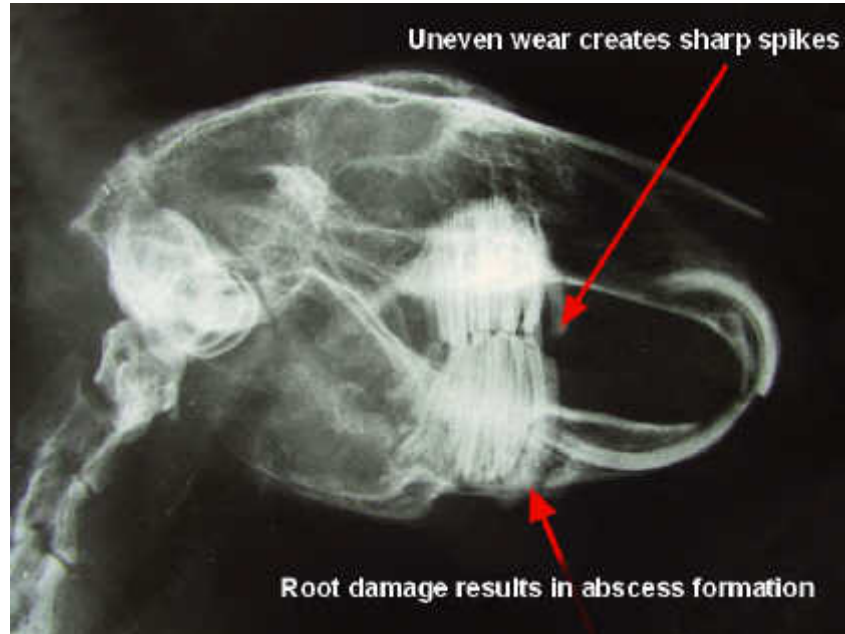




## Dental Disease in Pet Rabbits



As the numbers of pet rabbits continues to rise the recognition of their health requirements follows suit. At Fairfield, it certainly helps to have a dedicated rabbit veterinary surgeon as one of our most recent acquisitions. Agnieszka has only been with us for a few short months but already her expertise is paying dividends.

Dental disease in pet rabbits is an extremely common and incredibly frustrating condition. Just as in horses, rabbits' teeth continue to grow throughout their life. In order for them to remain healthy they need to grind evenly with their adjacent teeth.

Suboptimal skull conformation and a diet which is low in fibre result in uneven wear and the formation of spikes which in turn causes ulceration of the mouth and tongue. Treatment of affected patients invariably involves a general anaesthetic in order to properly access the cheek teeth. Previously this has always been considered a very high risk procedure but with modern drug dosage regimes and supportive treatments such as fluids and the use of incubators these risks have been reduced dramatically, although not entirely. The effort involved in delivering success is considerable.

The severity of dental disease in some patients means that they will require repeated teeth burring throughout their lives. One key point in the longterm survival of these patients is to reintroduce a diet which is high in fibre to encourage the grinding action of the teeth through prolonged periods of chewing.

The best diet for a rabbit is in fact grass and hay. Pellets which are high in fibre (18-24%) are also suitable!

Commercial mixes (grains,pulses and biscuits) should be avoided as they allow selective feeding.....they pick out the tasty pieces and leave the bits that are good for them! It would appear that unhealthy feeding patterns are not exclusive to humans says one who hails from the city of the deep fried Mars!

Terry Dunne BVMS, Cert SAO, MRCVS

This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at [www.fairfield-vets.co.uk](http://www.fairfield-vets.co.uk)

***You won't care how much we know - until you know how much we care***