



OVARIAN CYSTS IN GUINEA PIGS

Cystic ovaries occur most commonly in female entire guinea pigs aged 2-4 years. Various studies have identified them in up to 76% of female guinea pigs between 1.5 years old to 5 years of age.

Testosterone can stimulate ovarian epithelial cell growth resulting in cyst formation. In most cases both ovaries are affected. Most cysts range in size from 0.5cm to 7cm diameter.

Signs of a functional cyst secreting hormones include: bilateral symmetric hair loss in the flank region and a decline in fertility. Ovarian cysts may be associated with uterine disease and can also become significant space-occupying masses if left untreated and cause abdominal distension and pain. Affected guinea pigs may show signs of anorexia, depression and lethargy.

The *DIAGNOSIS* of an ovarian cyst is generally confirmed by palpation, an abdominal ultrasound or radiographs (x-rays).

The general *TREATMENT OPTIONS* for cystic ovaries are as follows:

1) *Exploratory abdominal surgery* to remove the cyst in a, ovariectomy; this carries some risk but is the best option for resolving the problem as the ovaries are totally removed.

2) *Ultrasound-guided aspiration* of the cysts under sedation provides an adequate temporary solution. However, aspiration usually needs to be followed by medical treatment in order to prevent the rapid re-accumulation of fluid.

3) *Hormonal implants* every 4-6 months may work to reduce the size of some cysts, unfortunately this is not always successful.



Ovarian cysts often increase in size with time and the pressure of the cyst on other organs may cause pain and associated gut stasis. The cyst could rupture at any time. Adhesions may form which could cause problems at a later date.

Ovarian cysts can be prevented by having your guinea pig sterilised (de-sexed) before they occur.

If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

