

Chinchilla Loses Fur Around Eyes

Why would a chinchilla lose fur around its eyes?

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Q: I have two chinchillas that I rescued last week. They are a male and female black velvet that are 2 years old, according to the previous owner. The female, I believe (she is larger), has begun to shed hair from around her eyes. They are dry and slightly pink. The actual eye itself is clear and there isn't any sign of running from the eyes. She is more shy than the other chinchilla, but she does let me pet her. They have a new cage with plenty of room, including several perches, hay, their dust bath, water, pellets, treats, chew toys, etc. Should I take this chinchilla to a veterinarian for this or not?

A: I would first contact the rescue organization. The people there may have a veterinarian they work with that has been treating these chinchillas or has treated other chinchillas from this rescue and is familiar with this problem.

The question is, what is this problem? Infection, such as conjunctivitis, can cause what you are describing. This could spread easily in a rescue or colony environment. The tearing that occurs with conjunctivitis cause the chinchilla to clean itself and then the hair around the eyes falls out as the chinchilla is grooming. If this is a bacterial conjunctivitis, treatment may involve applying antibacterial eye drops for a short while in both eyes. The problem must be diagnosed before it can be treated.

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