

## WILDSIDE VETERINARY HEALTH CENTER

### Handout: Ear Mites in Rabbits



Ear mites are a common parasitic issue that can affect rabbits. These tiny mites, known as *Psoroptes cuniculi*, reside in the ear canals and can lead to discomfort and various symptoms if left untreated.

#### **Mite Life Cycle:**

The 21-day life cycle is spent entirely on the animal, but mites can survive off the host for weeks in normal temperatures.

#### **Transmission:**

Ear mites are highly contagious and spread by direct contact with infected rabbits and fomites (especially bedding material).

If you have more than one rabbit or other pets in the house, all of them should be seen by a veterinarian and treated accordingly.

#### **Symptoms:**

- Head Shaking
- Scratching of the ears
- Secondary infection can occur, and the disease can spread to involve the middle and inner ears, leading to a head tilt and other vestibular signs.
- Ear Discharge: Mites can cause a dark, crusty discharge that looks like coffee grounds within the ear.
- Ears have a crusty appearance that extends to the ear canal, external ear and possibly face and neck if left untreated.

#### **Diagnosis:**

Mites can usually be seen during a regular physical exam performed by an experienced veterinarian. When very mild symptoms are present, it can be confirmed by checking a sample of the wax under the microscope.

#### **Treatment:**

If you suspect your rabbit has ear mites, it's crucial to consult a veterinarian experienced in rabbit care, like the doctors at Wildside Vet. We are able to accurately diagnose the condition and recommend a suitable treatment plan.

Treatment often involves topical or systemic anti-parasitic medications. In more severe cases pain medication and antibiotics may be needed.

Find us at: [www.wildsidevet.com](http://www.wildsidevet.com)

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Ear cleaning to remove crust and debris SHOULD not be performed prior to treatment, this is very painful to the animal and it may cause bleeding.

#### **Prognosis:**

With timely and appropriate treatment, ear mites in rabbits are generally treatable and have a good prognosis. It's crucial to follow the vet's instructions for the complete duration of treatment to ensure the mites are fully eradicated.

#### **Environmental cleaning;**

- Clean the environment thoroughly to remove all organic material, including loose hair and crusts that will harbor mites.
- Wash and sanitize toys, water bottles, food dishes, and any other accessories regularly to minimize the potential for mites or other parasites to linger on these items. If you are not able to sanitize an object, it must be discarded.
- Treat contaminated areas with flea products.
- Change the bedding frequently to prevent the accumulation of dirt, feces, or any potential mites that might have fallen off the rabbit.

Ear mites in rabbits are a manageable condition when addressed promptly. With the guidance of a veterinarian and consistent care, your rabbit can recover fully and lead a comfortable, mite-free life.

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