



Dystocia in Guinea Pigs

Dystocia is a clinical condition in which the birthing process is difficult or impossible for the mother.

Causes of Dystocia

As female guinea pigs age, the cartilage that binds the two halves of their pubic bones— medically referred to as the symphysis, stiffens, limiting the ability of the pubic bones to spread sufficiently enough to allow for the passage of the pups. This is especially true for first-time mothers that are over **seven months old**.

If the sow has never given birth and she is older than seven months, her pregnancy typically will result in Dystocia.

Symptoms of Dystocia

- Bleeding from the vagina
- Discomfort and pain
- Extended straining during labor without actually delivering the fetus
- Part of the fetus may be seen at the vaginal canal, but the labor does not progress
- Expected due date comes and goes with no pups

Diagnosis

Under normal conditions, the process of guinea pig birthing is relatively quick. If your sow's labor continues for an abnormally long time and she is in obvious discomfort, you must bring her to an exotic's trained Vet immediately.

Your veterinarian will make the initial diagnosis based on the symptoms observed during her exam. If the sow has passed her due date and still not delivered pups, your veterinarian will want to take an X-ray of the uterus, determine the size of the pups, and to see if there is any spreading of the symphysis before confirming Dystocia.

Treatment

Once your vet has confirmed Dystocia, your doctor may administer *oxytocin*, a drug that helps labor to progress by stimulating uterine contractions.

Cesarean sections may help relieve Dystocia, however the survival rate for the mom and pups is extremely poor and the surgery is very expensive – likely over \$1,000. Unfortunately, you will need to be prepared for the very high probability that your guinea pig and her babies will die.

Prevention

The only way to prevent pregnancy is to house **only same sex pairs** in your home. Because of this high mortality rate of guinea pigs under anesthesia, spaying and neutering is not recommended.