

Dental Problems

Information for the Rabbit Owner

Origin

Rabbits and certain other small mammals have teeth that continuously grow. When the alignment of the top and bottom teeth are not correct (called malocclusion), the teeth overgrow.

In many cases, the molars are the teeth that are first affected. Since these teeth are located inside the mouth, many owners do not notice the overgrowth. As the molars become longer, the normal structure at the front of the mouth is changed. This change causes the incisor teeth to no longer meet and overgrow.

So when the owner notices overgrown incisors, invariably there are more severe problems with the molars.

Symptoms

The pet may not eat well or have food fall out of their mouth. You may also notice overgrown incisors.

Prevention

The best way to treat this problem is to prevent it. We recommend that starting at 3 years of age, your pet is anesthetized and x-rays of the molars be done. If the molars are overgrown, they should be filed down under the same anesthesia.

By keeping the molars at a normal length, we hope to minimize changes to the mouth structure so the other teeth do not overgrow.

Treatment

If the teeth are overgrown, both the incisors and molars should be filed down to a normal size. In many cases, this will not totally restore normal anatomy and periodic rechecks are required.

In some cases, using scissors to clip down the incisors can be done. ***It must be stressed however that this is a very temporary solution and does not address the underlying problem.*** The advantages are that's it's easy to do on an outpatient basis.

Removal of the entire incisor teeth can be done. Due to the structure of the incisors, regrowth may occur. This is a painful procedure and should be done only as a last resort.



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