



FLY STRIKE INFORMATION SHEET

Fly strike can kill!

Fly strike is an unpleasant and distressing condition that usually occurs during the summer months. Fly strike can sometimes be successfully treated, but more often than not this condition is fatal, therefore prevention is better than cure! However once your rabbit has fly strike immediate veterinary attention is essential.

In the hot weather, flies may lay eggs around the rabbits' rear ends, these eggs then hatch into maggots, which feed on the rabbit. Dental disease and/or obesity can prevent the rabbit from grooming or eating its droppings effectively and so can lead to soiling which attracts the flies. Urinary incontinence and diarrhoea can also directly lead to fly strike. The maggots feed on the rabbit by burrowing into the skin and effectively eat the rabbits alive.

Effective hutch hygiene is the best defence and only a few simple steps can be carried out to prevent this awful condition.

1. **Examine your rabbit twice daily** for fly eggs that appear like miniature grains of rice clumped together. You should examine your rabbit, before it is put outside and again before it is put to bed, and look for evidence of the fur being wet or matted with faeces. These are the types of conditions that flies like to lay their eggs. A rabbit with diarrhoea is much more at risk, so a diet that contains high amounts of fibre, such as good quality hay or grass, supplemented with a high quality pellet food and small amounts of leafy greens is recommended.
Any wet fur should be thoroughly dried and any fur that is matted with faeces must be gently removed by washing the rabbit's back end. If there is any evidence of fly eggs or maggots then the rabbit **MUST be taken to a veterinary surgeon immediately.**
2. **Change soiled bedding every day.** Plenty of good quality absorbent bedding should be used in your rabbit's toilet area.
3. **Clean and disinfect the cage regularly.** All bedding material must be removed and disposed of once a week and the hutch disinfected and all thoroughly rinsed with a suitable disinfectant. All bowls and water bowls should also be thoroughly cleaned once a week.
4. **Apply Rearguard™ every 2 months to prevent fly strike.** Rearguard can be applied at home, or a nurse can apply the product for you in a nurses clinic. Please ask for more information.