



# SPECIAL REPORT:



## Quick Medical Reference Guide: a-z

The following is intended to be a quick reference guide to a wide range of issues that can happen – but are not common – among Sugar Gliders. ***For detailed, step-by-step answers to the most common ailments, refer to the [Day 4 Special Report: “How do I know if my baby is sick?..”](#)***


**\*\*NOW FOR THE LEGAL DISCLAIMER STUFF \*\*** Even though the pro’s here at Pocket Pets have years of experience raising tens of thousands of Gliders – we aren’t “Vets” – and therefore cannot give out “Veterinary advice”. Therefore, you are always encouraged to consult a local Vet who has experience with Sugar Gliders for any urgent health needs.

## Ok, Let’s Dive In! . . .



# aflatoxicosis:

A hepatic (liver) disease caused by ingestion of aflatoxins, which are toxic metabolites produced by certain fungi in/on foods and feeds. At highest risk for contamination are corn, peanuts, and cottonseed. Aflatoxins are also carcinogenic (cancer causing). Sugar gliders can contract aflatoxicosis by eating crickets who have been fed contaminated corn, or eating peanuts.

## Causes:

-  Ingesting contaminated corn, peanuts, or insects who have ingested contaminated feed






## Prevention:

-  Do not feed your gliders insects
-  Do not feed your gliders peanuts



## Research:

-  Cornell University Animal Science Department

## Signs and Symptoms:

-  Loss of appetite
-  Anemia
-  Jaundice
-  Lethargy
-  Gastrointestinal dysfunction (bowel problems, diarrhea)



## Treatment:

-  If caught in time, aflatoxicosis is reversible
-  Seek veterinary care immediately. Once a sugar glider shows symptoms, death can occur within HOURS

# Calcium Deficiency

Because many fruits, vegetables and proteins in a glider diet have low calcium to phosphorous ratios, many gliders experience calcium deficiency, which can lead to HIND LEG PARALYSIS, a potentially fatal disease.

## Prevention:

-  Make sure they are eating their [Glide-A-Mins™](#) every other day as outlined in the [Special Reports \(link to my baby won't eat his food or vitamins\)](#). If they won't lick them off the apple, mix them into a flavor of yogurt you already know they like – or applesauce – or peach syrup from canned peaches... Whatever it takes to “trick” them into getting their vitamins.
-  Feed a well-balanced, nutritious diet of [Glide-R-Chow™](#) and [Glide-A-Mins™](#)

## Research:

-  USDA Nutrient Database: Find out calcium/phosphorous ratios

# Cat Food Complications:

The two major and potentially fatal complications gliders experience from eating cat food are "Lumpy Jaw" and Intestinal Blockage. Diets that are high in cat food also lead to Calcium Deficiency, liver problems, and, in some cases, death.

## Prevention:



**NEVER** feed cat food

# Constipation:

Constipation is passage of small amounts of hard, dry bowel movements. It may be difficult and painful to have a bowel movement.

## Causes:



Not enough fiber in diet

Not enough liquids

Use of pain medications

Lack of exercise

Stress

Gastrointestinal dysfunction

Poor diet overall

## Prevention:



Provide a well-balanced, nutritious diet of [Glide-R-Chow™](#) & [Glide-A-Mins™](#)

Provide fresh water at all times for your gliders

Provide enough exercise for your gliders

Monitor glider fecal matter to insure that stools are healthy

## Signs and Symptoms:



Straining or crying when having a bowel movement

Decrease or lack of bowel movements

## Treatment:



Baby food prunes, and orange juice may work as a temporary solution until veterinary assistance can be obtained



Small amounts of mineral oil have also been effective in treating glider constipation







Seek veterinary care as soon as possible



# Contact Dermatitis (Humans):

A HUMAN condition, which is an inflammation of the skin caused by direct contact with a foreign substance. In this case, it would be the paws of your gliders.


## Causes:

-  A history of allergies
-  The severity can vary with an individual over time
-  The skin reacts to the gliders paws as allergens and triggers an immune response that inflames the skin
-  Although there may be no initial reaction, repeated exposure can develop sensitivity






## Prevention:

-  Wear long sleeves when handling your gliders if you suspect you have an allergy
-  Wash skin surfaces thoroughly after handling your gliders




## Research:

-  Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia: Contact Dermatitis
-  Hendrick Health System Access Med Health Information Library: Dermatitis

## Signs and Symptoms:

-  A red rash limited to the area of skin that has come in contact with glider paws
-  Itching of the skin in exposed areas
-  Swelling in the area that had contact with the paws
-  Blisters or pimple-like rash
-  Tenderness or warmth in exposed area





## Treatment:

-  Thoroughly wash exposed area with water to remove irritants
-  File down Glider's nails with [EZ-TRIM™ Nail Trimming Insert](#)
-  Apply Hydrocortisone Cream to the affected area, being careful not to overmedicate

# Dehydration:


Occurs when the body does not have enough fluids to function at an optimal level. Any dehydration is a life-threatening situation and the condition is fatal, but reversible if caught in time.


## Causes:


-  Fluid loss (usually through vomiting or diarrhea)
-  Fluid loss due to excessive urination (as in diabetes or kidney disease)
-  Strenuous activity
-  Appetite loss associated with acute illness

 Inadequate water supply

**Prevention:**

 Always provide fresh water / Pedialyte / Gatorade mix for your gliders at all times. Do not ever use tap water. Bottled water only.


 Add an open container of water if in doubt (weighted ash tray works well)


 Always thoroughly wash food and check for safety before giving it to your gliders

 At the first sign of any problems with your glider, seek veterinary care

**Research:**


 Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia: Dehydration


 Hendrick Health System Access Med Health Information Library: Dehydration


 "*Sugar Gliders: Gotta' Love 'Em*", Kevin Schargen, Former President, ISGA, Critters Magazine


**Signs and Symptoms:**


 Loss of fluid through vomiting or diarrhea

 SEIZURES and/or WOBBLING


 If the skin on the back stands up when you pinch it, your glider is dehydrated


 Delayed capillary refill time (when you press on the gums of your glider with your finger, the spot remains white for an extended period of time)

 Membranes lining mouth and nose lose moisture

 Decreased or absent urine output

 Constipation

 Deep or rapid breathing


 Sunken eyes

 Lethargy

**Treatment:**

 Immediately print out [Day 4 Special Report: "How do I know if my baby is sick?.."](#) Follow instructions.


Administer water or Pedialyte using eye-dropper or a needle-less syringe

 Seek medical attention immediately! This is an emergency situation. A glider can dehydrate completely and die in a matter of twelve hours


## Depression:


Depression is a term that people commonly use to refer to states involving sadness, dejection, lack of self-esteem, and lack of energy. In sugar gliders, depression can lead to mental illness, self-mutilation, and death. Severe, persistent depressed mood and loss of interest or pleasure in normal activities, accompanied by decreased energy, changes in sleep and appetite, and feelings of guilt or hopelessness are all signs of depression and/or mental illness.

**Causes:**





 Keeping a lone sugar glider without playing with it on a regular basis

 Owner neglect



 Prolonged illness

 Loss of a companion





**Prevention:**

-  Keep more than one sugar glider – or play with them regularly
-  Provide your gliders with toys, a large enough cage, and play with them
-  Provide your glider with a healthy, well-balanced diet
-  Provide your glider with annual or bi-annual check ups at the vet to alleviate, treat, and/or prevent illness





**Research:**

-  Medline Plus: Depression
-  "*Sugar Gliders: Gotta' Love 'Em*", Kevin Schargen, Former President, ISGA, Critters Magazine

**Signs and Symptoms:**

-  Loss of interest in playing
-  Decreased activity
-  Change in sleeping patterns
-  Decreased communications: no barking






**Treatment:**

-  Lots of love, bonding time, and attention
-  Provide a glider companion for your glider
-  Ensure that the glider has an enriching environment
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## Diarrhea:

The passage of an increased amount of stool. Mild diarrhea is considered to be the passage of a few loose or mushy stools. Severe diarrhea is the passage of many watery or unformed stools.

**Causes:**

-  Viral or bacterial infection
-  Stress of moving to a new home
-  Parasites: Typically a Giardia "bloom"
-  Malabsorption (lactose intolerance, intolerance to specific foods, milk protein intolerance)
-  Bowel disease

**Prevention:**

-  Provide your glider with a healthy, well-balanced diet of [Glide-R-Chow™](#) & [Glide-A-Mins™](#)
-  Avoid trying new, "fun" foods. Test new treats ONE at a time after you have had them for a minimum of 6 weeks.
-  Keep cages well-cleaned
-  Remove any uneaten food as soon as possible from the cage
-  Carefully monitor stools when offering gliders a new food item. Discontinue if watery stools appear


### Research:

 Medline Plus: Diarrhea


### Signs and Symptoms:

 Loose bowel movements

### Treatment:

 Immediately print out [Day 4 Special Report: "How do I know if my baby is sick?.."](#) Follow instructions. Check to see if the diarrhea is diet-related (citrus fruits, pumpkin, and milk products are common culprits)

 If diarrhea is bad, administer Pedialyte to prevent dehydration

 Seek veterinary attention to rule out such causes as internal parasites or bacterial infection.

## Ears "Wilting" or drying up:

Although rare, there are a handful of reasons why a Sugar Glider's ears might "wilt" or dry up. One reason are injuries caused from scratching at tiny mites inside the ear.


The most common cause for ears drying up is a fungal infection. [Aspergillus fungus](#) is the most common culprit. If caught early, a vet can treat it with an antifungal medication. This fungus can also produce urinary tract symptoms, such as blood in the urine, and respiratory symptoms similar to colds. In those cases, systemic antifungals are needed.


Should you notice this condition, the best treatment is to take the animal to a vet and check for either mites or a fungal infection.


## Giardiasis (Giardia "bloom"):

A diarrheal illness caused by *Giardia intestinalis* (also known as *Giardia lamblia*), a one-celled, microscopic parasite that lives in the intestine of people and animals. The parasite is protected by an outer shell that allows it to survive in the environment for long periods of time. All Sugar Gliders carry *Giardia* as a natural part of their digestive system. It can remain dormant for up to six months, and only manifest systems when the glider becomes stressed. If this happens, diarrhea can set in – and death can occur within hours. There has never been a single documented case of a Glider ever passing *Giardia* along to humans.




### Causes:

 The parasite is passed in the stool of an infected person or animal



 Accidentally swallowing something that has come in contact with the stool of a person or animal infected with *Giardia*

 All Gliders naturally carry dormant *Giardia* as a part of their digestive system. It only becomes a problem when it "blooms" in their stomachs under prolonged periods of stress. This makes them feel "full", and they stop eating/drinking.








### Prevention:

-  Always thoroughly wash your hands
-  Always thoroughly wash and/or peel fruits and vegetables before feeding them to gliders
-  Do not use or ingest water that may be fecally contaminated









### Research:

-  Medline Plus: Giardiasis
-  CDC Giardiasis Fact Sheet

### Signs and Symptoms:

-  Change in behavior
-  Lameness
-  Diarrhea
-  Vomiting
-  Yellow tint to belly (Jaundice), indicating liver problems
-  Green color to stools
-  Dehydration


### Treatment:

-  Immediately print out [Day 4 Special Report: "How do I know if my baby is sick?.."](#) Follow instructions.
-  Seek veterinary care if case is severe – or no improvement is noticed.
-  Quarantine the animal with symptoms. Giardiasis is HIGHLY contagious to other Gliders.
-  Take special care with other animals and yourself. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling the infected glider and keep hands away from your mouth
-  Clean other glider cages
-  Thoroughly sterilize the cage and everything in it using [Squeak-E-Clean™](#)
-  Sterilize the cage and items again a week after improvement is noticed.
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## Hind Leg Paralysis


A common symptom of *nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism*, hind leg paralysis (HLP) is not a disease in and of itself. Low calcium levels result in calcium being leached from bone to compensate for low calcium in the bloodstream. This condition is fatal if not treated, but, in many cases, reversible.


### Causes:

-  Inadequate calcium absorption due to poor diet (low calcium, high phosphate, low Vitamin D) leads the glider's body to produce increased parathyroid hormone, which removes calcium from the bones

### Prevention:

-  Feed a well-balanced, nutritious diet of [Glide-R-Chow™](#) and [Glide-A-Mins™](#)


 Make sure they are eating their [Glide-A-Mins™](#) every other day as outlined in the [Special Reports \(link to my baby won't eat his food or vitamins\)](#). If they won't lick them off the apple, mix them into a flavor of yogurt you already know they like – or applesauce – or peach syrup from canned peaches... Whatever it takes to “trick” them into getting their vitamins.

 Maintain a positive calcium to phosphorous ratio in the overall diet

#### Research:


  The Pet Place: Nutritional Secondary Hyperparathyroidism

 Bristol BioMed Image Archive: Nutritional Secondary Hyperparathyroidism

 Hind Leg Paralysis in Sugar Gliders: A Personal Experience

#### Signs and Symptoms:

 Paralysis


 Lethargy

 Limping

 Fractured bones


 Tremors


 Weakness

 Loss of use of hind legs or favoring one leg

 Poor gripping ability

#### Treatment:

 If caught in time, this disease is reversible

 Immediately print out [Day 4 Special Report: “How do I know if my baby is sick?..”](#) Follow instructions. Seek veterinary care immediately if no improvement is noticed.


## Intestinal Blockage


The partial or complete mechanical blockage of the small or large intestine. The bowel is physically blocked. This most often occurs in sugar gliders when a foreign body is present in the intestines (such as wood, seeds, or millet), blocking the bowel.

#### Causes:


 A foreign body, such as seed husks, seeds, millet, or wood, physically blocks the intestines, allowing fecal matter to build up in the intestines

#### Prevention:


 Always feed your glider a healthy, well-balanced diet of [Glide-R-Chow™](#) & [Glide-A-Mins™](#)

 Never give gliders inexpensive dry cat food






 Moisten dry foods for easier digestion

 Steer clear of seeds, nuts and other dry foods


**Research:**

-  "Sugar Gliders: Gotta' Love 'Em", Kevin Schargen, former President, ISGA, Critters Magazine

**Signs and Symptoms:**

-  Abdominal fullness, bloating, or swelling
-  Vomiting
-  Diarrhea (if blockage is not complete)
-  Breath odor
-  Absence of passage of stool (when blockage is complete)


**Treatment:**

-  Seek veterinary care immediately! If blockage is complete, surgery will be needed



## Lumpy Jaw (Impacted Salivary Gland)

Lumpy jaw, or *actinomycosis* is an infection primarily caused by the bacterium *Actinomyces israelii*. Infection most often occurs in the face and neck region and is characterized by the presence of a slowly enlarging, hard lump. It produces abscesses and can also infect the lungs and intestinal tract and other parts of the body and can lead to gangrene and other complications. It is fatal if left untreated.



**Causes:**

-  Bacteria are introduced into the facial tissues by trauma, surgery, or infection. The most common cause in gliders is dental abscess




**Prevention:**

-  Moisten dry, hard foods before feeding them to your gliders
-  Do not feed low quality cat food to your gliders


**Research:**

-  Pawprint Online: Sugar Gliders 101
-  Medline Plus: Actinomycosis

**Signs and Symptoms:**

-  A swelling or hard lump appears on face, neck or chest
-  Weight Loss
-  Discharge draining out of the eye

**Treatment:**

-  Seek veterinary care immediately! To eradicate the bacteria, your glider will probably need a prescription medication



# Stress

Stress is defined as an organism's total response to environmental demands or pressures. When stress was first studied in the 1950s, the term was used to denote both the causes and the experienced effects of these pressures. More recently, however, the word stressor has been used for the stimulus that provokes a stress response. In gliders, stress can be fatal.

## Causes:

- Actual danger
- Grief or loss of a loved one (human or glider)
- Loneliness
- Illness
- Poor diet
- Thyroid problems
- Low blood sugar
- Sudden change in environment, diet, or companionship

## Prevention:

- Provide your gliders with a healthy, well-balanced diet
- Keep gliders in a pair if you cannot play with it on a regular basis
- Keep gliders in a large enough cage
- When a glider has experienced a change, give him extra attention and love, and watch closely for any sign of illness
- Give your gliders an hour or two of playtime each night
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## Research:

- Common Diseases in Sugar Gliders
- Pawprint Online: Lonely Glider's Club

## Signs and Symptoms:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Change in sleeping habits
- Self-mutilation
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## Treatment:

- If your glider is experiencing any illness brought on by stress, seek veterinary care immediately
- Spend lots of extra quality time with your glider



If the stress is coming because the glider is new to your home, make sure the glider has familiar surroundings (old pouch, same cage). Even if the pouch/cage is old or dirty, keep at least one item that is familiar and change slowly

## Toxicity Issues: Plants

See the following:



Special Report: [Day 27 - "What kind of PLANTS are safe for my baby\(ies\)?.."](#)

Prevention:



Do not expose your glider to any toxic plants



Do not give your gliders live tree branches unless you know they are 1) glider safe, and 2) uncontaminated from pesticides or chemicals

## Trichomoniasis

A bacterial disease caused by a flagellate organism known as trichomonas. Trichomonads are usually pear-shaped and possess anterior flagella with a recurrent anterior flagellum which is attached to the body as an undulating membrane. Trichomonas can infect birds, cattle, dogs, cats, rodents, primates, and humans, among other species.

Causes:



Ingesting food or water contaminated with the trichomonas organism

Prevention:



Provide fresh, BOTTLED water at all times for your gliders



Always wash raw foods thoroughly before offering it to your gliders



Always wash your hands before you prepare food for your gliders and before handling your gliders



Research:



Trichomonads Tutorial



Ask the Vet: Trichomonas



University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine: Trichomonas



Diagnostics of Veterinary Endoparasitic Disease

Signs and Symptoms:



Weight loss



Vomiting



Diarrhea



Change in fecal matter: feces may be golden in color, undigested food may be passed with feces, mucus may be present in feces






Dehydration



Loss of appetite

Treatment:

-  Quarantine the infected animal, and clean and wash the cage, toys, and anything with which the glider may have come in contact
-  Seek veterinary care immediately. The vet will need to do a direct fecal smear to test for the presence of the trichomonas organism, and prescription medication will probably be given to kill the bacteria.
-  Closely monitor other gliders who may have also been exposed to the organism. To be safe, get them all tested for the presence of trichomonas.

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed veterinarian should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions