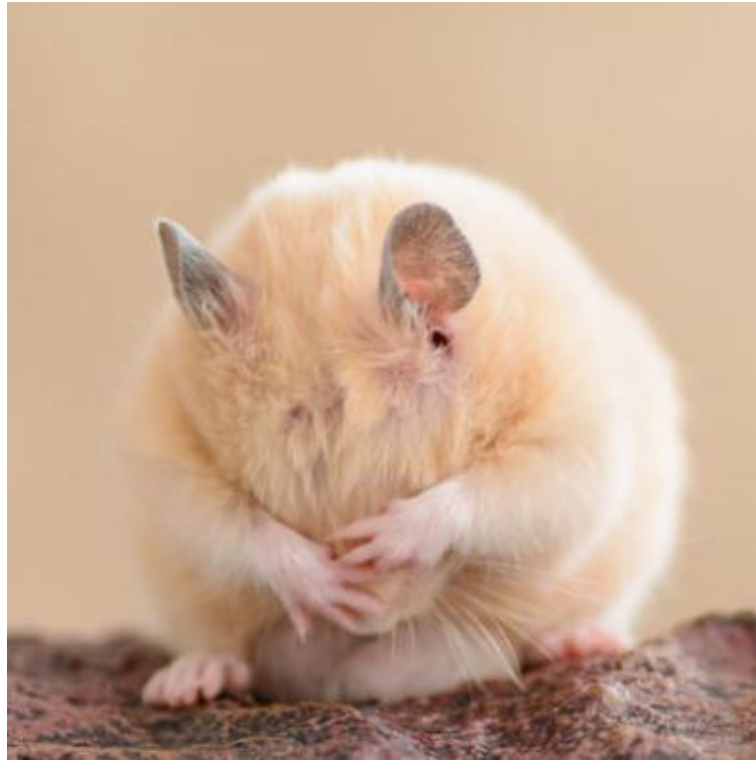


Health and welfare information about your rodent from Vetlexicon Rodent.



Parasitic diseases in hamsters

Both external and internal parasites are commonly seen in hamsters. A common external parasite problem of hamsters is caused by mites. Hamsters also frequently harbour intestinal tapeworms and, less commonly, pinworms.

What are mites?

A common external parasite problem of hamsters is caused by mites that reside within the hair follicles and certain glands of the skin. The mites cause dry, scaly skin and significant hair loss, especially over the back.

This disease is rarely a problem by itself and is frequently associated with long-standing,

debilitating diseases, such as those involving the kidneys.

Hamsters exhibiting hair loss should be examined by your vet as soon as possible. The doctor will do a skin scraping and examine it under the microscope. The presence of mites in the scraping confirms the diagnosis.

This disease can be treated, but the patient may have an underlying problem for which there is no practical treatment or cure.

What about tapeworms?

Hamsters frequently harbour tapeworms within their small intestines. Heavy infections may cause weight loss, lighter infections however, usually go undetected unless pieces of the worms pass out of the hamster's anus or appear in the faeces.

People can become infected with the same organism and can be transmitted to uninfected hamsters (or people) when faeces harbouring tapeworm eggs are inadvertently eaten. This underscores the importance of restricting access to hamsters and their enclosures by very young children. All such encounters should be carefully monitored.

If you are suspicious of this parasite problem, you should submit a faecal sample to your vet for analysis. The presence of tapeworm eggs in the sample (noted microscopically) confirms the diagnosis. Treatment for worms is possible and can be given by your vet.

What about pinworms?

Pinworms are a less common intestinal parasite seen in hamsters. These extremely tiny worms reside within the large intestines and usually cause no signs at all.

Pinworm infections can be diagnosed by your vet by microscopic examination of the faeces. Pinworm eggs passing from the anus of the hamster sometimes cause intense itching in this area.

Your vet may be able to detect the presence of pinworm eggs by pressing cellophane tape to

this area and examining it under the microscope. Pinworms in hamsters do not cause disease in people.