

## **RVC Exotics Service**

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# SLUDGY BLADDER IN RABBITS

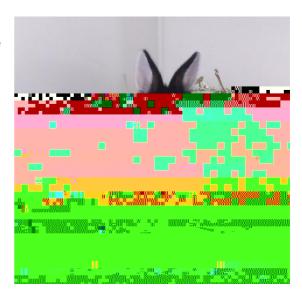
Sudgy bladder syndrome occurs when the normal calcium crystals in rabbit urine are retained in the bladder. This can lead to a build up of a gritty sediment which can irritate the lining of the bladder and lead to inflammation. This sludge reasons and is an indicator of an underlying problem.

# Causes

Any problems which lead to reduced movement in your rabbit can lead to this condition:

Lack of exercise

Being confined to a small hutch for most of the day Illness which makes them lethargic Musculoskeletal problems such as arthritis Obesity



# What signs to look for in your rabbit:

Painful or difficult urination
Thick, pasty beige-brown coloured urine could be mistaken for diarrhoea!
Increased urinary frequency
Urine staining of the back legs

Painful abdomen hunched posture

Non-specific signs can also include: dullness and weight loss.



Normal rabbit urine ranges in color from clear to doudy and yellow through to orange, red or brown depending on various factors including diet. This means that red urine may be normal and not necessarily a sign of blood present, so tests are required to rule this out.

# Investigations

An initial investigation would include

Taking X-rays under sedation or anaesthesia

Ultrasound of the urinary system

Obtaining a urine sample to check for bacteria and inflammation.

A blood sample to check that kidneys are working normally

### Treatment would include

**Fluid therapy** 

Pain relief

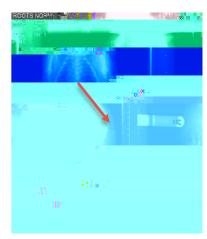
Bladder flushing

Antibiotics if secondary infection is present

Correct diet if needed

If urine scald is present, then dipping hair to help cleanse the skin an applying soothing topical creams may be undertaken.

Treating the underlying cause, e.g. weight loss, increased opportunity to exercise etc.



The bladder of this rabbit (red arrow) is greatly enlarged and filled with sludge.

#### Prevention

Avoid overfeeding your rabbit so that it does not become obese

Encourage/ allow your rabbit to move around and exercise

Prevent dehydration/poor water intake change and clean the water bottle, monitor intake, ensure bottles are the right height, provide a large heavy water bowl that cannot be knocked over and have multiple bottles/ bowls.

High calcium diets do not cause the problem but may make it worse so avoid alfalfa or lucerne hays which are high in calcium and make sure you feed a variety of lots of different vegetables rather than the same things on rotation all the time.

If you rabbit has the opportunity to move but is staying in the same spot this may be an indication it is unwell and veterinary advice should be sought.

