



ANAEMIA IN RABBITS AND GUINEA PIGS

Anaemia is a decrease in the red blood cells in the body. A rabbit or guinea pig with anaemia will generally show signs of being lethargic, off their food and a decreased exercise tolerance.

Anaemia is caused by several reasons:

1. A destruction of red blood cells
2. Blood loss through excessive bleeding
3. Decreased production of red blood cells

A blood test can help us to find the reasons behind anaemia.

These blood tests are:

- PCV (Packed Cell Volume) which is a measure of the number of red blood cells in the blood. This is usually in rabbits between 35-55%.
- Total Protein. This is the measure of the concentration of the blood (hydration) and also reflects liver function.
- Urea/Creatine. These are kidney enzymes, these can increase with waste products (breakdown of red blood cells) as well as renal (kidney) disease
- Liver Enzymes (ALT, ALKP, AST) These can assess the function of the liver and its involvement in the anemia
- Blood smear. This can be undertaken in-house by our own vets or sent away for a more in-depth analysis made at the laboratory. This looks at the size and shape of the red blood cells and if there are 'immature' red blood cells present. This is called 'regeneration' and is a sign the body is responding to the loss by the bone marrow manufacturing more red blood cells.
- Clotting factors. This is a blood test undertaken at the laboratory to attempt to differentiate between some of the causes of blood loss.

The reasons for anaemia are many and varied. Some of the more common problems are:

- Blood loss through injury
- Blood loss through internal bleeding due to clotting disorders or autoimmune disease
- Red blood cell loss through toxins damaging the red blood cells.
- Loss of blood through gut ulcers
- Low production of blood cells due to chronic disease.

If you are at all concerned about your pet please get in touch with us.

