

LETHAL WHITE GUINEA PIGS

Lethal white gene guinea pigs are genetically compromised guinea pigs and unfortunately do not live as long and healthy a life as other guinea pigs. They occur as the result of a recessive gene carried in roan and dalmatian coat coloured guinea pigs. Breeding two of these coat types together gives a 25% chance of a baby having the lethal white gene and being affected by the disorder. Other siblings may not be affected.

Lethal whites lack pigmentation and are always white with pink eyes. They are typically much smaller than their siblings. These guinea pigs will suffer from a range of illnesses and issues and they are almost always blind and deaf. Their life expectancy ranges from just a few months to a couple of years.

Problems in these guinea pigs include:

- Microphthalmia (small or absent eyes) and blindness
- Deafness
- Malformed teeth both front and back (including typically missing front incisors)
- Stunted growth
- Neurological signs
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Physical deformities
- Poor immunity

Lethal whites require a lifetime of support including changes to the home environment, lifelong nursing and veterinary care which will come at a considerable ongoing financial commitment. Careful consideration should be given before taking on such a responsibility. Care must be taken to ensure that these animals' welfare is maintained throughout life to avoid suffering and that veterinary attention is sought rapidly if any clinical signs of disease are observed.

Home care for these guinea pigs requires the following:

- A single level cage and maintaining the same enclosure layout to aid navigation. Ensuring easy navigation and avoiding ramps or edges which risk injury.
- Selecting an appropriate guinea pig companion to ensure the blind/deaf guinea pig can live a stress free life with comfort from another guinea pig
- Monitoring weight carefully to ensure they are thriving and eating well and syringe feeding if necessary
- Ensuring they have regular dental examinations with a vet and treatment as necessary

