



Myxomatosis Virus

What is Myxomatosis?

Myxo is a viral infection in rabbits caused by a member of the Poxvirus family. It is deadly to rabbits: the mortality rate has been reported at 99%. It is spread by vectors (mosquitoes and fleas) that have bitten an infected rabbit. Direct contact with an infected rabbit can also spread the disease.

The myxo virus was introduced into Australia in 1950 to reduce the population of wild rabbits. It got out of control and affected domestic rabbits and spread into other countries. Millions of rabbits have died from it. In Australia there have been hundreds of reported cases over the last few years.

How is Myxo diagnosed?

Myxo is diagnosis by observing the symptoms and biopsies of the lesions. In many cases the diagnosis is made post-mortem, because of the sudden death.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include swelling of the ears, nose, mouth and genitals, conjunctivitis, not eating, lethargy, loss of appetite, fever and lesions.

What do I do if I suspect my rabbit has Myxo?

Call your rabbit vet straight away and quarantine your rabbit from all other rabbits.

What is the treatment?

Currently there is no effective treatment for Myxo in Australia. Most rabbits die of hemorrhage and or seizures within 10 days. Pain medication and sub-q fluids will make a rabbit more comfortable.

There are vaccines in other countries, but the strains of Myxo can be different therefore a vaccine that works in one area may not in another. We are still looking into this for further information.

How do I protect my rabbits?

- Keep your rabbits indoors at all times.
- Make sure you have screens on all windows or doors that are left open.
- If you have cats or dogs keep them on flea control. The parasite control for mites, which is Revolution, will not protect rabbits from Myxo.
- Eliminate standing water (where mosquitoes might breed) in your yard.
- Avoid going to pet shops, rabbit shows, county fairs and swap meets.