

Myiasis (commonly known as 'flystrike')

What is flystrike?

Flystrike is a condition where flies lay eggs on an animal which then hatch and develop into maggots. These can eat into the animal's flesh and cause severe damage within a very short time.

Which animals can be affected by fly strike?

All species of animals are at risk of it but this condition most commonly affects **rabbits or guinea pigs**.

How dangerous is fly strike?

Flystrike is fatal if left untreated and will cause considerable suffering to a pet of any species.

Sadly as many as 50% of rabbits presented in veterinary practice are euthanased or die from this problem. It is a condition that needs to be prevented wherever possible and, if found, treated immediately

Which animals are most at risk?

Animals with dirty or soiled back ends or open wounds are most at risk from flystrike.

Rabbits which are most at risk are: -

- those with soiled urine or faeces around the back end (usually a sign of other diseases or inappropriate diet)
- those with open wounds or healing wounds
- elderly pets unable to move or groom as much due to arthritis
- overweight pets unable to clean themselves well enough
- longhaired animals as hair often becomes soiled and wounds are more easily missed
- pets living outside in hutches - they are also often not checked as frequently as indoor pets
- pets living in soiled hutches/cages which have not been cleaned regularly enough

Also, any other unwell or poorly animal who is not able to perform normal behaviour such as moving away from urine/faeces or for example those being syringe fed if not kept clean during this

When does flystrike occur?

Hot summer months increase the chances of fly strike occurrences.

What action should you take if you suspect your pet has been 'fly struck'?

If you think you can see either fly eggs or maggots on your pet, ring your vet immediately to make an appointment. Fly eggs have the appearance of tiny grains of rice. Gently pick off all maggots or eggs you can see straight away.

How is flystrike treated?

Treatment depends on the severity but often involves pain relief, anti parasite treatment, clipping fur, flushing and cleaning any wounds present and antibiotics. In many cases gut stimulants and syringe feeding will be necessary as the rabbit/guinea pig will be too unwell to want to eat.

How can you reduce the risk of fly strike?

- regular use of an antiparasite treatment (such as Rearguard) in the warmer months
- ensuring cages/hutches are cleaned regularly
- spot checking your pet's back end daily
- keeping the elderly, overweight or unwell pets clean and dry
- covering open wounds if possible, if not ensuring these are cleaned twice daily and are receiving veterinary treatment accordingly
- using netting around outside hutches to reduce flies if possible