Rabbit health, illnesses and diseases; symptoms, causes and treatment

There are many diseases in rabbits that can be prevented by ensuring you have an understanding of what a healthy rabbit requires and ensuring you know the signs of a sick rabbit.

Rabbits can hide the signs of illness until they are very ill hence we encourage close observation of the rabbits, keep an up to date vaccination schedule and doing regular health checks. Over grown teeth is one of the diseases of rabbits and this causes pain to the rabbits and to the extreme can lead to death. The disease is prevented by feeding the rabbits 80 to 90% ordinary grass hay and is treated by a general anaesthetic and burying the teeth flat.

Other diseases

Cold: This is caused by a bacteria called Pasteurella and causes eye discharge, nasal discharge and sneezing. It can also affect the ears resulting into head tilt and abscesses. Prevention is by avoiding stress to the rabbits and quarantining newly introduced rabbits while treatment is by antibiotics and surgery incase of abscesses.

Hair balls: These can normally be found in a rabbit‘s stomach as it grows. Since rabbits can not vomit, the hair should be able to pass through the GIT and if it does not then it causes serious complications. Prevention is by feeding the rabbits with feed high in fibre while surgery is the most effective treatment.

Uterine tumour: This causes blood stained vaginal discharge, aggressive behaviour, memory gland cysts and lethargy. Prevention is by desexing the rabbits early at between 4 to 6

months while treatment is by desexing before the cancer spreads through the entire body.

Myxomatosis: This is caused by a virus and transmitted by mosquitoes, fleas and close contact between an infected and susceptible rabbit. The disease is recognized by swelling of the eyes, nose and vaginal regions.