



RABBITS & DIARRHOEA

FACT SHEET 40

Using Denes Probiotic+ Powder

Introduction

There is a growing interest in keeping rabbits as pets, such that they are fast becoming almost as popular as dogs and cats. They suffer from a variety of health problems, including one of the most common, diarrhoea. This can arise from several different causes:

Poor diet

Diets which are low in fibre and high in protein, fat and energy can lead to diarrhoea. Unfortunately many commercial diets are formulated along these lines and can lead to digestive upsets. Diets of this type tend to have high levels of carbohydrates causing the intestine to slow down and retain food for longer. This causes changes in the pH of the bowel contents and in the levels of bacteria within the gut. The overall result is to cause diarrhoea. In contrast, diets high in indigestible fibre will stimulate the bowel to work correctly and will help prevent diarrhoea from occurring. Diarrhoea can also arise from incorrect feeding or sudden changes in diet and from feeding mouldy or frosted food or lawnmower clippings.

Drug induced

Over-use or dosing with certain types of antibiotics can cause diarrhoea by destroying the bacteria naturally present in the intestine of the rabbit. On occasion this will lead to overgrowth of potentially pathogenic bacteria which can damage the bowel and cause serious ill-health, and possibly death, through the production of toxins. Oral antibiotics are more likely to cause a problem compared with those given by injection. Feeding diets high in carbohydrates (including feeding grains and some fruits) at the same time as using antibiotics will increase the risk of the problem occurring. Feeding good quality grass hay which is high in fibre will reduce the risk of antibiotics upsetting the digestive system.

Stress induced

Stress situations can lead to diarrhoea in rabbits. To minimise the problem, avoid any unnecessary changes in routine or changes in environment.

Infections

Diarrhoea is often caused by overgrowth of bacteria in the bowel due to dietary causes or antibiotics rather than by direct infection. In younger rabbits, diarrhoea can be caused by infection with *E.coli*. Infection with *Coccidia* is a more common cause in rabbits of all ages.

Signs & symptoms

These will vary with the age of the rabbit and with the underlying cause. Symptoms can include lethargy, abdominal pain, dehydration, diarrhoea (which may contain blood) and drop in appetite.

How to help

Diarrhoea in rabbits can be potentially life threatening, so seek veterinary help if your rabbit seems particularly ill. Diet is of major importance in the treatment and prevention of diarrhoea. Feed a diet high in fibre (such as grass hay) and low in carbohydrates. Avoid feeding excess quantities of grains, refined flour and high sugar fruits such as bananas, which are all high in carbohydrates. Certain conditions such as coccidiosis will require specific veterinary treatment to clear the condition.

Probiotics such as **Denes Probiotic+ Powder** can be extremely useful in treating diarrhoea, in conjunction with dietary measures. Probiotics consist of freeze-dried normal gut bacteria which can be added to food to help repopulate the bowel with healthy bacteria. This will help reduce the chance of unwanted pathogenic bacteria multiplying, improve digestion, assist the bowel to return to normal and prevent diarrhoea.

Depending on the size of rabbit, add between ¼ to ½ teaspoon of **Denes Probiotic+ Powder** to the food each day until the problem has been resolved. If necessary, probiotics can be fed on a long term basis to prevent diarrhoea from occurring. At times of stress or risk add Denes **Probiotic+ Powder** to the food in anticipation of a problem occurring.

Denes Homeopathic remedies can also be useful as a first aid measure in treating diarrhoea in rabbits. In particular it is worth trying either **Denes Arsenicum album 30c** drops or **Phosphorus 30c drops**. Either of these can easily be given by mouth and may help in solving problems with diarrhoea.

If you have any queries concerning your pet's health or feeding problems, you can contact us for free pet care advice by:

- Visiting our website www.denes.com
- Emailing us at info@denes.com
- Calling us on **01273 325364** Mon-Fri, 9am – 12Noon
- Writing to us at:
Denes Natural Pet Care Ltd
2 Osmond Road
Hove, East Sussex BN3 1TE