

Guinea Pig Care Sheet



Your Pets Super Store

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Congratulations on your new pet. The guinea pig's endearing personality provides delightful companionship for both adults and families. Once settled in their new home they are inquisitive, friendly and talkative. With proper care and nutrition guinea pigs can live up to ten years. Guinea pigs have coats that come in many colors, lengths and textures. Two or more guinea pigs (usually females) can live together if given a large enough cage.

GENERAL-----

Most guinea pigs love to be petted once they are on your lap, but are cautious about being picked up. They have an excellent sense of smell and can recognize you by your personal scent, which is why it is important to wash your hands before handling your pet. Children must be supervised when holding a guinea pig and taught not to hug it tightly, or allow it to fall or jump. Guinea pigs are easily injured and may nip if not treated kindly. Regular exercise outside the cage is essential and great fun for the whole family! A folding exercise pen (Dreamzone makes a small animal pen suitable for guinea pigs) can keep your pet safe and in sight as well as keep your floors clean since guinea pigs do not use a litter box. Guinea pigs teeth grow constantly and therefore need plenty of hard chewing material such as Super Pet Branch Bites, Sunseed Chew Blox, Chew-A-Lots and Critter Cones.

HOUSING-----

Guinea pigs should be kept safe indoors and need as large a cage as possible, with room to exercise. Marchioro and preview Hendrix make good cages suitable for guinea pigs. One of our pet care specialists would be happy to help you with your selection. Look for a cage with a solid bottom, as wire floors and ramps can injure guinea pigs' feet. Cover the floor with bedding such as Carefresh, Pine or Aspen shavings. Avoid cedar, which contain harmful oils, and sawdust. The cage is best in a room where your pets can enjoy your company. Occasionally moving the cage to a new location can prevent boredom. Make sure the cage is not in direct sun or in a drafty place and that it is safe from other household pets that may cause harm to your guinea pig. Temperatures between 59-68 degrees fahrenheit are ideal. A chew safe hide box is important so that your pet has a quiet place to rest. Your guinea pig will also need a heavy, tip proof food bowl, a water bottle, hay rack and toys, such as cork tubes and ramps or hay balls. Moving toys around frequently keeps your pet interested and active.

DIET-----

Guinea pigs are herbivores and need plenty of fiber. A healthy diet is based on quality grass such as timothy, oat or orchard hay as well as guinea pig pellets. These should be available at all times as they tend to graze throughout the day. Constant chewing on hay also helps keep your pet's teeth from overgrowing. Babies under six months need alfalfa hay in their diet. Guinea Pigs may also enjoy some treats such as Kaytee Fiesta treats or Vitakraft Yogurt Drops. Remember to supply fresh water in a water bottle daily with Oasis Vita-drops with vitamin C. A small wedge of a fresh washed orange with the peel, a bit of fresh, washed parsley and occasionally a tiny bit of carrot can also be offered.

CLEANING-----

Every day wash the food and water bottle with hot water, using a bottle brush on the sipper bottle. Be sure the metal tube is cleaned as well and that water flows freely when the end is touched. Spot clean soiled areas two to three times a week. Scrub out the entire cage weekly with hot water. All toys and sleeping house should also be cleaned. Heavily soiled areas can be cleaned with Cage Wizard Plus. Always rinse and dry the cage well before adding the fresh bedding. Short haired guinea pigs groom themselves but enjoy a bit of brushing with a soft bristle brush. Long haired guinea pigs need a little more help; they should be combed and brushed daily.

HEALTH-----

Proper care is essential for your guinea pigs health. Guinea pigs need regular exercise to maintain good health. Being avid chewers you must be careful when letting your pet wander out of its cage, electrical wires, house plants and other household items can be hazardous. If you have other pets in your home you need to be sure they cannot hurt your guinea pig. Cats and ferrets are carnivores therefore, rodents are their natural prey. Exercise balls should be used with supervision so your pet does not fall, get stuck and panic or escape. Never let your guinea pig sit in wet bedding or leave it in a cold, damp location. Leftover food and droppings are an ideal place for germs to grow which can quickly lead to illness. Be sure to pay attention to the length of the toenails, because overgrown nails cause the animal pain. Creature Comforts offers a nail clipping service for a minimal fee if you do not feel comfortable with that task. Find a veterinarian specializing in exotic animals and experienced in treating guinea pigs before you need one. One of our pet care specialists can make a recommendation. The following signs mean your pet needs URGENT veterinary care: not eating or drinking, lethargy, sneezing, wheezing, crusty eyes, fluffed up fur, diarrhea, blood in urine, loss of balance, tilted head, excessive scratching or hair loss. Penicillin-based drugs, commonly prescribed for other pets, are TOXIC to guinea pigs.

FERTILITY-----

Male guinea pigs can be sexually mature at three weeks old. Make absolutely sure of your pet's sex and keep males and females separate at all times to prevent unwanted babies. Due to the health risks, breeding pet guinea pigs is STRONGLY discouraged.

CHECKLIST-----

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| _____ cage, as large as possible | _____ water bottle and bottle brush |
| _____ heavy food dish | _____ Carefresh or others safe bedding |
| _____ variety of chew sticks and toys | _____ sleeping / hiding box |
| _____ folding pet play pen | _____ fresh timothy or orchard hay |
| _____ fresh guinea pig pellets | _____ healthy training treats |
| _____ soft brush | |