



Guinea Pig Helpline Factsheet

The Place of Rodentologists

Please note that I do not represent the British Association of Rodentologists or any of their Members in any way, shape or form. My statement voices my entirely independent views based on my position as a pet owner interested in, and making use of, both the rodentology and veterinary fields.

Many a time the position of Rodentologists in guinea pig medical care has been questioned and even thoroughly demeaned with the message that ONLY a qualified veterinarian should have any say in a guinea pig's medical care, and no alternative research or suggestions should be sought. I have noticed that in the vast majority of cases these statements are made by those comfortable with the ability of their vet – which is fantastic as long as the vet is having success in treating these animals safely and effectively.

However a great many owners in every part of the country do not have access to vets who are able, experienced or even *willing* to treat guinea pigs, simply because of a lack of training, experience or interest in the species. Based on the variety of experiences presented informally to me over the years, there have been some vets who have no interest whatsoever in treating guinea pigs, some who will stick rigorously to the basics and do no more, and then there are those who openly admit they don't have experience of certain things but they would be willing to listen to and learn from other vets and also any suggestions provided by the owner.

Which is where I feel that reputable and highly experienced Rodentologists could, and indeed should, be considered for any suggestions they can offer based on their experiences and specialist interest in guinea pigs as a species. Most Rodentologists are little more than pet owners with a great interest and some training in health care; they know guinea pigs on a different level to many average guinea pig pet owners, and their experiences with their animals are constructively shared and used – by other Rodentologists and vets - to help other guinea pigs in need.

Rodentologists' learnings do not stop after their training; indeed, just as is required of qualified vets, it is experience over a period of time that teaches them the most. And it is important to remember that while no Rodentologist is perfect, no vet is perfect either.

I do not believe Rodentologists should ever entirely replace a veterinarian. Nor do I believe Rodentologists should be cast aside just because they do not have a veterinary background.

I firmly believe the future in improved veterinary care for guinea pigs will be the result of collaboration between highly experienced Rodentologists and vets.