
AVIAN & EXOTIC CLINIC
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Gastrointestinal Stasis in Rabbits

Gastrointestinal stasis is an important disease process that all rabbit owners should be aware of. If a rabbit stops producing feces, or his poop becomes small, dry and/or irregular, this can be an emergency. Those not familiar with rabbits may think the bunny is just constipated and wait days before getting help. But in fact gastrointestinal stasis is always a problem that requires medical attention, and the sooner the rabbit is brought to the veterinarian the better. Treatment for gastrointestinal stasis will depend on the severity of the stasis and the cause. A rabbit which has smaller droppings but is still eating small amounts of food may just need hand feeding and/or fluid injections. On the other hand, a rabbit which has a very painful abdomen and is not eating at all will need to be hospitalized. Rabbits with complete gastrointestinal stasis are treated with gastrointestinal stimulants, pain medication, fluids, assist feeding, and other indicated medications. Diagnostic tests such as x-rays and blood work may be warranted to determine the cause of the problem. Left untreated this disease process is often fatal. There are many problems that can cause a rabbit's intestines to slow down or stop. Issues such as a sudden diet changes, being inactive or overweight, a concurrent illness, or a tooth problem can all lead to gastrointestinal stasis. Shedding rabbits may ingest large quantities of hair as they groom, which can cause an obstruction. Hair ingestion is particularly a problem in dense-coated breed such as a rex, or if rabbits lack appropriate fiber in their diet (i.e. hay). We have also seen rabbits who develop gastrointestinal stasis for no discernible reason.

Prevention is definitely the best medicine, and grooming your rabbit daily during the shedding season really helps! The technique we use is wet hands. You dampen your hands and stroke the bunny backwards and forwards rinsing the excess hair off of your hands as you go. You can also gently pluck the loose tufts of hair that accumulate over their sides and rumps. We find the rabbits generally like this method and the extra bonding time it gives them with their people! Of course keeping your rabbit on hay and at a good weight also helps.

If your bunny develops smaller than normal droppings, or isn't eating well, contact us right away at (831) 647-1147.