

Chinchilla Suffering Weight Loss Has Odd Odor

Why would a chinchilla eat less and have stinky, matted fur beneath its chin?

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Q: My chinchilla (age 3) is losing weight and has a weird odor from beneath its chin, which also has matted fur. He drinks and eats a bit, but isn't getting fully hydrated like his son (age 2). I have five chinchillas. They all have been healthy until last night, and I am worried about only one that is sick. I may have to take him to the vet but would like to do home remedy first, if possible.

A: There may not be much you can do for your chinchilla at home. Based on what you describe, there is likely an infection beneath the chin. This infection may be superficial, involving only the skin, or it could be an abscess that is deeper, involving the inside of the mouth or tooth roots.

Chinchillas, like rabbits, are prone to dental disease. When a certain type of dental disease progresses, the chinchilla may start drooling. Drool can cause inflammation and infection of the skin on the chin area. The hair in that area can become matted. Also, if the tooth root along the lower jaw becomes infected, this causes the hair to be matted if the abscess from the infection breaks through the bone through the skin.

In any case, use warm water to wash the chin area and break up the matted fur. This will make your chinchilla feel better. But if your chinchilla protests as you do this, stop! Let your veterinarian clean up the chin area. Chinchillas can be injured if they struggle while they are being held, so it's best to allow your veterinarian and his or her employees clean off your pet's chin area.

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