



Kenya Climate Smart
Agriculture Project

How to Identify and Manage Rabbit Diseases and Parasitic Conditions for Improved Health and Production.





Introduction

Rabbit is an emerging livestock in Kenya and farmers are increasingly rearing. However, mortalities from disease is a challenge. Rabbit diseases are mainly caused by: parasite, bacteria and protozoa. Other causes include viruses, fungi, and nutritional deficiencies.

PARASITIC DISEASES

1. Ear Canker



Ear canker [Source: UoN repository 2018]

Ear canker affects the ears. It's caused by ear mites (*Psorotes cuniculi*).

Symptoms of rabbits with ear canker

- Scabs and crusts on the ear
- Rabbits scratch their ears and shake their head because of irritation from the mites
- Sick rabbits refuse to eat

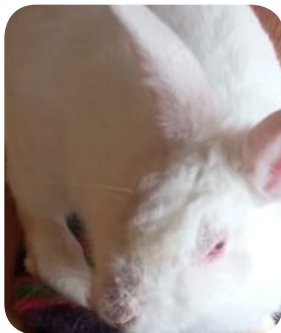
Prevention

- Separate sick rabbits from healthy ones
- Apply sevin to control mites

Treatment

- Apply mineral, olive or vegetable oil on the crust using a swab or cloth one to two times.
- Treat with Ivermectin, which is an antiparasitic drug

2. Skin Mange



Rabbit with maage around the nose

This is the infestation of mites which affect the skin of rabbits.

These mites burrow under the skin and cause extensive irritation.

Rabbits can also be infected by mites from dogs and cats.

Symptoms of rabbits with skin mange

- Scales on the skin
- A lot of itching and scratching
- Hair loss
- Refuse to eat

Prevention

- Isolate and treat affected rabbit
- Clean and disinfect rabbit houses
- Apply sevin to kill mites

Treatment

- Dust the rabbit with sevin
- Inject sick rabbits

3. Worm infestation

Worm infestation is mainly caused by Pinworms

Symptoms

- Affected rabbits have rough hair coat
- Rabbits with worms may diarrhoea
- Sometimes there may be constipation in rabbits

BACTERIAL DISEASES

1. Pasteurellosis

This is a chronic upper respiratory disease that causes running nose and sneezing. This bacterium also causes abscesses.



Rabbit with wet nose from nasal discharge [Source: infonet biovision]

Symptoms of rabbits with pasteurellosis

- Nasal discharge
- watery eye
- head shaking
- sneezing
- loss of weight
- Continual infection may lead to sterility of rabbits.

Prevention

- Quarantine all new rabbits for 1 to 2 weeks
- Dispose rabbits that are not responding to treatment.

- Reduce stress on rabbits
- Ensure good hygiene

Treatment

- Pasturellosis is treated with tetracyclines

2. Pneumonia



A rabbit with loss of appetite

This is a condition of rabbits caused by bacteria but sometimes viruses are involved. This condition may also arise from stress, damp, cold, wet and unsanitary hutches. It may also arise from infection.

Symptoms of rabbits with pneumonia

- Mucus from the nose
- Difficulty in breathing
- Refusing to eat

Prevention

- Control of pasteurellosis reduces the chances of pneumonia.
- Avoid cold and wet conditions.

Treatment

Treat with antibiotic.

3. Otitis externa

This is the infection of the external ear usually as secondary bacterial infection of the ear canker.

Symptoms of rabbits with pneumonia

- Affected rabbit tilts their head
- There is discharge from the ear
- Scales and scabs from the base of the ear

Prevention

- Control parasites

Treatment

- Use powder and ointments containing antibiotics

4. Salmonellosis “Scours”

This is a bacterial disease of rabbits which cause diarrhoea.

Symptoms

- Diarrhoea
- Lose of weight
- Watery eyes
- Affected rabbits breath fast

Prevention

- The farmers should practice good hygiene
- Quarantine of new rabbits for 1-2 weeks

Treatment

- Use of antibiotics

NB: Penicilin should not be used

PROTOZOAN DISEASES

5. Coccidiosis



Rabbit with diarrhoea [Source Kennedy 2018]

Coccidiosis is a disease that affects the digestive system of rabbits, causing enteritis manifesting diarrhea. Diarrhoea from a sick rabbit is bloody or brownish diarrhoea.

Symptoms of rabbits with coccidiosis

- Diarrhoea
- Affected rabbits lose weight
- The abdomen is swollen
- Affected rabbits refuse to eat
- Rough hair coat

Prevention



Rabbits in a clean environment

- Avoid overcrowding
- Provide clean drinking water and feed
- Ensure good ventilation of rabbit house

Treatment

Treat with antibiotics in feed or drinking water.

1. Weepy Eye (conjunctivitis)

This condition presents as reddish and watery eyes. The eyelid is swollen because of irritation. Irritation is mostly caused by dust, sprays or bacterial infection.



Conjunctivitis “Weepy Eye” infection [Source: David L]

Symptoms

- Rabbits rub their eyes
- Watery, red and swollen eyes

Prevention

- Keep rabbits in clean area
- Dispose rabbits not responding to treatment

Treatment

- Use eye wash
- Use eye ointment containing antibiotics

2. Bloat

This is a condition where the abdomen is distended.

Symptoms

- Sudden death of rabbits

Prevention

- Keep rabbits in clean environment
- Provide clean water and feed

3. Enteritis

This is a condition manifesting with diarrhoea in rabbits. It is caused by excessive consumption of greens, mouldy feeds or coccidia.

Symptoms

- Watery diarrhoea
- Rabbits refuse to eat

Prevention

- Provide clean feeds and drinking water
- Avoid offering fresh greens directly plucked from the shamba
- Proper ventilated rabbit house
- Avoid overcrowding

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Compiled by: Jesang A., Ogali, I. and Maichomo M.

For further information, contact:

Veterinary Research Institute, Muguga,

P.O. Box 32-00902 Kikuyu

Email: Director.vsri@kalro.org

Tel No. 0202020572

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