

Wry Neck in it's various forms is more common in winter months as a result of more weather related stress, dehydration and various types of respiratory infections. It is not clear how the rabbit acquires the spores but we know they must be ingested. I have always suspected that the spores are dormant in hay or feed since they are ground crops subject to contamination from rodents, birds, cats, dogs, foxes, etc. I quite frankly suspect all rabbits are carriers of the spores but only when the immune system is compromised does the animal show symptoms. I am certain that it is always secondary to some other debilitating condition. Lack of adequate water supply for as little as 12 hours can and does trigger the onset. We see symptoms typically one week after the water deprivation. It does not seem to be contagious in the same way that respiratory infections are but the spores that are shed in the urine can remain viable for months outside the body. Cleaning the cage with 10% bleach solution is necessary to kill the spores. Removing any nesting material, resting boards etc. is also important. We rarely see more than one kit in a litter with the symptoms although all are no doubt carriers as the spores can be spread transplacentally from the Mother. Keeping nest boxes free of urine soaked material is also critical. Treatment is successful in varying degrees. We have had about a 75% success ratio for complete recovery. Another 10% remain somewhat tilted but otherwise live a normal life. About 5% will give up and die with or without treatment. The other 10% are left more severely compromised and some are then euthanized due to recurrent eye infections or uncontrollable rolling which threatens fractures. Recognizing the symptoms early is the key to treatment. I encourage everyone to look at the list of symptoms and become aware of what to look for BEFORE YOU NEED IT.