



RENAL (KIDNEY) DISEASE

Kidneys work as filters in the body removing waste, regulating hydration and in rabbits and guinea pigs they are also a big part of helping the body to remove excess levels of calcium. Kidneys are an essential part of the body and no mammal can live without them.

What will I see if my rabbit's or guinea pig's kidneys are not working?

In early kidney disease you may not see anything. At this stage the kidneys are sensitive to dehydration and other health changes can 'tip them over the edge' into kidney disease or kidney failure. In some cases they may start to suffer from urine scalding, urinating in unusual places, a scruffy coat or even gut stasis. As the kidney function gradually reduces more obvious signs generally become apparent and your rabbit or guinea pig may start to drink and urinate a lot more than they did previously.

In severe kidney disease patients feel very tired and can even collapse in some cases.

How do we test to see if the kidneys are working?

We generally use blood tests to check overall health and specifically to check kidney enzymes. These parameters often increase when the kidneys are not functioning properly. We also recommend a comprehensive urine test as this can tell us a lot of information. In some cases of early kidney disease, we may need to send some of your pet's urine off to a specialized lab to allow a more comprehensive analysis. Ultrasonography, radiographs (x-rays), CT or MRI are also used in some cases to narrow down what might be causing the changes to your pet's kidneys.

What can I do at home?

1. Be aware of the signs listed above and if you are at all concerned then make sure to get your pet checked out by an experienced rabbit vet.
2. Increase the amount of fluid that your pet drinks. Wet their green vegetables daily (run them under the tap and leave wet) and make sure they have more than one bowl of water.
3. Reduce the workload for the kidneys. Make sure you do not feed too many high calcium foods such as spinach, parsley, dandelion and kale. Pellets, grains, lucerne, clover or alfalfa hays are also high in calcium.

Can you fix kidney disease?

In most cases unfortunately we cannot. In general, we can only manage kidney disease and try to slow the progression of the disease and improve quality of life of your pet for as long as possible. Early diagnosis allows better long-term management so if you are at all concerned please get in touch with us.

