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COMMON ILLNESSES IN CHINCHILLAS

Disclaimer: If your chinchilla shows any signs of the symptoms listed, schedule an appointment with one of our exotic doctors as soon as possible. The veterinarian is the only person authorized to make a diagnosis and the appropriate measures have to be taken accordingly.

ENTERITIS (Intestinal infection)

Enteritis is a bacterial infection of the intestinal tract caused by poor husbandry and management. A couple common bacteria included are E. coli and Giardia. Diagnostics include fecal flotation tests, fecal smears, and cultures. Symptoms include inconsistent diarrhea, inappetence, partial paralysis, and painful abdomen.

Treatment options often involve antibiotics and supportive care. Enteritis can be very serious and be fatal even with treatment. Contact your veterinarian immediately if you suspect enteritis in your chinchilla.

PNEUMONIA (Respiratory infection)

Respiratory infection symptoms include discharge from eyes or nose and inappetence. Sometimes, their fur can feel a little rougher. Treatment is similar to enteritis with antibiotics and supportive care as they are both bacterial infections.

RINGWORM

Contrary to popular belief, ringworm is not actually a worm or parasite. Ringworm refers to a fungal infection of the skin. The fungus that typically causes ringworm is trichophyton. The main sign or symptom of ringworm include hair loss and dry, red patches on the nose, feet, and even around the eyes.

Work-up includes skin scrapes and cultures to get a confirmed diagnosis. Treatment consists of antifungals and ointments.

HEAT STROKE

Chinchillas do not do well in high humidity or hot temperatures. Their cages must be well ventilated and out of direct sunlight. If they suffer from heat stroke, they tend to lie on their side and pant. They can feel hot to the touch and their fur can become damp from the humidity.

GASTROINTESTINAL STASIS

GI stasis is a common condition in small animals where the rate that food moves through the intestines slow down. Although the cause is unknown, the contents of the internal organ dehydrate and compact into a stiff, immobile mass. This blocks the digestive tract and food gets built up and results in gas pain.

Acute onset of inappetence is a common sign of GI stasis. This condition can be fatal if not treated or if treated improperly.

MALOCCLUSION

Though this is not considered an illness, malocclusion is a condition where the molars overgrow and cause problems in the mouth. It's often referred to as "Slobbers" because it causes the animal to drool onto the fur under the chin. Pets who have malocclusion experience poor appetite, sores in the mouth, and loss of fur under the chin area as well.

Treatment involves a dental procedure by clipping the affected teeth and having proper mineral supplementation. Poor dental alignment and mineral imbalances lead to malocclusion.

BARBERING/FUR CHEWING

Chinchillas can sometimes not only chew on their own fur but another chinchilla's fur. This causes the fur to look rough when compared to a healthy coat. Chinchillas barber when they're bored, dirty, or have a dietary imbalance. Chew toys are a good, common relief for chinchillas that barber.