



HEALTH OF PET GUINEA PIGS IN THE UK

Guinea pigs are hugely popular as pets in the UK, often because they are considered docile and easy to care for. However, there is limited published information on the overall health and longevity of guinea pigs kept as companion animals.

This VetCompass study aimed to describe the demography, common disorders and mortality of guinea pigs kept as pets in the UK. The study used information extracted from anonymised veterinary clinical records within VetCompass in 2019. These results can help veterinarians and owners recognise common illnesses earlier and therefore improve the lives of pet guinea pigs.

51,622

The number of guinea pigs in the study

1.05kg

Average bodyweight of a guinea pig.
Female: 1.00kg
Male: 1.10kg

2.95%

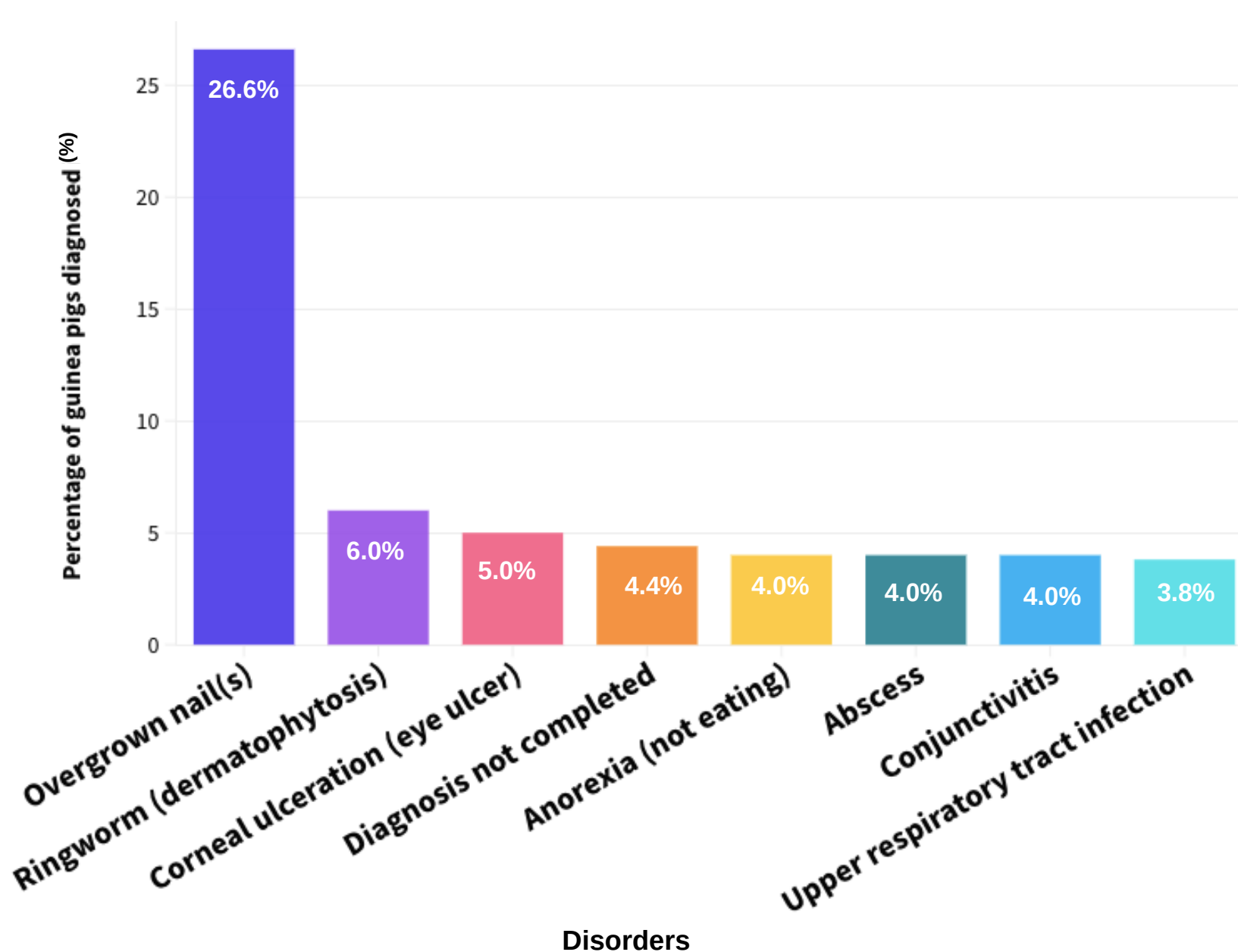
Proportion of guinea pigs with a formal breed name recorded.

2.08%

Proportion of guinea pigs recorded as neutered.



Most commonly diagnosed disorders in guinea pigs

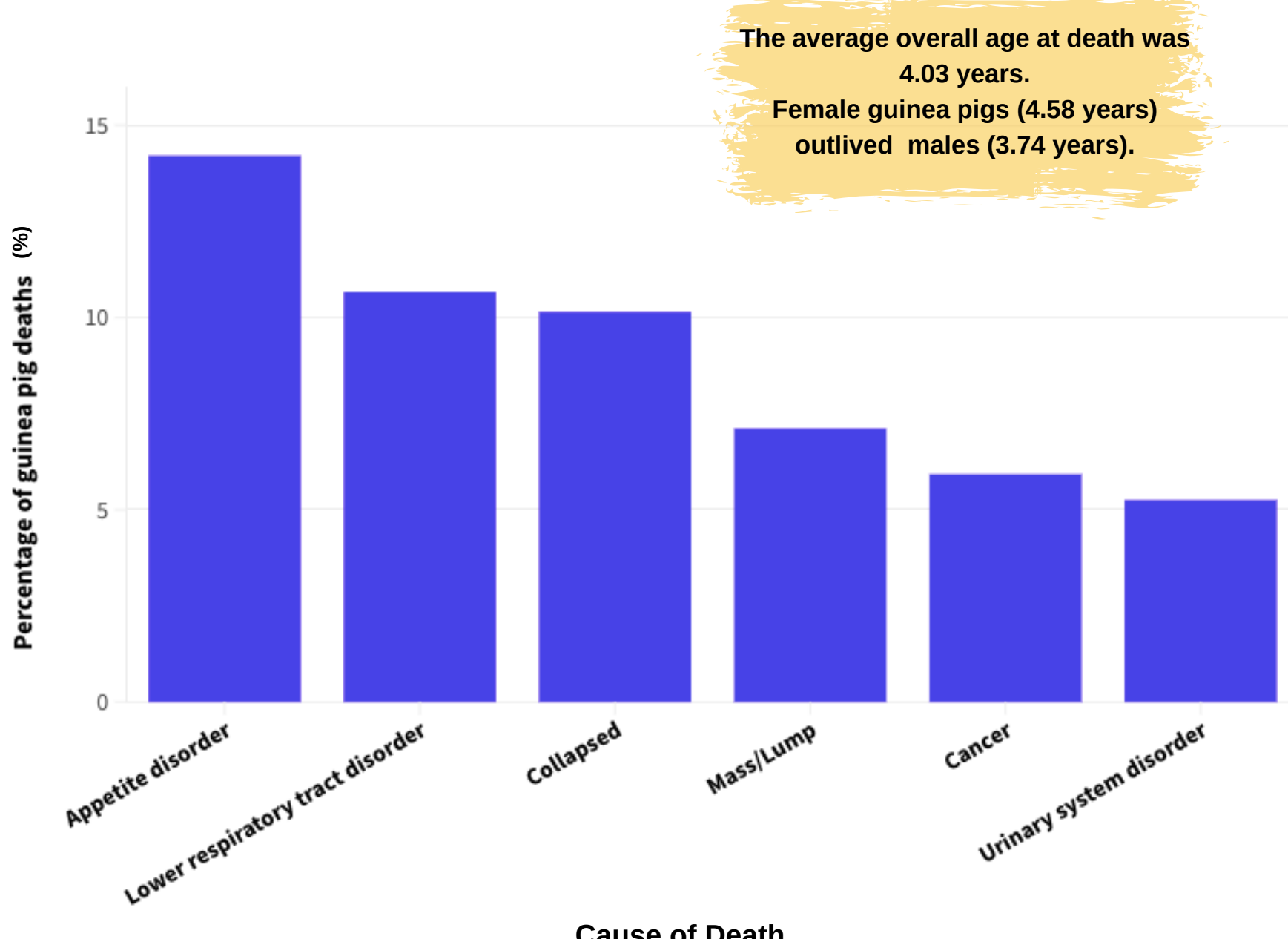


Male guinea pigs had higher probability than females of anorexia, bite injury, overgrown incisor(s), dental disease and wound(s).

Female guinea pigs had higher probability than males of corneal ulceration, ocular/conjunctival foreign body and abdominal mass.



Most common causes of death/reasons for euthanasia



The average overall age at death was 4.03 years.

Female guinea pigs (4.58 years) outlived males (3.74 years).

CONCLUSIONS



Many of the most common disorders of guinea pigs such as overgrown nail(s), ringworm and eye ulceration are related to husbandry such as exercise and bedding. This awareness can help owners to prevent or detect these conditions earlier.



The study identified several health differences between males and female guinea pigs. Males had shorter lifespans and were predisposed to bite injuries and dental disorders, while females were predisposed to eye disorders.



Routine veterinary health checks are recommended for all guinea pigs to promote earlier detection of disease and provide an opportunity for owners to discuss husbandry and diet with their veterinary practice.

[CLICK TO READ THE FULL STUDY](#)

O'Neill et al. (2023) "Demography, common disorders and mortality of guinea pigs under primary veterinary care in the UK in 2019 - A VetCompass Study"

RVC VetCompass <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass> carries out welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research.