



## EVC Times: March 2025

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PRIMARY + SPECIALTY + EMERGENCY/URGENT CARE

### What's Going on Inside Your Guinea Pig? Let's CT!

Bacterial infections in guinea pigs are very common and primarily affect the nose, ears, and lungs, often occurring together due to their interconnected airways. If left untreated they can become systemic and even lead to death. As guinea pigs are a prey species and adept at hiding their symptoms, their illnesses can go unnoticed for weeks or months. Signs to watch for are lack of appetite, weight loss, lethargy, nasal discharge or sneezing, noisy or pronounced breathing, digging at the ears, and head tilt.

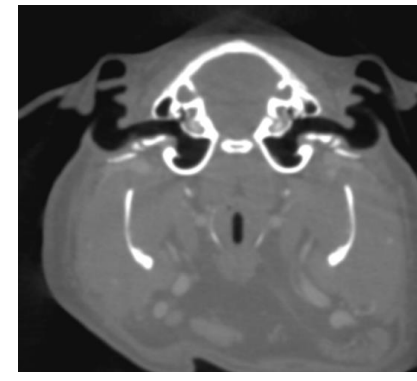
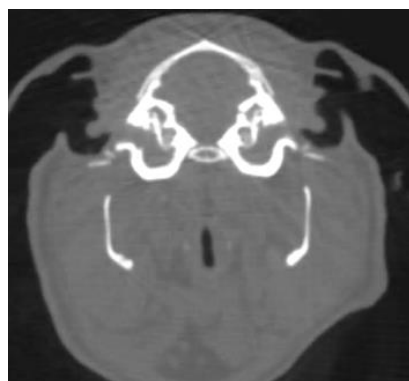
A CT scan is the best tool to evaluate the nasal passages, middle ears, and lungs, especially in early cases. It can not only give us a diagnosis but also evaluate the extent of the disease process which is necessary for a valid prognosis. We recommend imaging the whole pet to rule out other conditions which may be present.

Bacterial culture and sensitivity testing of the nasal passages or middle ear are needed for proper antibiotic selection. The most common pathogens we see are *Bordetella*, *Streptococcus*, *Pseudomonas*, and *Pasteurella*. If pneumonia is advanced, nebulization can be very helpful. For middle ear disease, myringotomy (making a surgical incision in the eardrum to allow drainage of fluid) and deep ear flushes are the best way to remove the exudate and apply medications directly to the site. Medical progress examinations are necessary to evaluate response to treatment.

Early intervention offers the best prognosis, as advanced cases may not respond to therapy. If your guinea pig or other exotic pet is showing any symptoms of concern, reach out by phone, app, or email and let's schedule your pet's appointment!



This 4-year-old female guinea pig came to see us due to intermittent lack of appetite, weight loss, and sneezing off and on. Her CT scan revealed multiple regions of thickening of the lung tissue (orange arrows) indicating pneumonia. Her full-body CT also revealed other findings including a right-sided cervical mass, urinary crystals, and arthritis.



This 1.5-year-old male guinea pig had been shaking his head off and on for 5 days, so his family brought him in for an exam which revealed dried exudate on both ears and discomfort. His CT (left image) showed chronic middle and inner ear disease indicated by the thickening of bone and obstruction of the ear canals, as opposed to the right image which shows a patient with no ear issues.

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