



FLYSTRIKE IN RABBITS AND GUINEA PIGS

Fly strike (infestation with maggots) occurs commonly in the warmer and more humid months of the year. Outdoor pet rabbits and guinea pigs are more at risk than indoor pets but any animal can be affected as flies often will work their way inside.

Flies are attracted to:

- Fur damp with urine or faecal contents
- Skin infections
- Wounds
- Mats in the fur

These flies lay their eggs on the soiled fur or infected skin with the maggots often hatching after 12 hours or so. It is thought by some people that the maggots initially release a form of local anaesthetic numbing the area, which permits them to cause significant damage unbeknown to the affected rabbit or guinea pig. The resulting wound and dermatitis can be very painful causing anorexia. Some cases of fly strike may be so severe that prognosis is guarded and euthanasia is recommended

There is generally an underlying health condition in rabbits and guinea pigs suffering from fly strike.

- Urine staining or urine scald may be due to a variety of health conditions which include urinary tract infection, bladder stones, kidney stones, kidney disease, or arthritis.
- Faecal staining or faecal scald may be due to enteritis (and diarrhoea), uneaten caecotrophs, a poorly kept coat or due to an inappropriate diet.
- Obesity, dental disease, arthritis or a back problem predisposes the rabbit or guinea pig to developing fly strike due to an inability to effectively groom themselves and maintain personal hygiene.
- Damp dirty bedding increases the risk of fly strike.

The underlying cause must be addressed to prevent fly strike from reoccurring.

TREATMENT OF FLY STRIKE

The most important part of treatment involves removing the maggots. The affected area needs to be clipped and cleaned and the maggots physically removed. Sometimes surgical closure of wounds is required depending on the severity.

Pain relief, fluid therapy, anti-inflammatories and antibiotics are usually required and sometimes gut motility medications if the rabbit or guinea pig isn't eating or is in a state of shock from the



infestation.



Antiseptic creams also need to be applied to the wound several times a day. An anti-parasitic drug is also often used to help break the life cycle of the maggot eggs. This is often repeated over several weeks to make sure all remaining maggots and eggs are killed.

Close monitoring on the owner's part is essential and all high-risk fly strike rabbits and guinea pigs should be housed inside over the summer months to prevent maggot infestations.

If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact us.

