

Chinchilla Drooling Excessively

Drooling could be a sign of dental disease in chinchillas.

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Q: We got our chinchilla, Mr. Jangles, about 5 years ago. A problem started about 7 months ago when Mr. Jangles began drooling excessively. We dust him two to three times a week and keep his cage clean. He is always wet under his chin area and it sometimes extends to his stomach. We began dusting him more frequently and have even left his dust in his cage for longer times in an attempt to help him clean himself. He is litter trained, but began using his dust as litter. I guess that was not such a great idea.

He's eating less and is not chewing on things like he normally would. He won't eat yogurt or dandelion treats. We took him to a local vet, who does treat chinchillas, and she suggested having his lower teeth shortened, which we did. The problem has not gone away. I also spoke with a local pet store owner about the issue who suggested that I begin using kitten formula to soak his food in to give him more nutrients and soften his food. He does eat a little better, but continues not to chew and continues to have the drooling problem. He is also very thin and small for his age.

A: Given the age of your chinchilla and the condition you describe, it is likely the veterinarian you saw had the correct diagnosis. That diagnosis being dental disease. The most common signs of dental disease in a chinchilla are drooling, wetness under the chin, a failure to eat normal foods, not wanting to chew and weight loss. There are other conditions that can do this and a general checkup along with a blood panel to review the liver and kidney values is very helpful to make sure there is nothing else wrong with your chinchilla.

It sounds like your local veterinarian did exactly what she should do, shorten the teeth that were causing the obvious problem. But since your chinchilla has not responded appropriately, that tells me that there is more dental work that is necessary. In fact, the dental problem may not be so obvious to your doctor. That is why the doctor will likely suggest radiographs (X-rays) of the mouth to see if there is more going on than meets the eye. There could be other teeth that are now bothering your chinchilla or, sadly, there may be an infection in a tooth root that will not be apparent until your doctor takes radiographs of the mouth. This is a common condition in chinchillas, and it sounds like your local doctor was right on with the diagnosis. I would definitely recommend returning to your doctor to continue with treatment of your chinchilla.

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