



# RABBIT SYPHILIS

Rabbit “Syphilis” is caused by a bacterium called *Treponema Cuniculi*. This bacteria adheres to the rabbit skin cells particularly around the face, nose (most commonly around the nose rather than the corner of the lip) and genital area.

Transmission of this bacteria is usually venereal (during birth and mating) or when does are feeding young. It has been seen to spread between rabbits living in close contact with each other. It is unsure if there are other modes of infection as rare infections of isolated rabbits have been seen, although some rabbits can carry the bacteria for years without showing signs.

After infection we see mild inflammation and then crusty scabby lesions with vesicles (blisters) and ulcers present. Long term infection can result in ‘horny’ scab like lesions.

Diagnosis is usually on presumptive scabbing and blisters. Alternatives for a definite diagnosis is serology (not presently available in Australia to our knowledge) and biopsy. Serology is not always 100% as it requires significant immune response. Biopsy is generally considered diagnostic. Histology of stains can often be undertaken on scrapings from the wound/scabs as well however a negative result does not rule the condition out though.

Treatment generally involves the use of penicillin antibiotic injections and these generally resolve the problem completely.

If you are at all concerned about your rabbit or have any other questions please don’t hesitate to get in touch with us.

