

Guinea Pig Care:



Basic Information:

Guinea pigs are active, gentle pets that love companionship. The three most common breeds are the Peruvian, the American Shorthair, and the Abyssinian. Guinea pigs generally weigh between 1 to 3 pounds and their average life span is 5 to 8 years.

Housing:

The enclosure should be at least 6.5ft² (30"x36") to house 1-2 guinea pigs.

The enclosure also should not have a wire mesh bottom, which can hurt their feet. Only purchase a cage that has a solid metal or plastic bottom. Good ventilation is important, especially in warm weather.

You should not use wood shavings in your guinea pig's cage. Cedar shavings can cause liver disease and respiratory problems in guinea pigs. Pine shavings can also cause skin problems because they contain high amounts of harmful oils. The proper way to set up your cage is to put newspaper on the bottom as a liner, then add fleece or commercially available small animal bedding to make the cage comfortable for your guinea pig. Each guinea pig should have a place to hide when they feel nervous.

Understanding Their Language:

Guinea pigs communicate with humans and other pigs by making noises. It is important to learn your guinea pig's noises so you can understand how they are feeling. For example, if your guinea pig lets out a high pitched squeal when it is being held, that means that your pig is feeling uncomfortable being held that way. In that case it is best to put them back in their cage for a little while. They may also squeal if they hear the crinkle of a food bag. If your guinea pig lets out a purring sound then you can assume that it is happy. Chattering is a sign of distress. It is important to pay close attention to these sounds and other sounds your pet may make, and to understand what they mean.

Diet:

Guinea Pigs should always have access to pellets, hay and fresh water! Fruits and veggies can be an important part of the diet of a guinea pig as it adds needed vitamin c that guinea pigs cannot produce by their selves. Below are some foods Guinea Pigs can and can't eat!

Can eat: Romaine lettuce, kale, parsley, cilantro, red, green or yellow peppers, broccoli, tomatoes, carrots, zucchini, oranges, apples, strawberries

Can't eat: Iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, avocados, cabbage, potatos, onions, chocolate

*Timothy hay should be kept inside your guinea pig's enclosure at all times as it strengthens their digestive system and keeps its entire body running smoothly!

Daily Care and Upkeep:

You should clean your guinea pig's cage every day. Guinea pigs do not require any inoculations from the veterinarian, so the main way to keep them healthy is to keep their cage clean. Any build up of feces or urine can cause infections in your guinea pig. Spot clean any waste and soiled areas daily, and fully empty any bedding and clean the cage with a mild cleanser weekly. Cleaning the cage only takes a few minutes, but it is extremely important for your pig's health.

To gauge your pet's health, keep an eye on any signs of change. Look out for any itching, sneezing, wounds, lethargy, weight changes, and changes in eating, drinking, or elimination. Dull coat, runny eyes and nose, and waxy ears can also be signs of illness. When in doubt, reach out to a veterinarian.

Guinea pig teeth grow continuously and they cannot grind down their teeth naturally, so a hardwood branch or block of wood should be placed in the cage for them to chew on. The best kinds of woods are oak, cherry, or apple. Branches are often more interesting than blocks of wood.

Guinea pigs cannot keep their nails trimmed either, and if they grow too long the nails will curl and your pig will have a hard time walking. Nails should be clipped every two to three weeks in order to prevent curling. These can be done with small animal nail trimmers, which make the process a bit easier than using regular people nail clippers, though these can be used as well.

Social Life and Exercise:

Guinea pigs often love human companionship, and enjoy being held and cuddled by people once they are comfortable. Guinea pigs should get at least an hour of exercise and play time outside of their cage daily, and you should hold your guinea pig for at least one half hour a day. Parents should supervise children that are trying to handle the pig. Children can easily handle guinea pigs because they do not kick like rabbits, but they can be squirmy when they are uncomfortable. It is best to have your child sitting down with the pig in his lap, rather than walking around with the pig in his hands in order to ensure her safety.

Guinea Pig Facts:

- Guinea pigs have teeth that are constantly growing. This means they need to munch on food lots and lots to grind their teeth down.
- Guinea pigs are very sociable animals and are happiest living in a group. They should not be kept on their own as they get very lonely.
- These animals are crepuscular, which means they tend to be most active around dawn and dusk.

