

Preventing Urine Scald with Disabled Bunnies

By Pam H.



Sunflower was one of many sanctuary buns that benefitted from this bedding.

Do you have a pet rabbit that does not move well enough to keep his urine from soaking his fur and/or skin? This can be a serious problem for people with disabled rabbits. Some people are able to keep their bunny clean with frequent changing of the material that he is sitting on along with washing and drying his hind end and sides several times a day. This is not always possible for people who are not available for long hours, either during the day or night. In our experience, even when we were available every 4 hours to change pads or towels and wash the wet fur, the rabbit still lost his fur and developed urine scald.

These past few months we finally found a method that appears to work, at least for the two rabbits with which we tried it. It is a three layer method. Sigi, the featured rabbit in our last newsletter, spent his first few months sitting back on his butt due to a spinal injury. Within a few days of coming home from the hospital, he started to lose all his hind end fur and was very quickly heading toward urine scald. However, once we had all the materials and began using the new method, his fur dried very quickly and started to grow back within days. Sunflower, who had severe head tilt never had wet fur with this three layer system.

The first layer is some sort of pee pad, either washable or paper. They can be obtained from selected pet stores or over the internet. Two such websites are www.ezwhelp.com and www.personallypaws.com. Personallypaws tends to have a wider variety of sizes and colors whereas ezwhelp has choices in two thicknesses as well as round ones. The large round ones fit into the 5 foot hard plastic swimming pools that people often use as an easily washable floor for rabbits when their home base is a dog exercise pen. The two ply thickness pads are less expensive than the three ply and work very well for rabbits.

The second layer needs to be slotted plastic layer thick enough to completely separate the top layer from the bottom layer. The slots or holes allow the urine to drip through onto the pad below. Garage drainage tiles with slots work quite well. They can be found on the internet or in a large hardware store such as Home Depot or Lowes. Eighteen inch square Easy Tile Versa Floor is one type that can be used.

The third or top layer is a thick, one sided fleece layer, usually with a tight webbing material on the bottom side. The thicker ones help keep the fluid away more readily than the thinner ones. Three examples are palace pet pads (www.usaknit.us.com), vet bedding (www.lakesideproducts.com -the super deluxe has a tighter, thicker pile) and profleece (Profleece Ultimate Vet Bedding is also a better quality, www.profleec bedding.com) The fleece is washable. We found that it kept the rabbits so dry that they did not have to be bathed often (except for removing cecotropes).

If your rabbit chews the fleece, he may be able to sit directly on a nonabsorbent tile or something similar if the holes are such that



Urine scald prevention bedding. The three layers are shown: of pee pad ((white), slotted plastic (black), and fleece (brown and green)

All Photos: Pam H.

he won't be likely to catch a nail or have sore hocks. Neither of our rabbits chewed the fleece. Our head tilt bunny, Sunflower (pictured, above), used the setup while she was recovering. She was in a large plastic bottomed cage with the 3 layer bottom and rolled towels on the sides of the cage (she was not rolling at this point of her recovery).

A note for rabbits that already have urine scald:

For bunnies that are so immobile that they can no longer groom themselves, we have found that Desitin works very well. It is a skin barrier cream. It has zinc oxide in it, so it cannot be used on rabbits that can groom it off. Edward, a disabled bunny that was on his side for his last 6 months had lost much of his fur on one hind side but never got urine scald because of the Desitin. He could not groom it off so it was safe for him. We tried another skin barrier film called Cavilon No Sting Barrier Film by 3M. It works well but Edward preferred the Desitin. Some people have recommended Bag Balm and CAL/ECH. Both are in a petrolatum lanolin base so check with your vet to see if that is safe on the skin with bunnies that cannot reach it while grooming. CAL/ECH is a homeopathic ointment that has Calendula and Echinacea in it.

For grooming bunnies that already have urine scald, the choices are more limited. CarraVet acemannan wound gel is good for wound healing. It has aloe vera in it and is safer for grooming rabbits, although a rabbit can lick it off fairly quickly. When Arwen had severe urine scald, we tried this but she removed it so quickly that our only option was to get her into a cart with her hind end away from her urine until the urine scald healed. We also tried diapers with Arwen. These work pretty well if you change them often. For Arwen, dog diapers were better than baby diapers because we did not have to cut a hole for the tail. They come in different sizes. The pads inside are removable so that they can be changed. We recommend using human incontinence liners such as Poise, Always Discreet or Tena. These are more absorbent and slightly wider than the pads that come with the dog diapers. We did find that we needed to change these quite often because poop and cecotropes would collect in them. These are just a few options that you may try with disabled rabbits that are developing urine scald. For more suggestions, there is a disabled rabbit group on Facebook, the members of the group are very helpful and supportive. You will need to get permission from the moderator to join.

Disabled Rabbits Group on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/201759429869484/>.



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