



GUINEA PIG CARE GUIDE: HEALTH

GENERAL INFO

Annual Exam: It is important to take your guinea pig to the veterinarian for an annual exam, to ensure your pig is in good health. Guinea pigs do not require vaccines.

GENERAL SIGNS OF ILLNESS

- Any behavioral change
- Lethargy
- Defensive aggression
- Disinterested in treats
- Changes in eating or drinking
- Disinterested in interacting with you
- Poor coat quality

Lifespan: Five to seven years.

Reproduction: Guinea pigs become sexually mature and are able to reproduce at three to four weeks of age. It is possible to spay and neuter guinea pigs, but most people choose to keep them intact and house them with the same gender instead. Surgery on small animals is always risky, particularly a complex surgery such as a spay. Talk to your veterinarian to see what option is right for you and your guinea pigs.

COMMON ISSUES

Vitamin C Deficiency

Just like humans, guinea pigs do not produce their own vitamin C. Therefore, they rely on fruits and vegetables to get it. Symptoms of vitamin C deficiency are rough coat, lethargy, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and swollen feet/joints. If you notice any of these symptoms in your pet, take them to your veterinarian immediately. To avoid vitamin C deficiency in your guinea pig, be sure to feed them plenty of vegetables containing vitamin C (see Guinea Pig Care Guide: Feeding for tips) and/or provide them with a daily Oxbow Vitamin C tablet.

Urinary Tract Infections

If you notice that your guinea pig has blood in its urine, difficulty urinating, or is having accidents (if potty trained), they may have a urinary tract infection. Guinea pigs are prone to bladder stones that if left untreated can cause blockage in your pet's urinary tract, which is life threatening. If your pet has these symptoms, take them to your veterinarian immediately.

Gastrointestinal Problems

Guinea pigs can sometimes have sensitive stomachs, especially when trying new foods. Be sure to introduce new foods slowly so as not to upset your guinea pig's digestive system. Symptoms of digestive upset include diarrhea, constipation, lack of appetite, and lethargy. If your pet has any of these symptoms contact your veterinarian. Ignoring these symptoms can lead to serious health complications.

Respiratory Infections

Guinea pigs are sensitive creatures and can easily develop respiratory infections which can quickly turn into pneumonia. If you notice that your guinea pig is sneezing, has eye or nose discharge, has a lack of appetite, or is lethargic, contact your veterinarian. Guinea pigs, like most small pets, are prey animals and thus tend to hide any weakness or illness for as long as possible. This means that by the time you notice symptoms, your pet is usually very sick. To avoid respiratory illness, keep your guinea pig's cage away from drafts, clean the cage often, use fleece for bedding, keep stress to a minimum, and provide your pet with as large of a habitat as possible.

