



The article from Rabbiting On magazine in the case study folder gives an overview of the rabbit digestive system to help you think about this case. It is also available from:

<https://rabbitwelfare.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/article-ROWinter10p7.pdf>.

- You are working in a busy small animal practice and are presented with **Sybil, a 1.5 year old FN French Cross rabbit**
- Sybil lives with another FN rabbit that she is very friendly with. They live in the house all the time and are kept together in a large indoor cage when the owner is not home, but allowed out in the evenings once or twice a week when the owner is home. They are litter trained.
- Sybil and her companion are fed a commercial 'muesli' type rabbit food *ad lib* and some vegetables including carrots, a variety of greens, and they also like apples. They have water from a sipper bottle at all times. The owner doesn't like feeding hay as it's very messy, but they do get a handful every other day.
- Sybil's owner has noticed Sybil has been quieter than normal for a few days and her appetite is very reduced, and she hasn't passed any droppings (faeces) for two days. Prior to that Sybil's droppings have been getting smaller and fewer in number for a week.
- You decide to admit Sybil to the hospital for investigations and treatment



### Question 1

At home Sybil is very relaxed and tame with her owner. What effect would a trip to the vet clinic have on Sybil and why?

### Question 2

What can you and your practice team do to make Sybil's



- a) visit to the clinic and
- b) stay in the hospital as **stress-free** as possible - a rabbit -friendly clinic?

Think about all the advice and actions you can take from the time the owner calls to make an appointment to discharge back home.

On clinical examination you observe the following

- Overweight (body condition score 4/5) – 3.2kg
- Dehydrated (skin tenting, sunken eyes)
- No gut sounds on auscultation of the abdomen
- Tense painful abdomen

You diagnose gut stasis



### Question 3

In addition to assessing the abdomen and gastrointestinal tract in your examination, what part of Sybil would you want to examine closely and why?

#### Question 4

What do you think are the key elements of supportive treatment for Sybil?

#### Question 5

What advice would you give to the owner about Sybil's diet?

#### Question 6

What else could Sybil's owner do at home to prevent this happening again?

### Case Study – Gippsland Water Dragon

You are working in a small animal practice and are presented with a female entire 2 year old Gippsland Water Dragon, which was purchased at 2 months of age from a pet store.



Before you call the owner in, think about the types of questions you will ask the owner about Dragon, her diet, and her enclosure.

Dragon's husbandry conditions at home are:

- Enclosure: 90cm square glass tank. Kitty litter substrate and tree branches in the cage. Large water dish with log across
- Thermostat set to 32°C, 100W heat lamp one end.
- Lighting provided via a fluorescent tube 12 hours a day.
- UV bulb in the tank beside the heat bulb. Globe only replaced once (2 months ago) since purchasing the dragon two years ago.

- Diet: Crickets, mealworms and carrots.
- Supplements: Calcium powder supplement fortnightly.

Dragon has been presented for a progressive weakness of the right front leg first noticed 1 week ago. There is no history of trauma, but Dragon is allowed out of her cage to roam for an hour a day in the house.

On examination of the right forelimb, there is marked swelling over the humerus with reduced muscle mass and tone. The limb intermittently drags behind when she walks.

List and discuss 3 possible causes for leg weakness.

What will you focus on in your physical exam?

Area Examined	Findings
Eyes	Bright and Clear
Oral cavity	Nothing abnormal detected (NAD)
Tympanic membranes	Intact. NAD
Dermis	NAD
Abdominal Palpation	NAD
Musculoskeletal	Ambulating. Not raising thorax and abdomen off the ground fully. Right forelimb: swelling over humerus, dropped shoulder, reduced muscle mass and tone. Intermittently dragging limb behind.
Neurological	Conscious control of all limbs. Reduced withdrawal in right forelimb
Body Condition	Within Normal Limits
Mentation	Bright Alert Responsive

Create a problem list of what is wrong physically.

Create another list identifying problems with how Dragon is kept.

For the physical problems, what are your differential diagnoses?

Is there any more information you need?

You radiograph Dragon and these are the resulting images:



Dragon right femur



Dragon whole body



Normal water dragon whole body

Can you see 2 abnormalities on Dragon's radiographs?

What treatment options can you give the owner?

What are the major welfare considerations in this case?

How will you determine what level of treatment the owner can commit to?



What advice would you give the owner for husbandry changes?

How will you determine the format in which to present the advice?

How will you assess whether it is understood?

What will you plan to monitor the implementation of the advice?

