabbits Master Class

Module 4: Rabbit Health

Tiffany Simpson



•Summary

Basics



Keeping your rabbits healthy is based upon a few key elements

Common
Illnesses



What to be watching out for, treatment and disease prevention

• Rabbit Health Basics

- Select high quality stock
- Keep contact to a minimum
- Provide adequate & proper nutrition
- Suitable environment
- Regular cleaning schedule
- Maintain great records
- Use feeding time to check on rabbits

**A clean
rabbitry is a
healthy
rabbitry.**

•Replacement Litter Qualities

- Good, consistent litter size
- Low mortality rate at 8 weeks
- Good feed conversion rates
- Weights are high & consistent
- Stocky, robust frames
- Can breed in cold weather
- Clean blood line



•About Handling Rabbits

You need your rabbits to trust you!

- NEVER by the ears
- Grab by scruff of neck with other hand under the rump (larger rabbits may need more support)
- Kids must be careful with large & giant breeds
- Use gloves or a towel to wrap if needed
- Trim toenails every 1-2 months



•Sanitation

- Easy to clean
- Fresh water
- Good drainage
- Stacking vs single row
- Protection from flies & mosquitos
- Good cleaning practices
- Clean off off fecal matter & other organic materials
- Then start washing
- Finally spray or soak to disinfect
- Also disinfect after sending rabbits to market & before new rabbits are moved in
- Steam cleaning
- Sunlight

• More Health Guidelines

- Isolate sick animals
- Mark pens with sick animals inside
- Care for sick AFTER all other rabbitry work is done
- If you lose several rabbits without a known cause, think about sending to a lab
- Destroy hopelessly sick animals
- Clean & disinfect holes thoroughly before putting new rabbits in

• Diseases Rabbits Can Share with Humans

• **VIRAL DISEASES**

- Rabies

• **BACTERIAL DISEASES**

- *Bordetella* sp.
- Brucellosis
- Pasteurellosis
- Salmonellosis
- Tularemia (*Francisella tularensis*)
– mostly found in wild rabbits

• **PROTOZOAL DISEASES**

- Encephalitozoonosis (in immunocompromised persons)
- Giardiasis
- Toxoplasmosis (no direct transmission)

• **FUNGAL DISEASES**

- Dermatophytosis
- *Microsporium* sp.
- *Trichophyton mentagrophytes*

• **PARASITIC SKIN DISEASES**

- Acariasis (any disease caused by an acarid mite)
- *Cheyletiella* sp. infestations (easily contagious)
- Fleas
- *Sarcoptes scabiei* infestations (easily contagious)
- Ticks

• **OTHER DISEASES**

- *Baylisascaris procyonis*
- Filariasis
- Trichostrongylidosis

• Pasteurellosis

Multiple diseases from snuffles to pneumonia

- **Consumption:** Usually ok in mild diseases (snuffles) but not in severe cases (pneumonia with fever)
- **Rhinitis (Snuffles)**
 - Nasal sounds, mucus/pus from nostrils, may be discharge from eyes, sneezing, coughing, rubbing eyes, caked fur on face or paws
 - Treatment with antibiotics expensive & often ineffective
 - Culling after 2 days of symptoms
- **Pneumonia**
 - Depression, labored breathing, nasal discharge, albino eyes become bluish
 - Usually discovered post-mortem

• Enteritis

Any disease with diarrhea-like symptoms

- **Consumption:** Never

- **Enterotoxemia**

- Explosive diarrhea in 4-8 wk old rabbits. Leads to diarrhea. Death in 24-48 hours.
- Increase fiber, hay/straw intake
- Not transmissible to other rabbits.

- **Mucoid Enteropathy**

- Clear, jelly-like stool. Dropping size reduced. May be constipated. Rabbit visibly in pain. Loss of appetite. Weakness. Rough coat. Sloshing sound in stomach. Bloated. Crouched by water.
- Palpate through abdomen in young. Rehydrate with electrolytes. Salt in food.

•Staphylococcosis (Mastitis)

- Usually begins as caked mammary glands
 - Hard knots on sides of nipples
 - May break open, show dried milk
 - Often caused by weaning kits too quickly
 - Look for rough spots on cages
 - Rub oil of camphor on the area twice daily for 3 to 5 days.
- Glands inflamed, swollen, feverish, bluish. Doe won't eat but drinks a lot. Fever 105° +
- Treatment must be started early for success
- Cut back on feed
- Soak teat in warm water
- Cut open infected teat(s) to remove pus
- Hand feed kits if necessary
- Cull infected if no improvement

•Conjunctivitis (weepy eye)

- Eyelids inflamed or swollen.
- Bulging eye.
- Discharge.
- Eye is red.
- Hair falling out around eye.
- Eye swollen shut or stuck with discharge.
- Rubbing or scratching eye.
- Fur around eye matted or stained.
- Flush eye and surrounding area with saline solution or boric acid mix
- Use clean washcloth or cotton ball 3-4 times daily. Rinse gently with clean water.
- If it doesn't clear shortly thereafter, 5% sulfathiazole or antibiotic eye ointment under the eyelids

• External Parasites

• Ear Mites

- Brown, waxy ear build up. Scratching or shaking head often. Ear may smell
- Must treat the whole herd if you find it in one
- Let crusts fall off on their own
- Mineral-oil meds effective. Can use oral or injectible avermectins. Genetian violet wash
- Santize cages & change bedding

• Fleas

- Not usually common.
- Scratching or itching. See fleas or eggs on a flea comb.
- Rid rabbits, rabbitry and surroundings of fleas
- Remove treatment while spraying
- No flea collars or Frontline

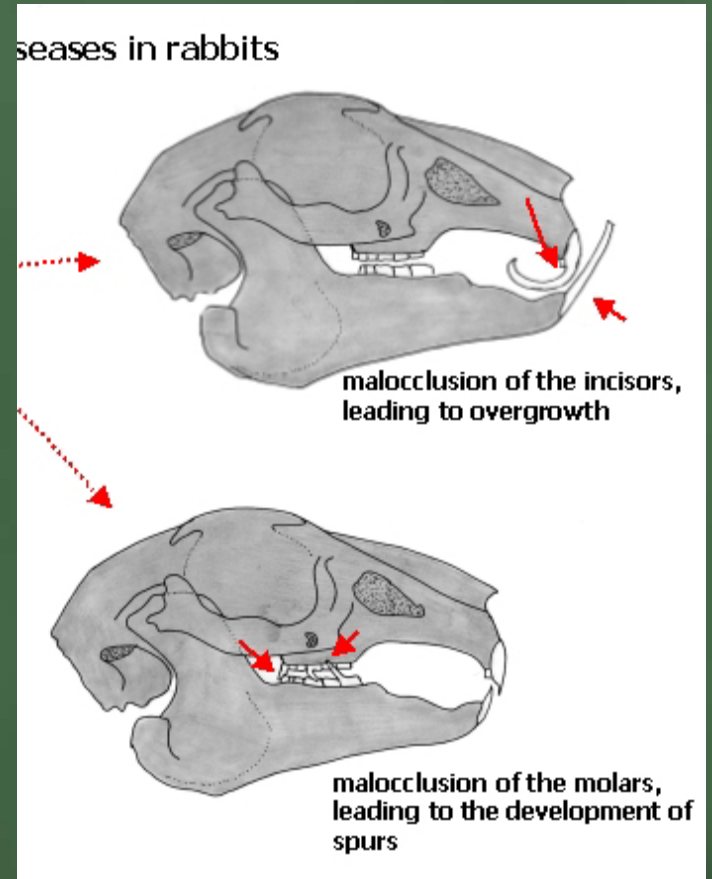
• Intestinal Coccidiosis

Caused by “coccidian” protozoa

- Usually only young rabbits, 6 weeks to 5 months
- Excessive diarrhea.
- Rough coat.
- Dullness.
- Decreased appetite.
- Dehydration.
- Weight loss.
- Signs of abdominal pain.
- Mucus membranes pale or watery.
- Hard to diagnose
- Feed comfrey, blackberry leaves, or strawberry leaves
- Dose with Ponazuril (aka Marquis from Bayer)
- Remove all fecal matter well & in a timely manner
- Automatic watering systems can help

• Malocclusion

- Overgrowth teeth
- Hereditary
- Loss of appetite. Weight loss. Bump on outer cheek. Listless. Dehydrated. Unable to eat properly.
- Trim every 4-6 weeks but not recommended for amateurs
- Cull. Do NOT re breed rabbits with this trait.



•Sore Hocks

- Inflamed bare spots on bottom of hind legs
- May spread to front
- Offer perch off wire floors.
- Keep cage floors clean & dry.
- Make sure floors are not rough or rusty
- Hereditary – cull



• Hairballs & Fur Eating

- Droppings smaller or pellets strung together
- Stomach eventually bulges
- Rabbit may pull own fur. Or fur of others if in shared area.
- Brush rabbits during heavy sheds
- Feed lots of fresh hay & other roughage
- Papaya & Pineapple
- Feline hairball treatments ok
- Let them exercise

•Herbal Remedies

- **Stop Diarrhea** – Comfrey, Strawberry or Blackberry Leaves
- **Calming/Sleep Aid** – Chamomile, Lemon Balm, Valerian
- **Ease Labor** – Raspberry Leaves
- **Increase Lactation** – Raspberry Leaves, Borage, Fenugreek, etc
- **Treat upset stomach** – Chamomile, Dill Seeds, Peppermint or Fennel
- **Treat sore hocks** – Calendula wash
- **Reduce fur balls** – Papaya & Pineapple
- **Increase libido & male potency** – Fenugreek

Next time:

Module 5: Nutrition & Feeding

