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A Case Report on Ear Canker in a Rabbit

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Abstract

An 18 months old New Zealand White rabbit weighing around 2.25kg was brought to the Avian and Exotic Pet Unit, Madras Veterinary College with a history of alopecia and scratch wounds at ears, lips, nose, head and neck region. Skin scraping collected from the lesion was examined under microscope under both low and high power objectives and was found positive for Sarcoptes spp. The rabbit was treated with the Ivermectin @ dose rate of 0.4 mg per kg body weight S/C and was advised to continue the medication for two months period, at weekly interval. In addition, lotion benzyl benzoate was applied topically every 5th day. After 30 days, the rabbit gradually recovered from the clinical condition.

Key words: Ear canker – Rabbit - Sarcoptes spp.

Scabies is relatively common in domestic rabbits, usual etiological agent being Sarcoptes scabiei. It may also spread from other domestic animals. It is extremely contagious and has zoonotic importance. It is characterized by pruritus, alopecia and in prolonged illness, the rabbit become emaciated and may even die. Sarcoptes scabiei is a deep burrowing mite, causes intense itching, pruritus, pyoderma, crust formation, thickening and wrinkling on skin of affected region (Mitra et al., 2014).

Case History and Observations

An 18 months old New Zealand White rabbit was brought to the Avian and Exotic Pet Unit, Madras Veterinary College with a history of alopecia and scratch wounds at ears, lips, nose, head and neck region. The owner reported that rabbit had reduced appetite. It was fed with cauliflower leaves, cabbage, greens, carrot and fruits.

On clinical examination the rabbit was found to be restless, with itching and crust formation on the ears, lips, nose and feet along with alopecia (Fig. 1). It was weak and had ruffled body coat. It had pruritus, self-mutilation, thickening of ear pinna, scratch wounds mainly on ears, excessive scab formation on ears and shaking of the head noticed.

On microscopic examination of skin scrapings, it was found positive for Sarcoptes spp. (Fig. 2) mite along with their different developmental stages and eggs. Based on the history and the laboratory examination the case was diagnosed to be Sarcoptesscabiei.

Treatment and Discussion

The affected rabbit was treated with Inj. Ivermectin at the dose rate of 0.4 mg/Kg. Bd.wt. subcutaneously at weekly interval for two months period. Inj. Tribivet (B complex vitamins) at the dose rate of 0.1 ml/Kg. Bd.wt. intramuscularly for 3 days and Tab. Chlorpheniramine maleate at the dose rate of 0.4 mg/Kg. Bd.wt. per orally, BID for 3 days were given and advised to apply Lotion benzyl benzoate topically every 5th day for 45 days. After 30 days, the rabbit gradually recovered from clinical condition and complete recovery seen after 2 months.

The owner was also advised on proper management measures such as maintenance of hygienic environment surrounding the rabbit cage, disinfection of the rabbit cage.

Mitra et al. (2014) reported that the affected rabbits were treated with subcutaneous injection of Ivermectin at the dose rate of 400 μg/kg body weight once weekly for 4 weeks. Disinfection of the rabbit cages with a blow lamp once weekly for 4 weeks to control mites.

In rabbits, sarcoptic mange often presents as an intense nonseasonal pruritus

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that responds poorly to corticosteroids. Sarcoptic mange lesions include papules, alopecia, erythema, and crusts. Treat with ivermectin at 0.2 to 0.4 mg/kg subcutaneously every 10 to 14 days for 3 treatments (Hoppmann and Barron, 2007).

Richardson (2000) suggested that the lesions caused by mites can be painted with 10% benzyl benzoate every 5 days.

**Summary**

Scabies occurs mainly due to the improper management and lack of hygiene in rabbits. The common etiology will be *Sarcoptes scabiei* mite and ivermectin is the drug of choice for the scabies.

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