

Guinea Pig Pregnancy Info

The gestation period for guinea pigs is 62 to 70 days. The greater the number of babies the mother is carrying, the shorter the pregnancy. Most pregnancies are non-problematic. Guinea pigs are more prone to heat related death in the latter stages of pregnancy. They have been known to abort the fetuses if an alarming incident occurs. Pregnant females should not have major changes in their diet or housing late in pregnancy, since this can result in stress-induced toxemia. If you must pick up a pregnant guinea pig, be sure to securely support her hindquarters.

No changes are visible in appearance or behavior during the first four weeks. The last two to three weeks, the mother to be will become quite "plump" as the babies will comprise more than half of her body weight. You can see and feel the movement of the babies during the last two weeks. During the last few weeks the mother's protein and calcium requirements increase. Adequate fiber may prevent hair thinning, a common occurrence in late pregnancy, so providing adequate hay becomes very important. In addition, pregnant females will need twice as much vitamin C to help prevent toxemia.

The mother will not build a nest prior to the birth. Towards the end of the pregnancy you will want to separate her from any other animals to avert any mishap and make sure she has a clean place to take care of her young. Give her some extra soft bedding to use and keep the environment draft free and quiet.

Mothers rarely need any help unless they are older and this is their first pregnancy. Females reach puberty when 3 to 4 weeks old and should be bred for the first time between 3 and 6 months old. As females age, the hipbones grow closer together if they have never given birth. Any guinea pig over six months of age who has never had a litter is at great risk if she becomes pregnant. In these cases, a caesarian section is usually necessary.

The birth process under normal circumstances usually takes place in the daytime and lasts for a maximum of 20 minutes. Average guinea pig litters have 2 to 3 babies. The first baby should appear after 5 minutes of labor. The time between the birth of each baby is usually between 3 and 5 minutes. If the labor extends longer, be prepared to rush her to the clinic. She could die of exhaustion. She will remain sitting while the babies emerge underneath, head first. She will pull the amniotic sac off with her teeth by reaching between her legs. As the babies appear she will clean them off. When all have been born, the placentas will appear (the mother will usually eat the placentas). As long as everything seems to be progressing, do not interrupt the mother during the birth.

Guinea pig babies are more completely developed at birth than most pet species. They are born with their eyes open and can consume solid food within a few hours of birth. The young are generally weaned at 2 to 3 weeks of age.