

Can Medical Conditions Or Medications Be Harmful To A Rabbit Pregnancy?

A rabbit with a history of E. cuniculi may have mated with a female.

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Q: We recently fostered a mother bunny and her six babies. We took them to the vet and all had signs of E. cuniculi. They were treated with a 30 day course of Panicur. All but one baby responded favorably to the treatment and are, to date, asymptomatic. Four babies have since been adopted but we're keeping the mother and two of her offspring (a male and a female), all of whom have been separated until their respective spay/neuter surgeries can be performed.

The male we are keeping did not fully recover from his E. cuniculi symptoms and went on to develop seizures (for which he is currently undergoing treatment). Due to the severity of his neurological issues, he cannot yet be neutered.

About two weeks ago, we came home to find this 5-month-old little guy in his mother's enclosure. We're not sure how he ended up there as both enclosures were solidly locked. Mommy bunny isn't scheduled for her spay until next Thursday, and today she started pulling out her fur and alternately carrying it and mouthfuls of hay into her wooden playhouse to start a nest. Given the amount of medication the baby male is on (1.2ml of Phenobarbital twice per day and .25ml of Metacam twice per day), we're not sure if he is capable of impregnating a female.

Is there a way to tell the difference between a false pregnancy and a real one? If this is a real pregnancy, are the babies at risk because of the aforementioned medications and, if so, what are the possible complications? Given the medical history on our little sperm donor, would it be best to terminate the pregnancy to be safe?

If you have any other thoughts or suggestions, we would greatly appreciate them. We'll be broaching the subject with our own veterinarian as soon as we can.

A: Depending on where your rabbit is in her pregnancy, you may be able to see skeletons of the babies on radiographs. Also, your doctor may be able to feel the babies with very gentle palpation. Terminating the pregnancy is up to you. The medications the male is on should not affect the babies but no one can say for certain. If you want to terminate the pregnancy with a spay, that is a viable option since she was set to be spayed anyway. That should not endanger her health. But I would be more concerned with inbreeding problems because he was bred with his mom. That would worry me more than the medications your little Romeo was taking.