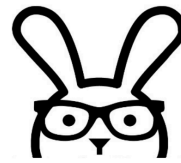


Sore Hocks in Rabbits

Sore hocks are a common condition seen in pet rabbits. There are many factors that can contribute to its development and understanding these factors can help prevent them from forming.



What are sore hocks?

Sore hocks is the common term for a condition called Pododermatitis. Pododermatitis refers to inflammation of the skin on the feet which in rabbits is essentially due to pressure sores.

Why do they develop?

Rabbits do not have foot pads or “toe beans” on their feet. This means the only protection of the skin on a bunny’s feet from pressure sores is a layer of hair, which is quite thin in some regions. Rabbits also always keep their nails out in a “gripping” position.

The above features are designed perfectly for the natural environment of a rabbit; fields. They can move through grass quietly, not leaving too much ground disturbance for a predator to follow.

If you take your shoes off and walk barefoot on grass you will notice your foot is constantly moving around to balance you. This is because the ground is uneven meaning you put pressure on different parts of your foot. When inside on wood, tiles or carpet your foot will not be doing the same movements as the ground is usually level.

Being on a level floor (even if it is carpet) means the pressure is staying in one area of the foot of the rabbit at all times. Over time this will create pressure sores (aka sore hocks).

What predisposes rabbits to sore hocks?

The following conditions predispose rabbits to developing pododermatitis:

- Even, firm surfaces (e.g. carpet, tiles, wood, concrete, firm dirt)
- Obesity
- Long nails
- Underlying disease

What to do if my bunny has sore hocks?

Treatment of sore hocks depends on how bad they are and the underlying cause. If the pododermatitis is low grade, changes may be recommended to try and prevent them from getting worse.

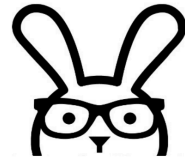
If they show a moderate level of disease then a barrier cream may be recommended. This is to prevent the skin breaking down from inflammation and bacteria getting into the joint.

K-Laser therapy can also be very beneficial in reducing inflammation.

If the pododermatitis is severe then imaging may be recommended to see the extent of damage as well as surgical treatment.

How can I prevent my bunny getting sore hocks?

Sore hocks can be prevented by understanding what causes them.



@bunny_vet_nz

1. Making sure your bunny is a healthy weight means they are not putting excessive pressure on their skin.
2. Keeping their nails at a shorter length means the pressure on the foot is kept more towards the part with fur on it.
3. Making sure the surface they are on is compressible and has some degree of unevenness. The following surfaces are ideal:
 - Lawn
 - Thick layer of barley straw
 - Memory foam mats
 - Jute mats
 - Thick, shag pile rugs
 - Rag rugs (from spotlight)

If you notice your bunny is not walking properly, or you notice redness on their feet or they are wet or dirty around their feet it is recommended to get them checked out by a vet. Early discovery of pododermatitis can prevent severe disease occurring later in life.