

## Grief Induced Depression Hampers Guinea Pig

**A guinea pig loses his buddy and suffers depression and other ailments.**

*By Karen Rosenthal, DVM, DABVP*

Posted: October 27, 2008, 9 p.m. EDT

**Q:** I live on a very fixed income. I had two guinea pigs until one passed away suddenly two nights ago. His buddy is very depressed. Because of a recent car accident, I haven't been holding them as much. When I held Yin, I saw that his foot was swollen and his eyes were crusty. My internet search turned up that he has pododermatitis and possibly an upper respiratory infection. I know he needs to see a vet. I have been soaking his foot in a betadine solution and a hydrogen peroxide solution (per the vet's instructions over the phone) but of course the vet wants to see Yin. I got the initial scab of debris off and now the scab is skin. He is in a new cage without a wire floor and with expensive paper bedding. His foot is wrapped.

He is lethargic but squirms and moves around. He fights me when I treat him and I take this as a good sign. The lethargy could be because he is depressed as well as being in pain and sick.

He has not eaten since last night. I am force-feeding him water with Karo syrup and Pedialyte to keep his hydration and electrolytes up. He will not eat guinea pig food, or fruits or vegetables.

What can I feed him? I am just trying to keep him going until I save money to get to the vet.

**A:** This sounds like a serious situation. When guinea pigs do not eat, they can get a condition in the liver called hepatic lipidosis, which is as serious or more serious than the original problem. The most common cause of not eating in guinea pigs is dental disease. Unfortunately, only your veterinarian can tell if the teeth are abnormal because your doctor uses specialized equipment to look into the oral cavity of your guinea pig. You will not be able to do that at home.

If the teeth are causing a problem, usually the first thing your doctor will do is drill down the overgrown tooth or teeth. Sometimes, just one piece of one tooth has grown to cause a sharp edge that digs into the tongue or cheek. Every time the guinea pig chews, it causes harm to the soft tissues of the mouth. Until you can get to the doctor, mash up guinea pig pellets or use vegetable baby food and feed this liquid food to your guinea pig. But this is not a long-term solution. I recommend getting to your doctor as soon as you are able to do it.