



Skin Conditions in Guinea Pigs

Skin conditions are common in guinea pigs and are sometimes the first sign of an underlying serious illness. It is important to identify the underlying cause of a skin condition in order to provide appropriate treatment and prevent further complications. Itchy and irritated skin can cause significant discomfort, and some guinea pigs can also have 'seizures' due to skin problems in extreme cases.



What causes skin problems in guinea pigs?

Common skin conditions in guinea pigs can be caused by a range of conditions including parasites, bacterial or fungal infections, allergies, nutritional deficiencies, and environmental factors. Common symptoms may include itching, hair loss, scabs, crusts, redness, and inflammation.

Parasites

There are a number of parasitic infestations commonly seen in guinea pigs, including both mite and lice infestation. The *Trixacarus caviae* mite is the most common parasitic condition we see. These mites burrow under the skin and cause intense itching and irritation. Treatment usually involves a topical, injectable, or oral medication prescribed by your veterinarian, as well as treating any secondary issues that have arisen.

Fungal Infections

'Ringworm' is the most common fungal infection we see in guinea pigs. Symptoms can include circular, scaly patches of hair loss, and irritation. Treatment typically involves an antifungal medication and disinfection of the environment.

Bacterial Infections

Bacterial skin infections are often seen in guinea pigs living in poor environmental conditions or as a secondary condition to parasitic infections. Treatment usually involves antibiotic therapy as prescribed by a veterinarian.

Vitamin C Deficiency

Nutritional deficiencies can also cause skin problems in guinea pigs. A lack of vitamin C can lead to scurvy, which can cause a range of problems including skin lesions and hair loss. Ensuring that guinea pigs receive adequate amounts of vitamin C in their diet prevents this condition. Unwell guinea pigs also generally have a higher requirement for vitamin C.





Allergies

While this is not overly common, various allergens, such as food, bedding, or dust, can cause allergic skin conditions in some cases. Symptoms may include itching, redness, and hair loss. Treatment generally involves identifying and removing the allergen and providing medication to alleviate symptoms.

Hormonal Causes

Pregnant guinea pigs can lose hair along the back of their legs and back area in the lead-up to giving birth. Cystic ovaries are commonly seen in unsterilised female guinea pigs, and can also cause hair loss, usually in round patches on both sides of their back.



Environmental Factors

Dirty cages, high humidity, and poor ventilation can contribute to skin problems in guinea pigs. Regular cleaning and maintenance of the cage are essential for preventing skin conditions.

If you notice any signs of a skin problem in your guinea pig, or they are itchy and irritated, it's important to consult with your local [Unusual Pet Vets](http://www.unusualpetvets.com.au) team. A prompt diagnosis and commencing treatment early often provides for the best outcome.

