

Love your pet... love your pet

Managing myxomatosis

Rabbits are Britain's third most popular pet. However, with nearly two million pet rabbits in the UK, it is worrying that only one in every 12 owners ensures that their bunnies are properly protected against fatal diseases such as myxomatosis.

Myxomatosis is particularly common in the late summer and autumn, although rabbits can contract the disease at any time of year. Spread typically by blood sucking insects like the common flea, the disease attacks both wild and domestic rabbits.

The first signs of myxomatosis are swollen eyelids, lips and ears as well as puffy swellings around the anus and genitalia. Within a day or so, these can become so severe that they can cause blindness and distortion around the face. Acute disease is associated with a high fever and rabbits will stop eating and drinking within a few days. In many cases, bacterial respiratory infection complicates the disease, encouraging the onset of pneumonia. The majority of affected rabbits will die ... don't let your rabbit be one of those unfortunate ones.

With no specific treatment, it is crucial that you put preventative measures in place to guard against the disease. Insecticidal treatments such as proper spot on treatments and repellents, available from your vet, will help to control fleas, lessening the likelihood of bites. The best way of ensuring your pet is protected against this commonly fatal and very unpleasant condition is to visit your vet for vaccination against myxomatosis. Experts recommend vaccinating all healthy, non-pregnant rabbits over the age of six weeks with regular boosters given every six to 12 months depending on the local disease risk.



At Hillside we offer a **'FREE' healthy hopper rabbit health check** where you can find out more about myxomatosis protection – this nurses appointment includes tips on nutrition, worming and dental healthcare.

Call the practice today on 698899 and ask for a **healthy hopper check**.

See also our Rabbit Ownership handout, available to download which gives more information on keeping a happy healthy rabbit.

Disclaimer: The information and advice contained in this handout is for general information only. It is not intended to be a substitute for a veterinary examination and/or specific treatment or advice. You should always seek advice from your veterinary surgeon.

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