



NATURE'S
FEAST

**Guide to
caring for your
Guinea Pig**



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Guinea Pigs

The Guinea Pig (*Cavia porcellus*), also known as the cavy, is a species of rodent belonging to the family Caviidae. Despite their name they are not related to pigs, nor do they come from Guinea.

In fact they come from the grasslands of the Andes in South America. There they have played an important part in local culture for over a thousand years, and were probably domesticated by indigenous tribes as early as 1000 BC. Even now, wild populations still exist in South America. They are related to their larger cousins, the Mara, Agouti and Capybara.

They were brought to Europe about four hundred years ago, as curiosities and then pets.

General Information

LIFESTAGES

Junior

Age: **0-16 weeks**

Birth weight: **70 - 110g**

Eyes open: **At birth**

Young: **Pups**

Weaning age: **21 days**

Litter size: **2 - 4 (up to 17!)**

Adult

Male: **Boar**

Female: **Sow**

Pregnancy: **59-72 days**

Weight: **Males 900 - 1200g**

Weight: **Females 700 - 900g**

Sexual Maturity: **Males less than 2 months**

Sexual Maturity: **Females from 6 weeks**

Senior

From Age: **5 - 8 years**

Life Expectancy: **Up to 8 years**



The nutrition your Guinea Pig needs

WATER

Guinea Pigs should always have access to fresh clean water, which can be supplied either in a bowl or a drinker. The water should be changed on a daily basis. Vitamin supplements should not be added to the water, as this can lead to an overgrowth of bacteria unless strict hygiene is maintained.

HAY

Guinea Pigs eat grass, but when that is not available they should always have access to an constant supply of hay. Ideally they should be provided with a similar volume as their body size on a daily basis.

FOOD

Guinea Pigs should have access to a daily portion of nuggets to ensure that they receive the vitamins and minerals they need.

FRUIT & VEGETABLES

Guinea Pigs enjoy a balanced diet of fresh fruit and vegetables such as Apples, Asparagus, Basil, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cantaloupe Melon, Carrots and Carrot Tops, Cauliflower Leaves and Stalks, Celery, Chicory, Chinese Parsley, Coriander, Cucumber, Dill, Garden Cress, Grapefruit, Gooseberries, Honeydew Melon, Kale, Kiwi Fruit, Mangoes, Oranges, Parsley, Parsnips, Peas, Red Cabbage, Red Chard, Romaine Lettuce, Savoy Cabbage, Spinach, Strawberries, Tangerines, Tomatoes, Turnips and Water Cress.

SNACKS

Hand feeding snacks is an excellent way to bond with your Guinea Pig. Avoid feeding sugary treats as this can lead to obesity and other health issues.

Guinea Pigs
have a very sweet
tooth so be careful
not to over feed

FRUIT & VEGETABLES TO AVOID

Some vegetables are bad for Guinea Pigs such as Potato and Potato Tops, Rhubarb and Rhubarb Leaves and Tomato Leaves.

Please note
this is not a
complete list so
always check if
you are unsure.



5 Welfare Needs for your Guinea Pig

1. Suitable environment

Companionship

Guinea Pigs should ideally be kept in single sex groups or pairs. Guinea Pigs should never be housed or kept with rabbits as they often get bullied. Also their dietary requirements are different.

Housing

The house is really just a bedroom at one end, a toilet and a dining room. They always need access to more space for exercise and mental stimulation. The house must be at least five times the Guinea Pig's length and at least a foot wide.

Houses
must be at least
five times the
length of the
Guinea Pig

Lining

Line the floor of the house with newspaper covered with either soft, non dusty, wood chippings or shredded paper, mixed in with fresh straw bedding.

Location

The house can be either indoors or outdoors, but must be protected from the wind and rain. The temperature in the house shouldn't drop lower than 18°C and should also not be in direct sunlight, or they will get too hot.

Clean the hutch two or three times a week. Guinea Pigs are generally very clean and will create a 'toilet' in a corner. Make sure that there is always clean, fresh bedding available.

They should have access to an area for exercise on a daily basis.

2. A proper diet including fresh water and hay

Hay or Grass

As obligate fibre eaters, they need a high fibre diet. A constant supply of good quality hay or grass should always be available.

Nuggets

Predominantly made up of grass and other fibrous ingredients, with additional vitamins and minerals, including vitamin C to help maintain good overall health. Follow the feeding guide on the back of pack and adjust up or down, as needed, to maintain a healthy weight.

Fresh Vegetables and Healthy Snacks

These provide emotional and mental stimulation, as well acting as a source of vitamins and minerals. But be careful that you do not give the wrong sort of fresh food. They need high fibre vegetables, be careful not to over feed sugary treats.

Water

Guinea Pigs should have a constant supply of clean water.

5%
Snacks and
Fresh Greens

20%
Guinea Pig
Nuggets

75%
Good Quality
Hay

Always have
clean fresh
Water



3. Ability to express normal behaviour

Guinea Pigs can make very rewarding pets as they are relatively docile, whilst being interactive and sociable. They are unusual amongst small animals as they “talk” to each other and their owners in a range of noises including “wheeks”, “chirps”, “chattering”, “rumbling” and “purring”.

Guinea Pigs, especially young ones, occasionally display a behaviour known as “popcorning”, where they bounce and jump around. This is a normal, pleasurable activity, although it can look like seizing at first!

Exercising and playing with your Guinea Pig is great as it helps prevent behavioural problems such as fur plucking, which can arise if they get bored. It also allows for a good chance to check them over and make sure there are no problems.

In the summer, if possible, allow them access to a predator proof exercise area. They love to graze, so if you can provide some grass, even better. Make sure that this area is safe; they cannot escape, no predators can get in, and they do not have access to poisonous plants. They should always have access to a bolt hole or refuge.

4. Companionship and other pets

Guinea Pigs are social animals and should be kept at least in pairs.

They enjoy company and, if handled carefully from a young age, are very rewarding, social pets. However when being handled they must be held by supporting their weight with one hand under their bottom.

5. Protection from and treatment of illness and injury

It is recommended that males and females are neutered. This prevents unwanted pregnancies, it also makes them calmer and less aggressive.

Being prey animals they have evolved to help them avoid predators. Response to perceived danger is to freeze or flight (as opposed to fight or flight). If frightened they tend to become immobile or make an explosive attempt to escape. They also hear very well and at high frequencies.

SOME POISONOUS PLANTS TO BE AWARE OF:

Bindweed, Bryony, Buttercup, Bluebell, Crocus, Daffodil, Dock, Foxglove, Hyacinth, Laburnum, Poppy, Ragwort, Sorrel, Antirrhinum (Snapdragon), Tulip and Yew.

Please note
this is not a complete list so always check if you are unsure



Common Guinea Pig Breeds

There are many breeds of guinea pig to choose from, all of which differ in colour, shape and size.



Short Haired



American (or English)

Long Haired



Peruvian

Rosette Hair Pattern



Abyssinian

Guinea Pigs
are unusual amongst
small animals as
they "talk" to
each other

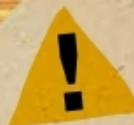
Health and Wellbeing of your Guinea Pig

Health checks are important for your Guinea Pig. Owners should develop a routine to do this regularly...



Regular health checks

- ✓ **Eyes:** Clear bright and alert
- ✓ **Ears:** Clean, dry and free from discharge
- ✓ **Nose:** Clean, dry and free from discharge
- ✓ **Teeth:** Front teeth should meet correctly
- ✓ **Coat:** Clean, free from knots, matting or bald spots. Should also be free from parasites such as fleas, mites or ticks
- ✓ **Bottom:** Clean and dry
- ✓ **Healthy weight:** Between 700g - 1.2kg depending on size
- ✓ **Good appetite:** Guinea Pigs should eat a good quantity of quality hay, some nuggets and fresh leafy vegetables
- ✓ **Attentive and alert**



Signs to look out for

- ⚠ Subdued and not active/interacting as they would normally
- ⚠ Discharge from eyes, ears or nose
- ⚠ Over grown teeth, drooling or blood coming from the mouth
- ⚠ Laboured breathing
- ⚠ Changes in coat/matting/bald patches
- ⚠ Parasites such as fleas, mites or ticks
- ⚠ Reduced appetite
- ⚠ Weight gain or loss
- ⚠ Swollen abdomen
- ⚠ Change in droppings consistency and shape
- ⚠ Sticky, dirty bottom
- ⚠ Swollen limbs and/or limping

A proper diet is essential for the health of your guinea pig

If you are concerned about the health of your guinea pig consult a VET

With natural ingredients that bring out your Guinea Pigs personality

Guinea Pig Nugget, Grass & Veg Mix

A healthy and tasty blend of nuggets with rye grass and veggies for variety and stimulation.

Our food should be fed alongside hay or grass, some fresh greens and occasional snacks.

Feeding guide

Suitable for all guinea pigs

Guinea Pig Weight	Daily amount of Food per Guinea Pig
0.7 - 1.2kg	25-50g 1-2 serving spoons

Specially blended to:

- Add variety and interest
- Encourage foraging behaviours
- Maintain healthy teeth
- Help digestion
- Stimulate the senses

Snack Selection

A selection of three snack pots for Small Animals in easy to store containers

- Fruit Garden
- Vegetable Patch
- Flower Garden

Natural
prebiotics
from
CHICORY

RICH
in fibre

with
vegetables
for natural
GOODNESS

Encourages
FORAGING

