

## Eye Infections in Rabbits

### Overview

- Eye infections are a common problem in pet rabbits and often develop because of an underlying problem such as dental disease or an injury to the eye.
- Eye infections are often easy to spot because they cause red, painful, weepy eyes.
- Never delay treatment for an eye problem, book an appointment with your vet as soon as you notice any symptoms.

### General information and causes



Eye infections (commonly known as conjunctivitis) are a common problem in pet rabbits. They are usually caused by bacteria, and develop because of an underlying problem such as:

- **Dental disease** - dental disease is a common cause of eye problems in a rabbit because their tooth roots grow very close to their eyes and tear ducts
- **An injury or an eye ulcer**
- **Dacrocystitis** (an inflamed tear duct)
- **Something stuck in the eye/under the eyelid** (i.e. straw, hay or sawdust)
- **Abnormal eyelashes** that irritate the front of the eye
- **The Myxomatosis virus** can cause conjunctivitis but fortunately we can prevent this deadly virus by vaccination

## Symptoms

Symptoms of an eye infection/conjunctivitis include:

- Redness and inflammation
- Pain (blinking or squinting)
- Weeping/discharge or crusting around the eye
- Difficulty eating

## When to contact your vet

Contact your vet if your rabbit has symptoms of an eye infection, and let them know if they have had similar symptoms in the past. **You know your rabbit best, if you are concerned it's always best to contact your vet.**

## Treatment

Your rabbit's treatment will depend on what has caused their infection, but is likely to include:

- Antibiotic eye drops to treat kill any bacteria.
- Artificial tears to keep the eyes moist while they heal.
- Anti-inflammatory pain relief if their eyes are very sore or inflamed.
- Regularly bathing your rabbit's eyes to remove discharge.
- **Most importantly**, to prevent problems returning, your vet will want to investigate and treat the cause of your rabbit's eye infection (especially if it keeps coming back).

Make sure you give your rabbit all their medication (you may find our medication planner helpful), isolate them from any healthy rabbits until your vet says otherwise, and let your vet know if their symptoms don't improve.

## Outlook

Most cases of conjunctivitis respond to treatment and clear up quickly, but can take longer or require ongoing treatment if there is

an underlying cause such as dental disease,. For more information about treating the underlying causes of eye problems in pet rabbits, follow the links within the causes section.

## Prevention

- Check your rabbits' eyes regularly for redness or discharge.
- Keep your rabbits' teeth healthy by feeding them a good quality, high fibre diet.
- Use a good quality, dust free bedding and clean their living space regularly.

## Home remedies and natural care

Always have your rabbit examined and treated by a vet if they have a problem with their eye. Conjunctivitis in rabbits is very often caused by an underlying problem, which left without treatment, is likely to get worse. Home remedies for eye infections are likely to be unhelpful and delay effective treatment, putting your rabbit's sight at risk.

## Cost

Eye infections in a rabbit often indicate an underlying problem such as dental disease, which can become expensive to treat and require ongoing treatment. Consider insuring your rabbit as soon as you get them, before any signs of illness start. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them if they become unwell. It's also very important to speak openly to your vet about your finances, the cost of treatment, as well as what you think is right for your rabbit. There are often several treatment options so if one doesn't work for you and your pet then the vet may be able to offer another.

**Find out whether you are eligible for free or low cost PDSA veterinary treatment by visiting [www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility)**

Published: March 2020