

Eye problems in rabbits - an overview

Overview

- To prevent permanent damage or loss of vision, problems with your rabbit's eyes should be taken seriously and treated quickly.
- If you notice a change in your rabbit's eyes, contact your vet for an appointment.
- If your rabbit is in pain, book an urgent appointment.

General information

Several different conditions can affect rabbit's eyes including: injuries, infections, tooth problems, tear duct problems and infectious diseases such as myxomatosis. To prevent any permanent damage or loss of vision, problems should be taken seriously and treated quickly.



When to contact your vet

Contact your vet as soon as you notice a problem with your rabbit's eyes. Leaving your rabbit without treatment could lead to much more serious problems and even loss of vision or blindness.

Find out whether you are eligible for free or low cost PDSA veterinary treatment using our checker below or visit www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility

Symptoms

If your rabbit has a problem with either of his/her eyes, you may notice the following:

- Weeping/discharge
- Redness or swelling
- Cloudiness
- Pain/blinking/keeping one or both eye(s) closed
- Third eyelid showing
- A lump in or around the eye
- Loss of vision
- Flickering eye movements
- Blood in the eye
- Bulging eye

Common eye conditions

- **Eye infections/conjunctivitis** - eye infections can be caused by bacteria or viruses. If your rabbit suffers from frequent eye infections, there may be an underlying reason for them.
- **Tear duct disease (dacryocystitis)** - inflammation of the tear ducts is a common problem in rabbits and is nearly always caused by dental disease. Dacryocystitis causes weepy, sticky eyes.

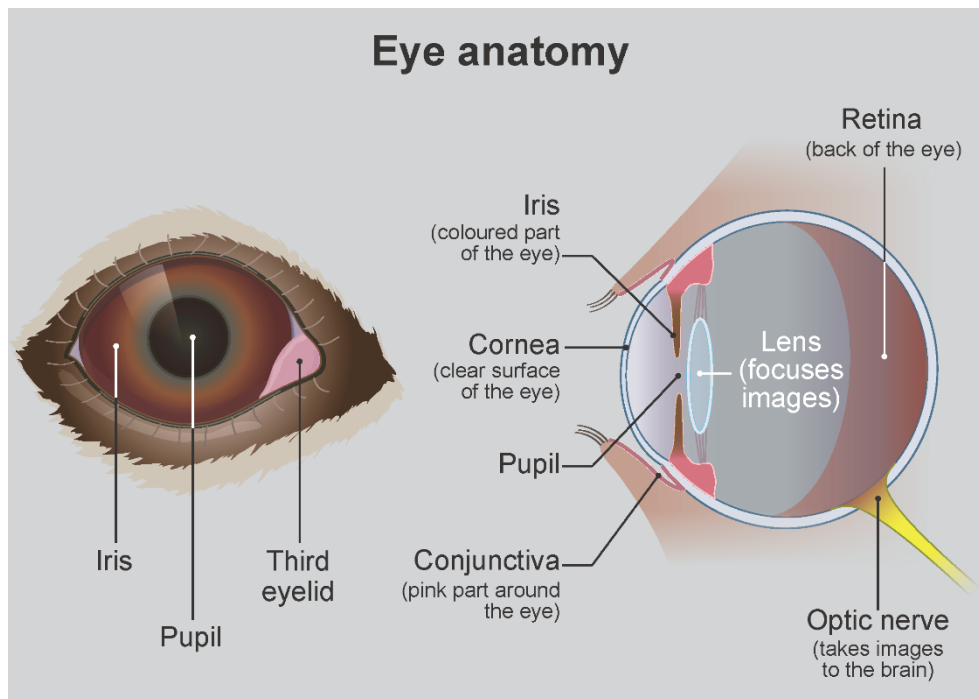
- **Eye ulcer** - an eye ulcer is a wound on the surface of the eye (the cornea). Ulcers need treatment to help them heal and can lead to loss of an eye if neglected.
- **Abscesses** – abscesses behind the eyeball are common in rabbits with dental problems.
- **Glaucoma** – increased pressure inside the eye. Glaucoma is a painful condition that can quickly lead to blindness if left untreated.
- **Uveitis** – inflammation of the coloured part of the eye (the iris) and the structures around it.
- **Blindness** – a few eye problems can cause blindness in rabbits.
- **Masses and tumours** – growths can occur behind, in and around eye. It's important to get any new lumps checked by your vet.
- **Myxomatosis** – a devastating virus that spreads from wild rabbits to pet rabbits through fleas and mosquitoes. Myxomatosis causes swelling of the head, eyes, face, and quickly leads to death. You can protect your rabbit against myxomatosis by vaccination.
- **Pasteurellosis** – is a common bacterial disease in rabbits that causes breathing problems, eye disease and abscesses.

Eye anatomy

See our image below explaining how the eye works.

- **Eyelids** - rabbits have three eyelids; the upper lid, lower lid and a third eyelid in the inside corner of the eye, underneath the outer lids.
- **Conjunctiva** - the soft, pink tissues inside the eyelids and around the eyeball.
- **Cornea** – the clear, front surface of the eyeball.
- **Iris** - the circular coloured part of the eye.

- **Pupil** - the hole in the iris that lets light into the eye.
- **Lens** - the lens is a small, transparent disc inside the eyeball. It puts images into focus as they travel to the back of the eye.
- **Retina** - the back of the eye where a layer of light-sensitive cells receive images.
- **Optic nerve** - the nerve that transmits image signals to the brain, enabling sight.



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