

Edinburgh rabbit owners warned of disease

August 8 2007

Pet rabbit owners in Edinburgh, Scotland, have been warned they are at risk of contracting a deadly virus during this warm, wet summer.

The weather has led to an increase in the fleas that spread myxomatosis. Veterinarians say there are more wild rabbits around the capital now, creating a reservoir of infection.

"Basically, the disease doesn't always kill wild rabbits now and they can carry it for some time," Dr. Donald McTaggart told The Scotsman. "So when a flea bites it and gets the blood in it, then later bites a domestic pet -- which is defenseless against it -- the pet rabbit dies."

McTaggart urged rabbit owners to get their pets vaccinated against the disease. He described the symptoms as horrible and said the disease often has a long incubation period, showing up weeks after a bite from a flea carrying the disease.

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