

# Skin problems in rabbits: an overview

## Overview

Skin and fur are important for protection and warmth. Skin disease has the potential to cause a lot of discomfort. This page gives a brief summary of the most common skin problems seen in rabbits.

Book an appointment with your vet if you notice your rabbit has a skin problem, waiting could lead to a more serious issue developing.

## Signs of a skin problem

Skin problems can present in many different ways, including:

- Itchy skin
- Hair loss (alopecia)
- Dry flaky skin
- Dermatitis (red, inflamed, sore skin or a rash)
- Smelly, weepy skin
- Coat colour change

## Causes

Some of the most common skin problems in rabbits include:

### Fleas, mites and lice

- Fleas, mites and lice cause various signs including flaky, itchy skin, and sometimes hair loss.

### Urine scald

- Urine scald is likely to develop if dirt (wee and poo) builds up around your rabbit's bottom. It's a painful condition that causes the fur to become matted and often leads to skin infections.



### Ear mites

- Ear mites cause pain, severe irritation, crusting in the ears, head shaking and sometimes a head tilt.

### Fly strike

- Fly strike is a potentially life-threatening condition that develops when maggots hatch on a rabbit and start to burrow under their skin.

### Wounds

- Wounds cause pain and discomfort and can easily become infected.

### **Bacterial infections**

- Bacterial skin infections can develop due to urine scalding, wounds, or poor hygiene.

### **Abscesses**

- Abscesses are a common problem in rabbits. They often form under the skin (due to wounds) and around the mouth (because of dental disease).

### **Pregnancy**

- During pregnancy or a false pregnancy, your rabbit is likely to pull out the fur from under their chin and tummy. This is to enable them to nest and expose their nipples.

### **Bumble foot**

- Bumble foot (also known as Pododermatitis) is a painful condition that causes hair loss and ulcers on the soles of the feet. It happens when rabbits are kept in damp conditions, on grid floors or when they become overweight or inactive.

### **Behavioural**

- Rabbits are sociable creatures, best kept in pairs or groups. Sometimes, rabbits fight for dominance by pulling each other's fur out, this is called 'barbering'.
- Stress may cause your rabbit to pull their own fur out.

### **Fungal infections**

- Fungal skin infections such as ringworm cause areas of crusty skin and hair loss (alopecia).

### **Myxomatosis**

- Myxomatosis, a nasty virus that can cause patches of swollen skin on the face and body. It causes many other severe symptoms and eventually death.

## When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if you notice any signs of a skin problem in your rabbit(s). Skin conditions can often be very painful, especially if they are severe or continue for a long time.

**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.**

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