Presentation, treatment and outcome of fractures in pet rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

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OBJECTIVES

To identify the incidence, aetiology, characteristics, assessment, management and outcome of bone fractures in rabbits presenting to a single institution.

METHODS

Medical records of pet rabbits diagnosed with fractures over a twelve-year period were analysed. Patient signalment, insurance status, case type (first opinion/referral), fracture aetiology, fracture location, fracture description, time from fracture occurrence to veterinary presentation,

fixation method, post-operative complications, clinical outcome and follow-up were recorded.

RESULTS

Forty rabbits that sustained forty-two fractures were included in the study (femoral (n = 12), tibial (n = 6), spinal (n = 6), metacarpal/metatarsal (n = 5), mandibular (n = 4), radius and ulna (n = 4), tarsal (n = 3), and pelvic (n = 2)). Twenty-four fractures had no identifiable cause, seventeen were traumatic and one was infectious. Only one fracture was open. Surgical stabilisation was performed in twenty-two fractures (external skeletal fixation (ESF) and intramedullary pinning (IMP) (n = 9), bone plating (n = 5), ESF (n = 3), IMP (n = 1), K-wire (n = 2), screws (n = 2)), nine were non-surgically managed, eight were euthanased (including all spinal fractures) and three had one limb amputated. Postoperative complications occurred in twelve cases (major (n = 9), minor (n = 3)). Overall twenty-five cases made a functional recovery, eleven were euthanased and six underwent limb amputation.

STATEMENT (CONCLUSIONS)

Fractures in rabbits are typically closed, diaphyseal fractures without an obvious aetiology. The majority of the rabbits treated achieved a functional recovery, although postoperative complication rate was high. Plate fixation did not appear to result in worse outcomes than ESF. The most commonly reported reasons for euthanasia or amputation were a poor prognosis or outcome.