

Veterinary clinical management of dental disease in UK pet rabbits

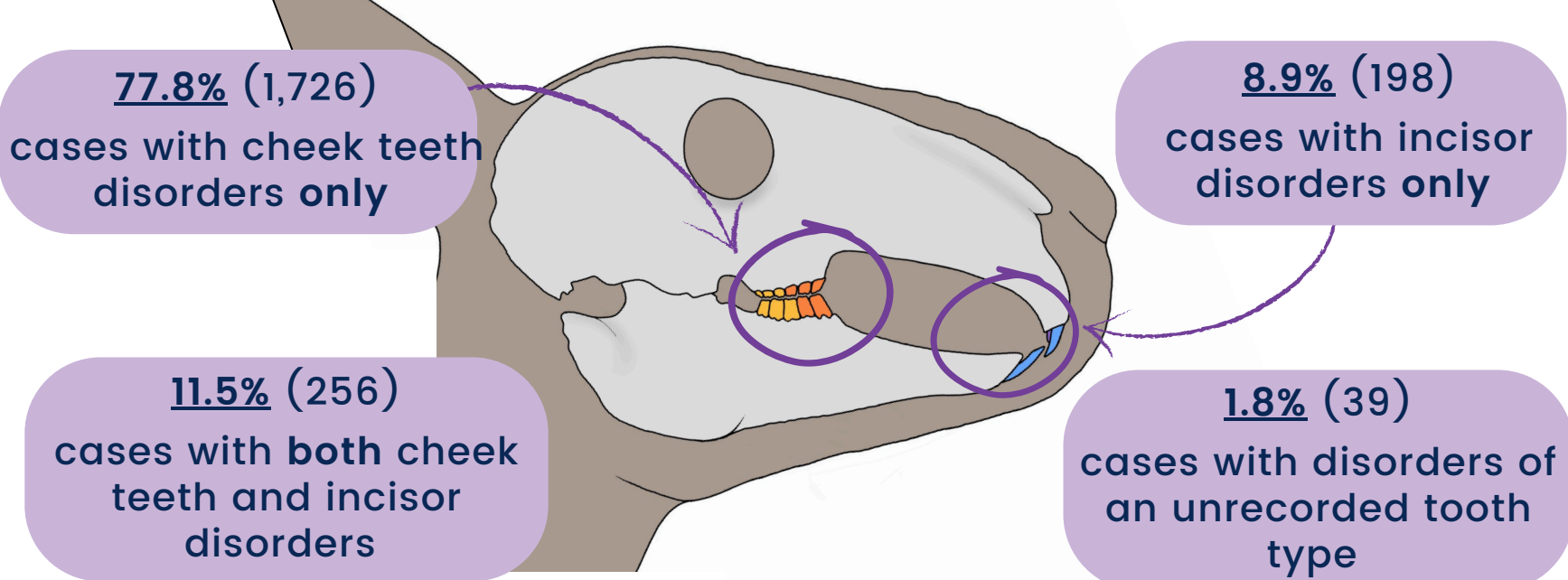


Dental disease is very common in pet rabbits, affecting an estimated 15.36% to 18.23% of UK pet rabbits in 2019. Recommended diagnostic and treatment methods are well described in the veterinary literature.

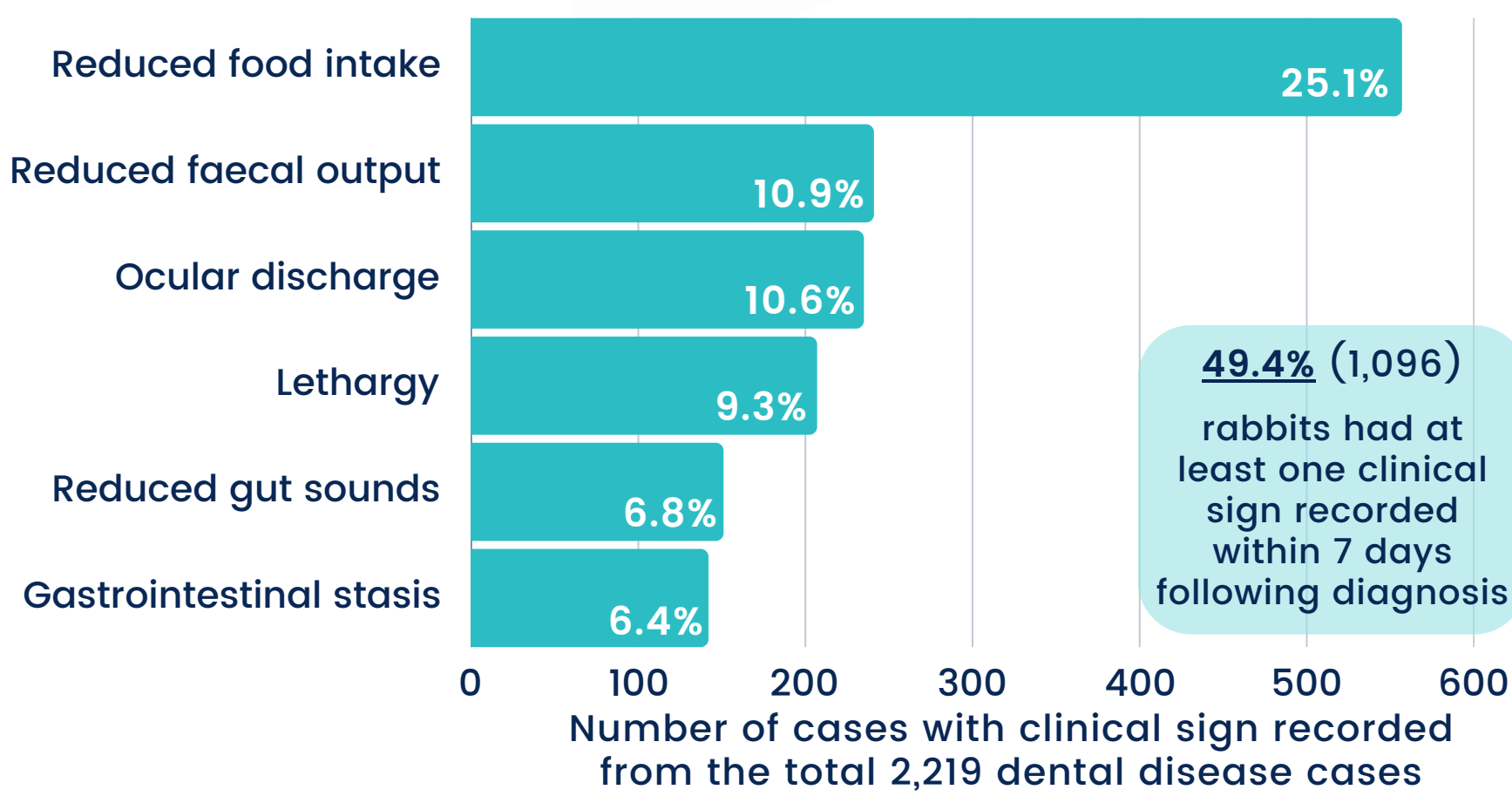
This study reports the clinical signs associated with dental disease, and whether the disease was implicated in rabbit deaths, and then uses this information to infer some welfare implications of dental disease.

The diagnostic and treatment methods used by UK primary-care veterinarians in 2019 were documented to also benchmark for clinical audit with a view to ongoing improved veterinary care.

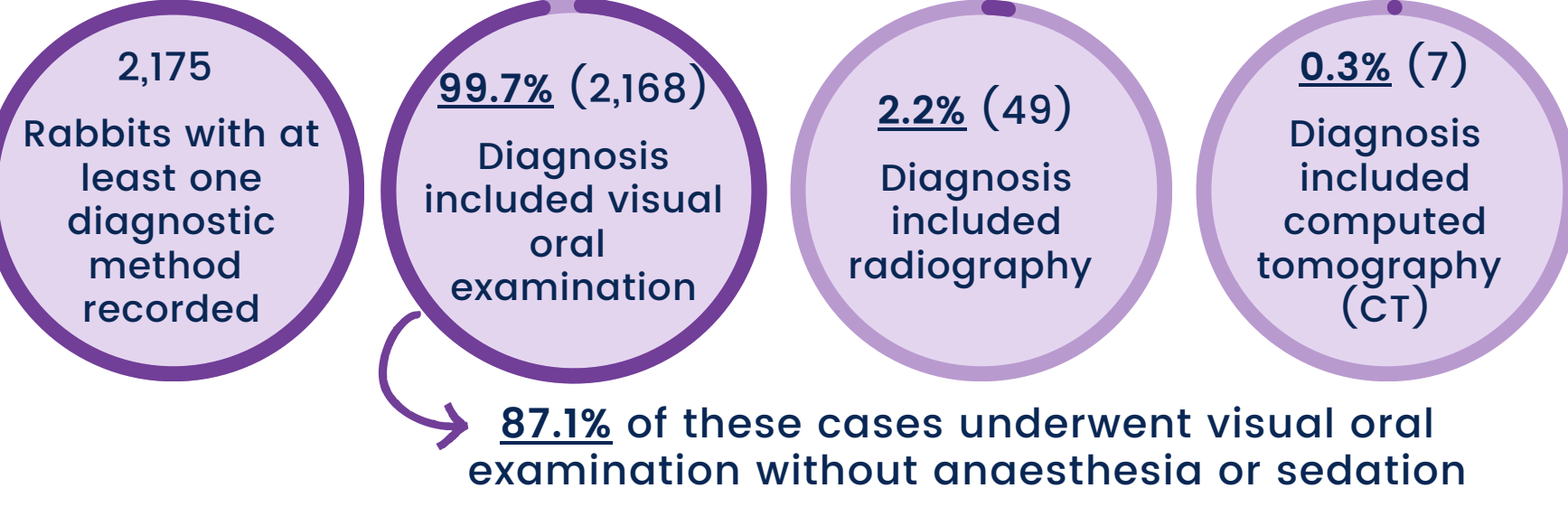
This study included a random sample of 2,219 rabbits with dental disease in 2019.



Common reported clinical signs related to dental disease



Diagnostic techniques undertaken within seven days following diagnosis



Treatments and veterinary advice given at any point until 31st December 2019

34.0% (754) of cases had their teeth trimmed by any method (including clipping, burring, and rasping)

Cheek teeth trimming was most common, occurring in 78.6% (593) of cases that received any trimming

6.1% (36) of cheek teeth and 70.9% (173) of incisor trimming events happened on conscious (non-anaesthetised or non-sedated) rabbits

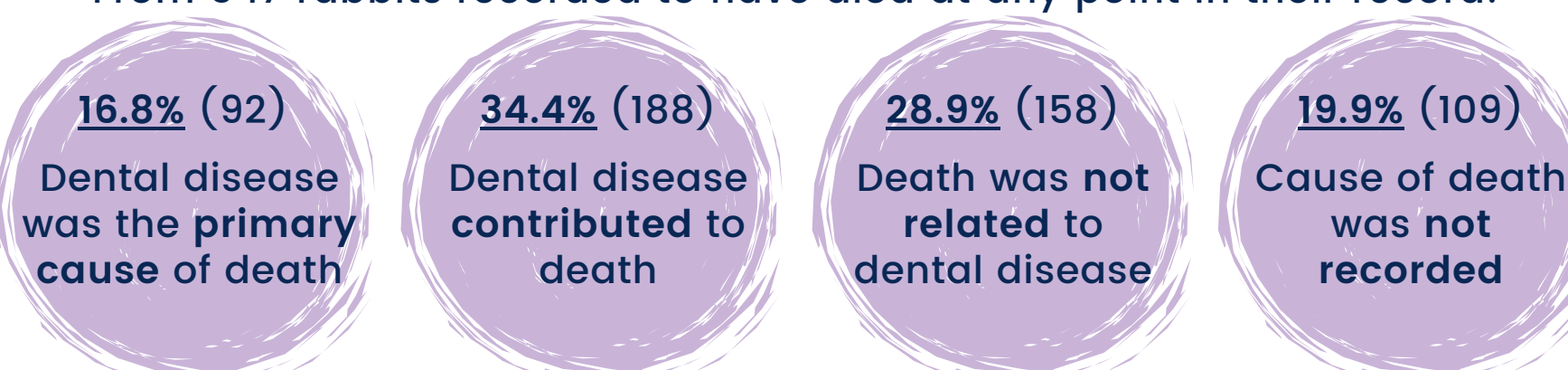
5.7% (126) of all 2,219 cases had tooth extractions - 68.3% (86) of these rabbits had incisor extractions

Dietary modification was recommended for 21.5% (476) of cases within seven days following diagnosis



Mortality

From 547 rabbits recorded to have died at any point in their record:



Conclusions and expert recommendations

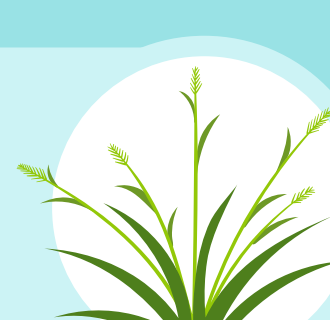
Cheek teeth were commonly affected:
Rabbit teeth, especially cheek teeth, should routinely be examined with an otoscope during regular check-ups to promote earlier disease detection.



Radiography was uncommonly used:
Where finances and other constraints allow, radiography should be considered to assess the sub-gingival tooth roots. Root overgrowth is a common early sign of dental disease, and disease progression can be slowed by starting treatment early.



Dietary modification was often recommended:
All rabbit owners (regardless of whether the rabbit already shows dental disease or not) should be encouraged to provide a constant supply of high fibre foods, such as hay or grass, to prevent dental disease or slow its progression.



Most rabbits were sedated or anaesthetised for cheek teeth trimming:
It is recommended that cheek teeth trimming is only performed on sedated or anaesthetised rabbits to reduce risk of iatrogenic injury and minimise stress and fear for the rabbit.



[CLICK TO READ THE FULL STUDY](#)

Jackson, M.A., O'Neill, D.G., Hedley, J., Brodbelt, D.C., and Burn, C.C. (2025) Dental disease in rabbits under UK primary veterinary care: Clinical management and associated welfare impacts. *Vet Record*: e5326.

RVC VetCompass <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass> carries out animal welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research.