

Hairloss (alopecia) rabbits

Overview

Fur loss (alopecia) in rabbits usually appears in patches and depending on the cause often comes with a variation of other symptoms.

Most causes of alopecia in rabbits can be treated and it's rare for alopecia to be permanent. With the correct treatment, your rabbit's fur will regrow (unless there has been any permanent scarring to the skin).

Book an appointment with your vet if you notice your rabbit losing fur. Alopecia can make them feel cold, uncomfortable and miserable.



A severe mite infestation causing hair loss and painful, crusty, skin.

What is alopecia?

Alopecia is either complete fur loss or patchy / thinning fur. Rabbits most commonly suffer with patchy alopecia.

Most conditions that cause alopecia also cause other symptoms and these other symptoms may help your vet reach a diagnosis. Keep an eye out for:

- Red skin
- Bumps or scabs on the skin
- Dandruff
- Itchy skin
- Over grooming (licking and chewing more than usual)
- Bald patches

Causes

Common causes of alopecia in rabbits include:

Parasites

- Fleas, mites and lice are all parasites that can live on rabbits.
- Parasites are likely to also cause red, itchy or irritated skin, scabs and dandruff.

Bacterial infection

- Bacterial infections often cause fur to fall out.

Behavioural causes

- Stress is a common cause of alopecia in rabbits. If your rabbit is stressed, they may start to pull their own fur out.
- Rabbits are sociable animals and should always be kept as a pair or as a group. However, occasionally one rabbit

may pull another's fur out due to stress or dominance. This is called 'barbering'.

- Speak to your vet or vet nurse for advice on behavioural issues in rabbits.

Natural causes

- Some rabbits will pull their own fur out during pregnancy or false pregnancy to create a nest. This is normal behaviour and nothing to worry about.
- Hormonal changes during pregnancy, false pregnancy and lactation can also cause alopecia.

Ringworm

- Ringworm is a fungus, not a worm. It damages the skin and causes fur to fall out in patches.

Injuries or pain

- If your rabbit gets an injury such as a bite, an abscess or a rub (common on rough hutch floors), the fur around the injured area will often fall out.
- Painful conditions such as arthritis may cause your rabbit to pull their own fur out.

Flystrike

- Flystrike is life-threatening condition. It's caused when flies lay their eggs on a rabbit which then hatch into maggots and burrow under the skin to feed on flesh.
- A symptom of fly strike is alopecia around the tail and back end.

Tumours

- Certain cancers of the ovaries and testicles can cause hormone changes that cause alopecia.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet if you notice your rabbit is losing its fur or has a skin problem.

You know your rabbit best. If you are concerned, it's always best to contact your vet.

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