

## What Happens As Guinea Pigs Age?

### What are the characteristics of a senior guinea pig?

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Guinea pigs usually begin to slow down at 4 or 5 years of age.

**Q:** What does the aging process of a guinea pig involve? What are normal signs of aging and what are the health concerns?

**A:** The average life span of most guinea pigs is 5 to 8 years of age. Not unlike humans, a guinea pig's life span is affected by genetics, environment and diet. Some guinea pigs live longer or shorter lives, depending on these and other factors. To my knowledge, the breed of guinea pig can affect life span. Silkies/Shelties or Peruvians have lived 12 to 14 years. The hairless breeds tend to be short-lived at 3 to 5 years.

It is difficult to determine the age of a guinea pig, but looking at its feet can give you a clue. As a guinea pig ages, its toes tend to roll. This roll starts at the outside toe and works inward to the largest toe. The toes end up twisted to the outside of the feet and may even thicken.

Guinea pigs tend to slow down as they reach four or five years of age.

Aging guinea pigs may develop some of the same ailments or characteristics as aging humans. These include cataracts, stroke, heart attacks, arthritis, dementia and graying (guinea pigs may develop gray fur around the nose and mouth).

In the last 10 years, tumors are becoming more and more common in guinea pigs. Watch for those bumps and growths, and have them checked by a veterinarian.

Sleeping a lot, not eating and melancholy are other signs that should be checked out by a veterinarian if your guinea pig develops them.

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