



Guinea Pig Advice: Health

Disclaimer: These notes are only based on my own experience and are not set in stone. They have worked for me and people who have adopted a guinea pig from Windwhistle Warren, I hope they will help you too.

As prey animals guinea pigs are experts at hiding signs of pain and can deteriorate very quickly. There are certain vets who specialise in small furries so it is always worth making enquiries. The rescue you adopted your piggies from should be able to recommend a suitable vet.

Mites and mange are common ailments in piggies. I often find these in neglected pigs that come in, but these skin complaints can occur in our much-loved pets too. The most common reasons for them appear to be lack of vitamin C, or mites picked up from hay. As guinea pigs are unable to produce their own vitamin C, I try to supplement their intake by adding some soluble vitamin C powder to their fresh water each day. If you only have small packs of hay any mites present can be killed by putting the bag in the deep freeze.

These illnesses are so debilitating; they show themselves by dandruff/flaky skin or hair loss. The poor little pigs suffer so much and injure themselves by desperately scratching and biting at their skin. They are in so much pain and discomfort that they cannot even bear the pain of a fellow piggy brushing against them. I have taken in a guinea pig who only had hair on his head, this is how bad it can get and they still hang on to life. If not treated, eventually they become so distressed and ill that they have seizures and are unable to eat or drink.

If your guinea pig is under the weather he could start to suffer from one of these skin complaints simply because his immune system is low. I have also noticed that in a group of guinea pigs only one will appear to suffer from it although it is necessary to treat them all as they can pass it on to each other. I have also noticed that it appears to be Abyssinian or Rex type pigs who seem more prone to these illnesses.

Ask your vet to treat your guinea pig with 'ivomectin', which is administered orally or directly onto their skin. This is a much kinder method of treatment than injections.

Also see the shampoos and oils available at www.gorgeousguineas.com. These really soothe and help piggy feel more comfortable quicker. The web site also explains about these illnesses and various treatments very clearly.

Guinea Pigs can also get teeth problems. Please take your piggy to the vet if he goes off his food, salivates, dribbles or develops eye infections or abscesses.

Their claws will need trimming from time to time. Also check their feet for signs of soreness.