

WILDSIDE VETERINARY HEALTH CENTER

Handout: Bladder Sludge in Rabbits



Overview of Bladder Sludge

Bladder sludge, sometimes referred to as "urinary sludge," is a condition commonly seen in rabbits, where the urine becomes thickened and deposits of calcium salts form within the urinary tract. This substance, resembling chalk or fine sand in texture and appearing white to gray in color, can accumulate and cause discomfort and potential health complications for the rabbit.

Causes and Risk Factors

While the exact causes of bladder sludge in rabbits are not yet fully elucidated, several contributing factors have been identified:

- Dietary Factors: Although recent studies have shown that a diet high in digestible calcium alone is not the primary cause, it's essential to ensure that the rabbit's diet is balanced and not excessively rich in calcium.
- Hydration: Inadequate water intake can lead to concentrated urine, which may promote sludge formation.
- Physical Activity: A sedentary lifestyle may result in less frequent urination and contribute to sludge accumulation.
- Obesity: Overweight rabbits may be more prone to bladder sludge.
- Inadequate Toilet Habits: Improper litter box habits or the absence of a suitable toilet area can encourage sludge development.

Recognizing the Signs

Common indicators of bladder sludge in rabbits include:

- Frequent and often inappropriate urination.
- Straining during urination.
- Blood in the urine.
- Visible sludge particles in the urine and around the genital area.
- Irritation leading to urine scald.
- Reduced appetite and signs of lethargy or depression.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Diagnosing bladder sludge involves a thorough assessment, including history, physical examination, urinalysis, and often radiography (X-rays) to definitively confirm the presence of sludge in the urinary tract.

Treatment strategies are tailored to the individual case and may include:

- Catheterization and flushing of the bladder to remove sludge.
- Promoting diuresis (increased water intake).
- Administering fluids subcutaneously or intravenously to ensure hydration.

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- Dietary modifications, such as eliminating commercial foods high in calcium.
- Pain management.
- Use of specialized dietary supplements like Sherwood Urinary Tablets.
- Antibiotics if there's a risk of infection.
- Encouraging exercise to stimulate urination.
- Weight management if obesity is a contributing factor.

In conclusion, bladder sludge is a complex condition in rabbits influenced by various factors. Owners should be vigilant for signs and consult with our veterinarian for proper diagnosis and treatment, ensuring their rabbits receive the necessary care to alleviate discomfort and promote urinary health.

Let us know if you have any questions!

Sincerely,

Wildside Veterinary team

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