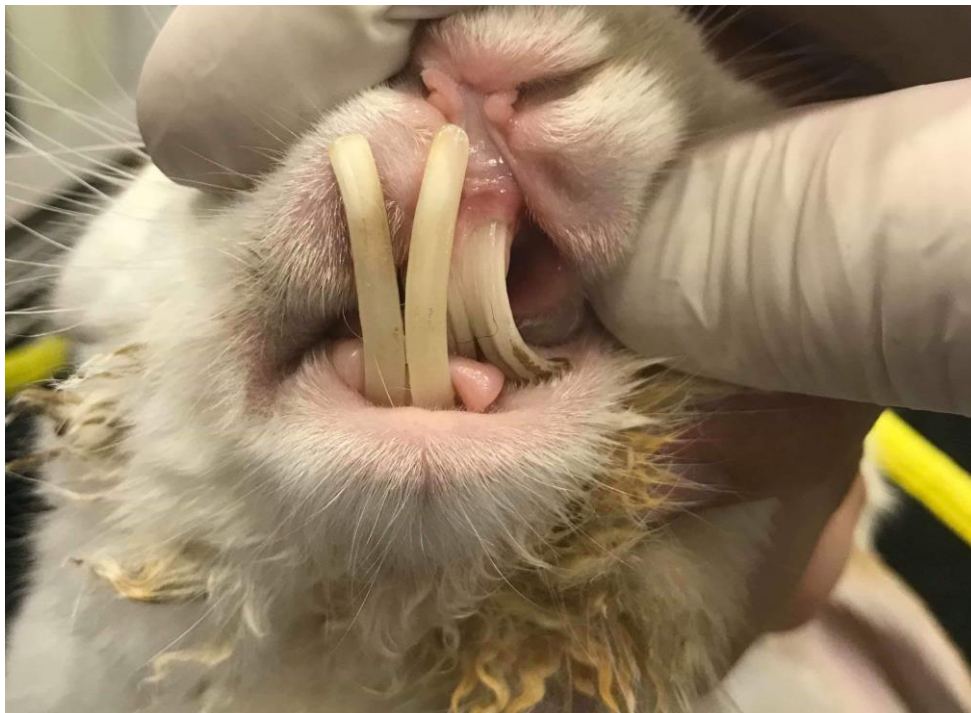


Dental problems in rabbits

Overview

- Dental disease is a very common problem in pet rabbits and is most commonly caused by a poor diet/lack of fibre.
- Dental disease often goes unnoticed for a long time because rabbits instinctively hide pain and discomfort.
- If you own pet rabbits, keep an eye out for dental problems and have their mouth and teeth checked by your vet regularly.
- Contact your vet for an appointment if you notice any signs of dental disease; never wait to see if it improves.
- **The best way to prevent dental problems is to feed your rabbits a well-balanced diet containing mostly grass and hay.**



This rabbit is unable to eat, drink or groom due to severely overgrown front teeth.

Causes

Dental problems in rabbits can be caused by:

Diet

A poor diet (lack of fibre) is the most common cause of dental disease in rabbits. Rabbit teeth are very different from cat and dog teeth because they grow throughout their whole life and need to be continuously worn down by fibre (grass and hay). If your rabbit's teeth don't get enough wear, they will start to overgrow into their mouth and the roots get pushed back into the jaw and skull. Check out our rabbit feeding guide.

Breed

Rabbits with short, round faces such as the Netherland Dwarf and Lionhead are more likely to suffer with dental problems because their teeth are squashed into a small space.

Age

As your rabbit gets older, they are more likely to suffer from dental disease. Senior rabbits should be checked more regularly for problems with their mouth.

Symptoms

Rabbits instinctively try to hide pain and discomfort because showing any sign of weakness in the wild would make them a target for predators. Therefore, as a rabbit owner, it's important to keep an eye out for dental problems and check your rabbits regularly. Look at their general health as well as their mouth. Symptoms often include:

- Weight loss
- A dirty bottom (grooming becomes difficult and painful)
- Diarrhoea of soft faeces
- Drooling
- Reduced appetite
- Weepy eyes (see image below)
- Teeth grinding

- A bumpy jawline
- A
- A runny nose
- Less active/quiet
- Long/deformed/broken teeth



Weepy eyes are a common symptom of dental disease in rabbits.

Treatment

Your rabbit's treatment will depend on the type of dental disease they have, but is likely to include a combination of surgery, pain relief, other medications, help eating and diet changes.

Dental surgery

- Your rabbit may need an anaesthetic so that your vet can trim any overgrown teeth and/or smooth any spurs.
- Your rabbit may need teeth removed if they are suffering from severe dental disease such as a tooth root abscess, damaged teeth, or teeth growing in the wrong direction. Removing teeth from a rabbit is much more difficult than in dogs or cats because of their long, curved roots, small mouths and delicate jaws.

- ***Never attempt to trim your rabbits' teeth at home - you may crack a root, which will cause severe pain and long-term problems.***

Pain relief

- Your rabbit may need pain relief to help them recover, especially if they have sores inside their mouth.

Feeding

- If your rabbit is struggling to eat, you may need to help them, your vet will show you how.

Other medication

- Antibiotics aren't necessary for most dental problems, but your vet may prescribe them if your rabbit has severe dental disease such as a tooth root abscess or an infected mouth sore.

When to contact your vet

As a rabbit owner, it's important to keep an eye out for dental problems and contact your vet promptly if you notice anything unusual. **Never wait to see if your rabbit improves** - dental disease is very painful and left untreated can cause major problems (e.g. gut stasis).

Preventing dental disease

Regular checks

In addition to regular monitoring, have your rabbit's teeth checked regularly by your vet (at least once a year but ideally more regularly). They will be able to take a close look at your rabbits back teeth using a special instrument.

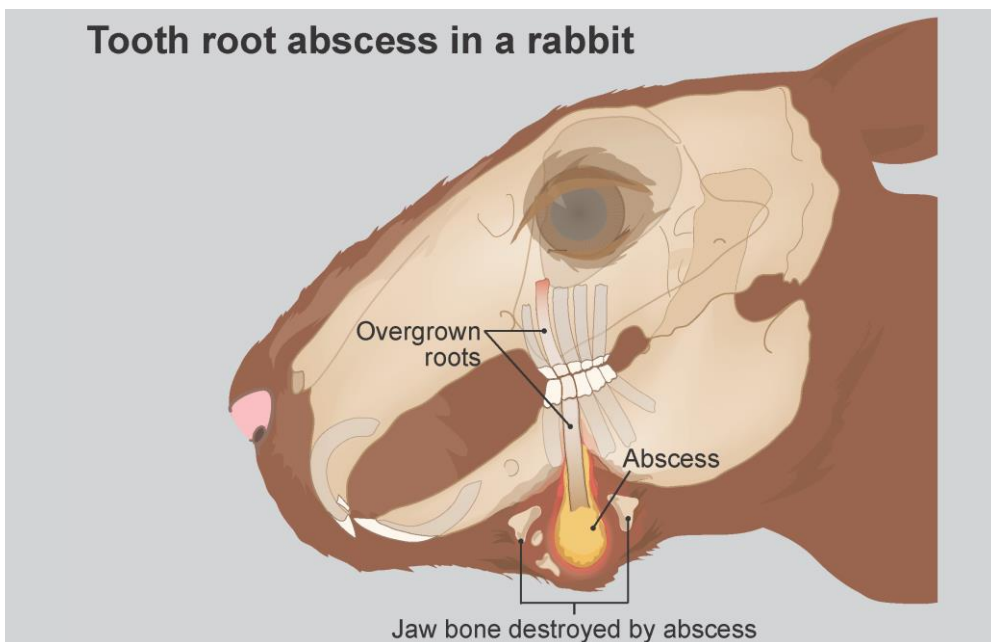
Diet

A poor diet (lack of fibre) is the biggest cause of dental disease in rabbits. If your rabbit doesn't eat enough grass or hay their teeth are likely to overgrow and cause problems. Check out our feeding guide for more information.



Tooth root abscess

A tooth root abscess is an infection around the root of a tooth where it fits into the bone (see image below). Tooth root abscesses are



painful and can be difficult to treat. If a tooth root abscess is caught early and treatment is successful, your rabbit may recover well, but unfortunately many tooth root abscesses never fully resolve.

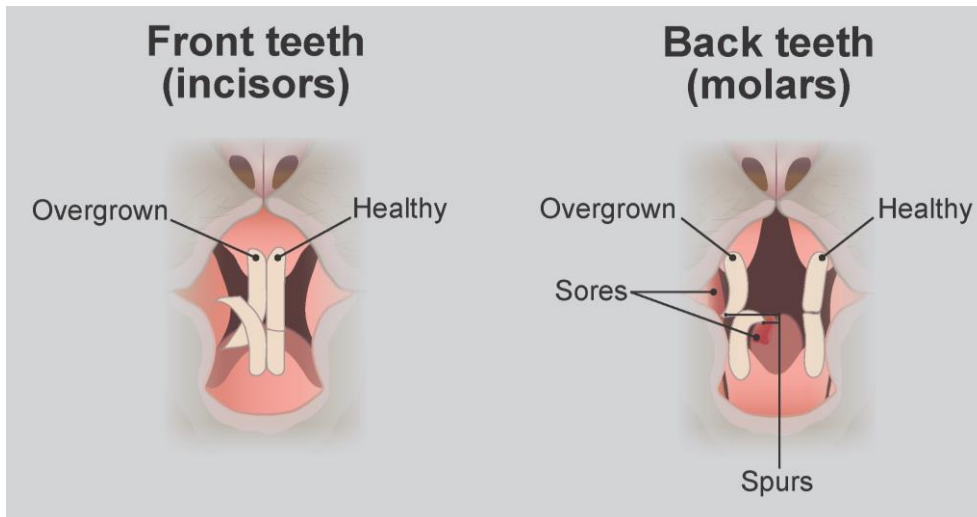
Overgrown teeth

Front teeth

Front teeth (incisors) are for picking up and cutting food. If they overgrow, or grow in the wrong direction, your rabbit will have problems eating, drinking, grooming and closing their mouth. If front teeth are causing problems, it's likely that the back teeth will also be problematic.

Back teeth

Back teeth (molars) are for grinding food. If they overgrow, they develop sharp edges, called spurs. Spurs dig into the cheeks and tongue (see diagram below), causing painful sores.



Tooth injuries

It's possible for a tooth to break or become loose when gnawing, fighting or after a head injury, particularly if they are overgrown or unhealthy. Treatment for a damaged tooth depends on the seriousness of the injury; some can be fixed but some need removal.

Muesli diets

Don't feed your rabbit a muesli style diet, they will pick out the tasty bits and leave the healthier bits with the most fibre. This can lead to obesity and dental problems. Grass, hay, fresh greens and a small amount of pellet food is a much healthier and more natural diet for your rabbits.

Cost

Treating a rabbit with dental problems can become very expensive because often, it's an ongoing problem that requires lifelong treatment and check-ups. Always speak to your vet if you can't afford the treatment they have recommended, there may be other options.

We strongly recommend taking out insurance for your rabbits as soon as you get them, before any problems develop them so that you are covered for any problems. Always check if your insurance policy covers dental disease.

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