



RESPIRATORY DISEASE IN GUINEA PIGS

Guinea pigs have a very small chest cavity and trachea (wind pipe) as well as a highly complex upper respiratory tract – all of which make them more prone to developing problems. Some of the problems can be very difficult to treat and control; unfortunately even with treatment we are unable to help some guinea pigs.

The following are some examples of issues that can affect the respiratory tract of guinea pigs:

- Neoplasia (cancer)
- Viral Infections
- Bacterial Infections (including *Bordetella*, *Streptococcus*, *Klebsiella*, *Pseudomonas* and *Pasturella*)
- Trauma or damage to the nose and nasal turbinates
- Heart disease
- Dental disease
- Allergies
- Foreign materials (ie hay seeds) entering their nasal cavity

It is important to note that the respiratory problem may not be the main primary problem. Guinea pigs that have underlying illnesses or have a decreased immune system are generally more susceptible to respiratory problems.

How can we tell what the problem is?

Various procedures can help us determine what is behind the respiratory problem

- * Advanced imaging techniques such as x-rays, ultrasound, CT or MRI
- * Blood testing
- * Nasal swabs and cultures
- * Endoscope examination of the respiratory tract under general anaesthesia

In some cases where further testing is not possible a response to treatment can help with the initial diagnosis. The use of antibiotics, anti-inflammatory, airway medications and nebulization may all be used depending on the scenario.

What else can you do to support your guinea pig?

- Vitamin C supplementation: Guinea pigs cannot produce their own vitamin C so administering up to 50mg per kg of vitamin C per day (as a general rule) by mouth can help to improve their general health and help fight infection





- Support feeding: If your guinea pig is not eating, syringe feeding with Oxbow critical care (or Vetafarm Critta Care) may be necessary.

- Environmental changes: Improve ventilation in and around their hutches. Guinea pigs generally prefer to be kept at approximately 20-22C, and a humidity of 45-65% is ideal for most. Hutches should be cleaned daily to decrease the accumulation of ammonia which can damage the nasal passages. Bedding should not be dusty (wood shavings or shredded paper) as this can contribute to irritation of the airways.

- Minimising stress: Decreasing any stress (ie change in living arrangements, other animals) they may be experiencing can help to make them feel more relaxed and comfortable.

It is essential to keep in mind that even with all treatments we may not be able to cure all guinea pigs.

If you are at all concerned about your guinea pig please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

