



Rabbits & Encephalitozoon Cuniculi (EC or E. Cuniculi)

What is EC?

EC is a parasite belonging to the protozoa family that generally affects the central nervous system, eyes and/or kidneys. Some rabbits can live normally with EC dormant in their system without any obvious signs, and others can be affected severely over several body systems. It can be transferred from a mother rabbit to her babies in utero and can also spread between rabbits as infected rabbits can shed the organism through their urine.

How does EC affect my rabbit?

If the infected rabbit has a healthy immune system, this often prevents EC from multiplying although the organism will generally remain in the rabbit's system. Immunosuppression from illness, stress or aging can result in signs of the disease. Symptoms of EC can include but aren't limited to:

- Head tilting to one side
- Neurological problems – loss of balance and co-ordination
- Cataracts or blindness
- Chronic gastrointestinal problems
- Urinary tract problems
- Kidney disease



What are the treatment options for EC?

If it is suspected that your rabbit may have EC it is advised for them to have a blood sample taken by a vet to confirm a positive diagnosis. There is an oral medication that can be given that helps to suppress the EC levels in the system however the treatment length is long and there are potential side effects so we generally recommend confirming the infection first before starting treatment. Unfortunately, the medication is not a cure and the rabbit will generally always have the organism in the system. This means medical treatment does need to be continued for the duration of the rabbit's life, usually at 6 monthly intervals. Monitoring the disease with your vet is also important and regular check-ups for an EC positive rabbit is advised.

If you have any concerns or are at all worried about your rabbit please don't hesitate to contact us.

