Anorexia in the Rabbit

**Medical History**
- Signalment
- Presenting clinical signs
- Progression / systems affected
- Date when last normal
- Medical & surgical history
- Response to any previous therapy

**Environmental History**
- Complete diet history, including recent changes
- Potential toxin exposure
- Exposure to other pets / illness in companions
- History of social structure, especially recent changes
- Changes in environment, including bedding, toys, visitors, disruptions

**Complete Physical Examination**

**Abdominal**
- Pain upon palpation
- Presence of masses, excessive fluid, food, and/or gas*

**Cardiovascular**
- Murmur, arrhythmia, rate

**Dermatologic**
- Hair loss, generalized or under eyes or chin, suggesting epiphora or ptyalism
- Evidence of ectoparasites
- Pododermatitis

**Ears/Ear Canal/Eyes**
- Palpate base of ears
- Evaluate lens/anterior chamber
- Note evidence of exophthalmia or epiphora

**Gastrointestinal**
- Willingness to eat
- Amount/character of stool*

**Mentation**
- General activity level
- Interest in environment*

**Musculoskeletal**
- Reluctance to move
- Lameness/discomfort
- Swelling

**Neurologic**
- Central and/or peripheral nerve deficit

**Oral Cavity**
- Examine incisors
- Perform cursory otoscopic examination of oral cavity
- Palpate jaw

**Respiratory**
- Increased rate of effort
- Auscultation
- Evidence of nasal discharge*

**Urogenital**
- Pain upon palpation of the bladder
- Character of urine

* Repeat these examinations every 3 to 4 hours while anorexia persists in the hospitalized patient

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**Did history or physical examination reveal evidence of disease in a specific body system or suggest environmental stress as a potential cause of anorexia?**

- **Yes**
  - **Diagnostic tests specific to body system:**
    - **Oral cavity**: Complete evaluation of oral cavity in anesthetized patient
    - **Abdominal**: Radiography
    - **Musculoskeletal**: Radiography of spine & limbs
    - **Eyes (exophthalmos)**: Radiography

- **No**

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**Did diagnostic tests reveal evidence of specific disease?**

- **Yes**
  - **Initiate treatment for disease**
  - **Conduct further diagnostic testing specific to body system**

- **No**

If environmental stress is suspected, send patient home, have owner hand-feed, & allow 48 hours for adjustment

Repeat physical examination

Did repeat physical examination reveal evidence of disease in a specific body system?

No

Consider additional diagnostic tests:
- Infectious disease titers (Encephalitozoon cuniculi)
- Echocardiography (murmur, arrhythmia)

Did additional tests reveal evidence of disease in a specific body system?

No

Repeat physical examination & review patient history

Did repeat history & physical examination reveal evidence of disease in a specific body system?

No

Therapy options:
- Consider therapeutic trial
- Begin hand-feeding high-fiber liquid diet
- Administer intravenous fluids to dehydrated patients
- Administer subcutaneous fluids to nonclinically dehydrated patients to help rehydrate gastrointestinal tract
- Send noncritically ill patients home with instructions on how to hand-feed
- Consider analgesia if there is indication of discomfort (eg, ileus)
- Consider motility-enhancing drugs

This algorithm can be downloaded and printed for use in your clinic at cliniciansbrief.com.