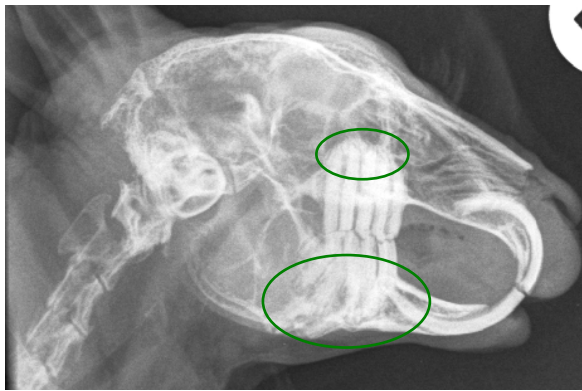


# Dental Problems in Rabbits

Tooth problems are one of the most common diseases encountered in domestic rabbits and they can cause pain and stress and in severe cases even lead to death. This is such a big problem because rabbit teeth will grow continually throughout their life, unlike human teeth, and so they need to be worn down constantly and properly.



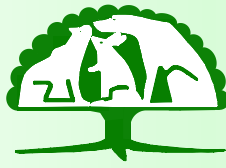
Xray showing overgrown teeth

## Signs of tooth problems in rabbits

- Reduced appetite
- Weight loss
- Change in food preferences
- Drooling
- Discharge from eyes
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced grooming
- Facial abscesses

## What causes dental problems in rabbits?

- Misalignment of teeth: especially round headed breeds like Lops and Netherland Dwarfs.
- Any events causing trauma (fractures of the teeth).
- Diet: this is one of the main factors in dental disease. A diet based on unlimited hay and greens and with reduced amounts of pellets (half an eggcup daily) will ensure a continuous use of their teeth as they will have to chew large quantities of both hay and vegetables to get their daily energy requirements. If your rabbit is eating large quantities of pellets he will quickly get all the energy he needs and won't need to eat much more for the rest of the day. This will lead to long teeth that aren't worn down properly and therefore to dental disease.
- Lack of sunlight: This is especially important in indoor rabbits. Sun light is essential for calcium metabolism and the lack of this will lead to weak tooth cavities and therefore teeth problems. Rabbits should have access to sunlight at least 2 hours every day.

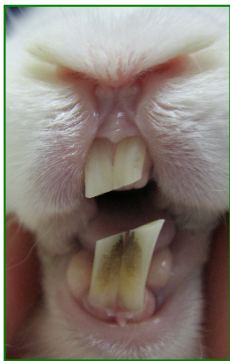


## Diagnosis of Dental Disease

- Regular examinations by a vet are very important as back teeth are very difficult to check without the appropriate tools. A general anaesthetic might be necessary for a better understanding of the problem.
- Xrays will show bone abnormalities and will allow your vet to assess the root of the tooth. This is especially important when dealing with tooth root abscesses.

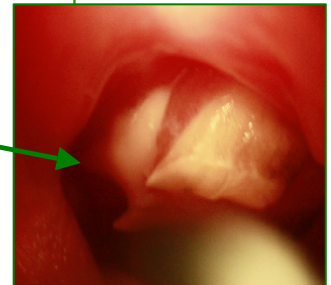


Bone destruction secondary to a tooth root abscess



## What can we do when there is dental disease?

- Incisors can be burred down and this doesn't usually require a general anaesthetic. Trying to do this at home could damage the tooth root causing pain.
- Cheek teeth can also be burred down when overgrown or when they have formed spurs. In this case it will always be done under a general anaesthetic.
- Incisors can be removed when necessary but removal of cheek teeth will only be considered in very severe cases.
- Tooth root abscesses can be treated but will usually require extraction of that tooth too.
- Tear ducts can be flushed and secondary infection can be treated, but it often reoccurs.



**Unfortunately rabbits with dental disease will often require frequent treatments.**