



Exotic Animal Hospital of Philadelphia

RABBIT, CHINCHILLA & GUINEA PIG GASTROINTESTINAL (GI) SYNDROME (AKA GI STASIS / ILEUS)

WHAT IS GI SYNDROME?

Rabbits, guinea pigs and chinchillas have a specialized gut with special bacteria that allows them to eat very fibrous food like hay and grass. Rabbits and chinchillas need to be eating and defecating all the time to ensure that this special gut is always moving.

If your rabbit, guinea pig or chinchilla has stopped eating/drinking or passing normal stool for a period of 8 hours or more this means that the gut has slowed down and ileus should be suspected. This will cause the lack of fecal production.

When the gut is not moving, the special bacteria that usually break down the hay and grass can produce a lot of gas. This can cause your pet to feel distended and gassy. This is painful and can make your pet not want to eat.

WHAT CAN CAUSE GI SYNDROME?

Literally, anything can cause your rabbit/chinchilla/guinea pig's gut to stop working. This is usually a multifactorial problem that can include: stress, illness, cancer, pain, teeth problems, inappropriate foods (too much sugar, not enough fiber).

CLINICAL SIGNS OF GI SYNDROME

Signs include a decreased appetite, a complete loss of appetite, painful belly, bloated belly, lethargy, hiding, not drinking, decreased urine production, decreased fecal production, production of small or dry feces and diarrhea.

If you notice any of these signs in your rabbit or chinchilla this is an **EMERGENCY** and you should contact your veterinarian immediately.

DIAGNOSIS OF THE PRIMARY CAUSE TO GI SYNDROME

Many times ileus will be diagnosed based on history, clinical signs and physical examination findings. Your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical examination to feel the belly and look in the mouth for signs of dental disease.

Radiographs (XRAYs) will be necessary to give the veterinarian an idea of how the gut looks and to assess the amount of gas, food and feces that are in the gut.

Radiographs or a CT of the skull may also be necessary to look at the teeth.

Bloodwork will be necessary to assess the kidneys, liver, proteins, red and white blood cells to look for any underlying disease and to assess organ function.

TREATMENT OF GI SYNDROME

Your veterinarian may recommend that your pet be hospitalized for treatment or they may recommend treatments for you to do at home. Your pet will be given fluids to prevent dehydration, syringe feeding of a special diet (**Herbivore Critical Care- Oxbow**) and pain medications.

Treatment of ileus usually takes days to weeks depending on its severity and any underlying disease. Your animal will not be ready for general anesthesia to treat dental disease or other issues until it is more stable (better hydrated, gut less gassy and less painful).

It is important to be patient and follow all of the veterinarian's recommendations.

