

## Guinea Pig Losing Weight And Patches Of Fur

### Why would a guinea pig suddenly lose weight and patches of fur?

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**Q:** My 3- or 4-year-old female guinea pig has lost a lot of weight. About three months ago she started to lose both weight and two large patches of hair on her rump. I gave her a bath or two, and the hair grew back. She has always lived with her mother, but her mother died about six months ago. We checked her teeth and they look even, white and short. I thought it might be a tapeworm, but there is no indication of that in her stool. She isn't particularly lethargic. What's wrong?

**A:** It is extremely unusual for a guinea pig to be infested with tapeworms, so this is probably not tapeworms. When a guinea pig loses weight, a couple of general questions must be asked.

First, is the weight loss because your guinea pig is not eating as much as she used to eat? Or is it because what is going into your guinea pig is not being digested? Are you putting less food in her bowl, is she eating all the greens you are giving her?

If her teeth were a problem, you would see your guinea pig spitting food out and/or drooling around her mouth. Even though her front teeth (incisors) look fine, her cheek teeth (molars) may not be normal. So, you need to look carefully at your guinea pig's food dish. If she is not eating as well, it could be her teeth or it could be some other systemic problem. And if your guinea pig is spitting out food, then the problem is her teeth.

Less common in guinea pigs with weight loss is when they do not digest their food. If food is not properly digested, the guinea pig will have soft stools or diarrhea. If you do not see soft stools or diarrhea, your guinea pig is probably properly digesting her food.

When you take your guinea pig to the veterinarian, bring the answers to these questions to make it easier for your veterinarian to help your guinea pig.

Finally, with guinea pigs, we always have to make sure they are getting adequate amounts of vitamin C.

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