

Encephalitozoon cuniculi

E. cuniculi is a widespread problem in the UK rabbit population, and can cause serious problems in some infected rabbits.

What is it?

E. cuniculi is a parasite that lives inside the cells of your rabbit- it can affect many different species

How does my rabbit get infected?

It is most likely rabbits become infected at an early age via eating food contaminated with infected urine carrying the infective spores. 4 weeks after infection, a rabbit will begin to shed spores in its urine. Spores are tough, and can persist for up to a month in the environment.

Why is it a problem?

Once inside the body, the parasite is transported from the intestines to other organs, especially the kidneys and the brain. The parasite causes lesions in these organs called "granulomas"

Most rabbits live happily with these lesions, but it is now apparent a small number of rabbits suffer significant problems from these lesions.

What problems can be caused?

Kidney granulomas don't generally cause a problem, but lesions in the brain can cause:

- loss of balance
- urinary incontinence
- tremors
- fits
- head tilt
- coma
- hind limb weakness

It can be difficult to diagnose if any of these problems are due to *E. cuniculi* or another problem.

How do I know if my rabbit is infected?

There is a blood test available which can tell if your rabbit has been infected.

Is there any treatment?

Fenbendazole in Panacur Rabbit has been proven to control infection. However, although the parasite may be killed, the problem may not get any better due to the problems already caused by the granuloma formation in the brain.

Can I prevent it?

Panacur Rabbit can prevent infection by *E. cuniculi*, and can kill the parasite in infected rabbits. If it is given before your bunny shows any problems, the risk from *E. cuniculi* can be drastically reduced by treating them regularly. The wormer is given into the mouth once a day for 9 consecutive days twice a year. It comes in a handy to use syringe and is easy to give.

DON'T LET YOUR BUNNY BECOME AFFECTED BY THIS DIFFICULT TO TREAT PROBLEM. WORM THEM REGULARLY TO KEEP THEM HAPPY AND HEALTHY!