

Flystrike in Rabbits

Overview

- Flystrike is when maggots feed on skin and flesh - a serious condition that left untreated, can be fatal.
- Flystrike is most common in Spring and Summer when flies are active, and is particularly likely to develop around warm wet areas such as the anus (bottom).
- Contact your vet for an emergency appointment if you suspect your rabbit has flystrike - the sooner they are treated, the better their chance of survival.
- Use fly repellents and keep your rabbits clean to prevent flystrike.

General information

Flystrike is when flies lay their eggs on a rabbit's fur, which then hatch into maggots and burrow under the skin to feed on flesh. Flystrike is a very serious and painful condition, which can quickly cause serious illness and even death.



Flystrike tends to occur in the Spring and Summer (when flies are most active), and is most common around the bottom (and any other warm, wet areas). Flystrike is made more likely by anything that attracts flies and allows them to lay eggs on your rabbits, such as:

- A dirty living space
- [Diarrhoea](#) or a [mucky bottom](#)
- [Wounds](#), especially if they are infected.
- Anything that stops them moving around or cleaning themselves properly (such as arthritis, [dental problems](#) and [obesity](#)).

Symptoms

Symptoms of flystrike include:

- Patches of wet fur and [fur loss](#) (often around the back end)
- Being quieter than usual
- [Eating less](#)
- A bad smell
- [Open wounds or sores containing](#) fly eggs or maggots
- [Collapse](#)

Treatment

If your rabbit has flystrike, they will need emergency treatment from your vet.

Treatment is likely to include:

- Pain relief
- An anaesthetic so your vet can remove the maggots from your rabbit
- Medication to kill any remaining maggots
- A fluid drip
- [Antibiotics](#) (these aren't always necessary, but may be given if your rabbit has developed an infection)

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet immediately for an **emergency appointment** if you notice any symptoms of flystrike. Flystrike can very quickly cause death, so the sooner your rabbit is seen by a vet, the better their chance of survival.

You know your rabbit best. If they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.

[Find out more about PDSA's veterinary services](#)

Outlook

Sadly, flystrike is often fatal because of the severe damage that maggots cause. Your rabbit's best chance of survival is if their flystrike is discovered and treated quickly.

Unfortunately, if your rabbit is very poorly you may need to consider whether it is kindest to [put them to sleep](#).

Prevention

Prevent flystrike in your rabbits by:

- **Keeping them clean** - it's important to keep your rabbits and their living space clean and to check them every day to make sure they don't have a [dirty bottom](#) or [diarrhoea](#).
- **Using a fly repellent in the warmer months** - it's a good idea to use a fly deterrent during the summer months. Speak to your vet about which product to use, and how regularly to apply it.
- **Keeping them fit and healthy** - keep your rabbit slim and fit, [obese](#) rabbits are more likely to have problems cleaning themselves and are more likely to develop flystrike.

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