



UPPER RESPIRATORY TRACT DISEASE

Upper respiratory tract disease is very common in rabbits and can be caused by a number of different reasons. Rabbit's that are kept in dusty environments or that are exposed to respiratory irritants (ie ammonia from a dirty cage that has been soiled with faeces and urine) are more at risk of developing upper respiratory tract disease. The clinical signs often include sneezing as well as nasal and ocular discharge. Rabbits are obligate nasal breathers and any obstruction or inflammation of the nasal passages restricts breathing so often an increased respiratory effort is seen.

Rabbits can develop acute or chronic upper respiratory disease. Acute cases often can be treated and cured within days to weeks. Chronic infection is sometimes referred to as 'snuffles' and can be more difficult to treat as often there is infection and damage to the bones within the nasal cavity. Once this occurs eradication of the infection often becomes very challenging.

Many people think that upper respiratory diseases in rabbits are all caused by the bacteria *Pasteurella multocida* however this is not at all true and there are many types of different infectious agents that can be involved.

There are a number of different ways to investigate the cause and severity of upper respiratory tract disease including:

- Radiographs (x-rays), CT or MRI - these imaging modalities are often invaluable as they provide so much information
- Culture swaps and cytology from the nasal cavity
- Endoscopy of the nasal cavities
- Response to treatment

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

