



Introduction Guide To The Care Of Guinea Pigs

Scientific Name: *Cavia porcellus*

Life Span: Approx 5-8 years in captivity

Size: Approx 20 and 25 cm (8–10 inches)

Appearance: Larger than hamsters, but smaller than rabbits, guinea pigs can weigh a couple of pounds and generally live for five to seven years. The three most common breeds of guinea pig are the Smooth-Coated, with short, glossy fur; the Abyssinian, whose hair grows in fluffy tufts all over the body, and the Peruvian, with long, silky hair that flows to the ground. Guinea pigs make wonderful companions. These docile members of the rodent family rarely bite and are known for squeaking with delight when their favourite humans enter the room. Guinea pigs are excellent starter pets for older children who have mastered proper handling techniques.

Temperament and Handling: Do not handle your guinea pigs for 24hrs after taking them home. Give them time to adjust to their new surroundings. Place one hand over the top of the guinea pig, and slide your other hand underneath its belly to lift it out of the hutch. Small children should sit on the floor when handling guinea pigs to avoid them from being injured if dropped. Talking to your guinea pigs will help calm and re-assure them. Weekly grooming using a soft guinea-pig brush will help maintain a healthy shiny coat. This is especially important for long haired varieties. If you intend to breed your guinea pigs the ideal age for the female to have her first litter is 6 months to 1yr. After this time her pelvic bones will fuse and she will not be able to give birth to the babies unless she has already had a litter.

Housing: Guinea pigs can live outside during the summer months so long as their hutch is positioned in a shady area. Damp, cold and draughts can kill guinea pigs therefore they should be housed indoors or inside a shed during the winter months. The minimum hutch size is 2ft² per guinea pig. But obviously the more space you can give them the happier they will be. A run is essential for providing exercise during the summer months. Shelter must be available at all times to prevent the guinea pigs suffering from heat stroke. They will love playing with guinea pig toys, and sheltering in a guinea pig house, fiddle sticks or cardboard tunnels available at Weird N Wonderful. They may also enjoy going for a walk around your garden wearing a guinea pig harness.

Setting up a guinea pig hutch

-Place a thick layer of wood shavings across the bottom of the hutch.

-Fill the sleeping compartment with hay.



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Pets and reptiles

-Attach a water bottle to the front of the hutch where the guinea pigs can reach it easily. (This must be changed daily).

-Place a food bowl containing guinea pig food inside the hutch. Have a second bowl ready for their daily meal of fresh fruit and vegetables. Guinea pigs require two meals a day. Hutches should be cleaned out using small animal disinfectant at least once a week. More frequent cleaning is required during the summer months to avoid flies being attracted towards the hutch.

Heating and Lighting: (see above)

Feeding: Guinea pigs are unable to manufacture vitamin C and so require a daily supply (in the form of fresh fruit and vegetables) to prevent scurvy. Cauliflower leaves, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, cucumber, celery, greens, curly kale, tomatoes, apples, oranges, pears, melons, grapes, and bananas are usually enjoyed by guinea pigs. But too much fruit and vegetables will cause diarrhoea. They will also enjoy the vast range of treats available at surrey feed. Guinea pigs will occasionally be seen to eat their own droppings. This is necessary, as their digestive system cannot extract all the necessary vitamins the first time around. As your guinea pigs are members of the rodent family their teeth will grow continuously. By providing them with a constant supply of fresh hay and wooden gnaw treats you can prevent your guinea pigs teeth from overgrowing and requiring veterinary attention.

Please note that this is only an introductory guide based on our opinions and experience, we advise you to continually research and learn as much as possible from as many sources as you can, every animal is different and new care and information is always being developed and found 😊