



# Guinea Pig Skin Disease

Skin disease is a common problem for guinea pigs. It can cause reduced appetite, abnormal behavior or limping, hair loss, and stress or injuries from having itchy skin. **Talk with your veterinarian if you notice any signs or symptoms of skin disease in your guinea pigs.**

## Seven Types of Guinea Pig Skin Disease

**Abscesses** are painful swellings, usually on the face, jaw, rump, or tail, caused by an infected wound or tooth problems.



*Abscess under the jaw and a swollen foot*

**Bumblefoot** is caused by bacteria or fungi. Guinea pigs will limp or hold up a foot in pain. The skin on the feet may be swollen, scaly, cracked, or have blisters of clear or bloody fluid. Additional risk factors include:



*Bumblefoot*

- Obesity
- Not enough bedding to protect feet
- Dirty cages and bedding
- Harsh flooring surfaces like metal wire

**Hair loss** can be normal for growing or pregnant animals, and mild barbering is a social behavior. Abnormal causes include:



*Hair loss*

- Ovarian disease
- Excessive barbering (due to stress including from overcrowding) or scratching
- Vitamin C deficiency
- Infections

**Ringworm** is a fungal infection causing a circular crusty or scaly rash. Animals can “silently” spread the disease without looking or acting sick. They are not usually itchy unless there is a secondary bacterial infection. It is easily passed through direct contact with:

- Infected animals
- Surfaces that are not waterproof like wood enclosures that are not painted or sealed
- Food or water dishes
- Toys, bedding, or other equipment

**External Parasites** (mites and lice) cause intense itching, self-trauma (biting and scratching), hair loss, and even seizures. They can be found by combing or parting the hairs, or in hair samples examined under a microscope. Skin may become discolored, crusty or scaly, and thicken over time.



*External parasites as seen under a microscope*

**Fight wounds** from overcrowding or aggressive animals require first aid and/or antibiotics to control bacterial infection.



*Fight wound*

**Vitamin C deficiency** can cause hair and weight loss, rough haircoat, scaly skin, and achy joints.



*Fresh, refrigerated vegetables support a guinea pig's nutritional need for additional vitamin C.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Many skin diseases in guinea pigs can spread to other animals and even to people. Wash your hands after handling any animals, especially sick guinea pigs, and sanitize enclosures and other objects frequently to reduce disease spread at your facility.

### PRACTICAL TIP



Guinea pigs require a dietary supplement of Vitamin C. Feed fresh, refrigerated vegetables or fruits like parsley, kale, spinach, broccoli, peas, green beans, bell peppers, citrus fruits, or beet greens every day. Adding Vitamin C to water is not reliable to support guinea pigs' nutritional needs.

