



Rabbit Dental Procedure - What to expect

Rabbits have 28 teeth in total. There are 4 front teeth (incisors), two on the top and two on the bottom. There are two small peg teeth sitting behind the upper incisors. Rabbits also have 'cheek teeth' that are hidden at the back of the mouth. There are 6 on either side of the upper jaw and 5 on either side of the lower jaw. Rabbit's teeth constantly grow and they need to be worn down with high amounts of dietary fiber (ie. Hay or grass), this growth can be up to 3 mm a week.

During an anaesthetic the rabbit's cheeks and tongue are moved to the side with special instruments and each individual tooth is examined for spurs (sharp protrusions) and instability. Radiographs (x-rays) or a CT scan are also important and indicated for some cases. These allow us to assess the size and shape of the roots of the teeth. This will give us an idea of how advanced the dental disease is and allow planning for the dental procedure.

Correction of Cheek Teeth - Often an early sign of dental disease is the formation of sharp spikes or spurs on the cheek teeth. These cut into the tongue and the cheek causing a lot of pain and discomfort and can often result in your rabbit not eating. Spurs are caused by poor wearing of the cheek teeth and are usually the result of low fibre diets. In general, these have to be removed with a specialised dental bur while your rabbit is under anaesthetic.

Correction or removal of Incisor Teeth - Malocclusion of front teeth is usually a result of problems with the cheek teeth or in some cases rabbits are born with abnormal jaw alignment which leads to problems with their incisors. If there are only mild changes in the shape and curvature of the incisors, trimming and solving the primary cheek tooth problem (if present) may be all that is needed. Once the incisors are not meeting they are not helping the rabbit to eat at all and often require trimming every 2-4 weeks. Often once this occurs it is best to remove them as this offers a more permanent solution.

Removal of Tooth Root Abscess - Tooth root abscesses are common in rabbits with dental disease. They are often seen as hard lumps on the lower jaw or facial abscesses. Treatment requires removal of the bony abscess and the tooth. Depending on the tooth involved this often requires a surgical approach with a drainage hole left to allow for flushing of the abscess. Injectable antibiotics and regular revisits are often required post operatively.

It is important to note that depending on the severity of the dental problems, anaesthetic intervention may be ongoing. This can range from every 4 weeks to every 12 months or not at all. This can often be predicted with radiographs or a CT scan but sometimes only time will tell.

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

