The Satin Study is still in its infancy in the UK and will take time to reach any conclusions. The main aim at the moment is to make information available to those who want/need it. Several other countries are monitoring the health of their Satins as they too have noticed problems with the breed. Problems have been noted since the arrival of the variety in the UK in the 1980's, now it has a name...

OD affected Sky in her spine and jaw, and later on her teeth.

OD affected Sky in her spine and jaw, and later on her teeth.

China was clear of OD when x-rayed in October 2005, x-rays in January 2006 showed that Osteodystrophy was present.

Reading Guinea Pig Rescue

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What is Osteodystrophy (OD)?

- Osteodystrophy is a collective noun for all disorders in the growth of bone tissue. OD is a metabolic disease.
- The body does not absorb Calcium causing the skeleton to decalcify and form fibrous tissue.
- There is no known cure for the disease.

What are the symptoms of OD?

Symptoms usually begin when the guinea is a year to eighteen months old, but some show symptoms earlier, other later. The hind legs are usually affected, the growth of fibrous tissue causes an unsteady gait, commonly known as bunny hopping. Many guineas appear ‘lazy’ or lethargic, they are unwilling to move because of the pain.

The jaw and teeth can also be affected causing eating/dental problems. These are shown by the guinea’s preference for certain foods and an difficulty picking up food. At this stage syringe feeding may become necessary.

General weight loss is another symptom to look out for, regular weighing (at least once weekly) is a good idea.

X-rays can detect the disease when there are no visible symptoms.

Satins with OD often have a high pitched squeak that disappears when they are made more comfortable.

A guinea that is diagnosed with OD does not need to be euthanized immediately, though this will be the eventual outcome.

What is a Satin Guinea Pig?

The Satin variety of guinea pig has a polished ‘glass like’ sheen to its coat, quite different to that of other varieties. There are Satinised examples of most Varieties (including cross breeds). It was introduced to the UK in the 1980’s and is popular in the cavy Fancy.

Some breeders have noticed problems when breeding with satins. Some Satin sows have problems with birthing whilst others have none. It has become common practice to use a Satin carrier sow and Satin boar for breeding. However, Osteodystrophy (OD) is still passed on to the young and may even lay dormant for a generation or two.

Satins guinea pigs generally are said not to live as long as other varieties, though there are exceptions of course.

Guineas with OD may sit in a hunched position on their hocks. (Thank you to Danielle for the use of the picture)

What is being done?

A group of breeders and guinea pig enthusiasts are collecting x-rays to send to the Netherlands for analysis by a vet with experience of OD in guinea pigs. It is hoped that a university will make a study based on the results of these x-rays. Research is being done into alternative methods of painkillers for the sufferers of OD. Check the website: www.readingguineapigrescue.co.uk for updates. A British vet has expressed an interest and offered to converse with other vets on OD, please contact us for her details.

More research is needed, but money has proved to be a major problem. If you have an x-ray of a Satin you would like to submit to the study please send to Karen at the address below.

Diagnosis is by x-ray, though a clear x-ray does not mean the guinea pig will not develop OD. Although OD should be considered when examining Satins other conditions must not be discounted—Do not be blinded by the Satin coat...

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