

Breeding Guinea Pigs

Mature females will be willing to mate with the male about twice each month until pregnant. Birth will occur after 60 to 70 days. The boar should be removed from the sow's cage several weeks before birth is expected and kept separate until the young are about a month old. Baby guinea pigs will nurse for about three weeks, although they will eat guinea pig food pellets within a day after being born.

Health Care—Some common problems in guinea pigs are:

Lack of vitamin C. Possibly the number one cause of debilitating conditions. Guinea pigs require 10 to 12 milligrams of vitamin C daily, with a 50 percent increase if the female is pregnant. This important vitamin can be provided in the specially-formulated guinea pig food diet and vitamin supplements.

Diarrhea caused by foul water or eating too many greens. Change water and sanitize bottle and tube frequently. Limit greens until condition clears up.

Colds and respiratory ailments caused by wet bedding, soiled cages, cold temperatures, drafts and environmental stress. Preventing these conditions is easier than attempting a cure.

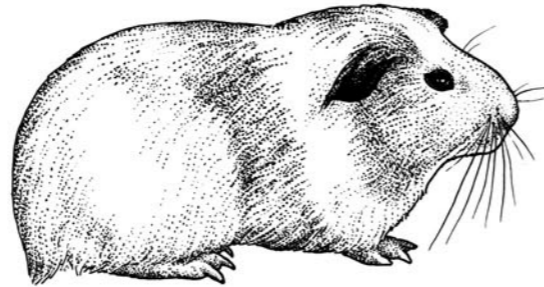
Dental maintenance. A guinea pig's teeth continue to grow over its lifetime and are routinely ground down by chewing. Sometimes the teeth will overgrow and must be trimmed if an abrasive substance for gnawing is not provided.

Illness

Do not self-treat any illness with antibiotics. Penicillin, for example, is deadly to guinea pigs. Check with your veterinarian for remedies to prevent or cure any abnormal conditions.

Finally

This informational pamphlet is not a substitute for a good book or veterinary care. Visit your pet store for a selection of books on the responsible care and maintenance of your pet guinea pig. Your pet store is the one source of important information and supplies useful in successfully raising your pet.



A PUBLIC SERVICE OF THE PET INFORMATION BUREAU
PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL
1710 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

MY GUINEA PIG

Guinea Pig's Name: _____

Date Purchased: _____

Veterinarian: _____

Phone: _____

Vet Checks	Date	Care Prescribed
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Food:

Type:	Frequency
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(IMPRINT PET STORE STAMP BELOW)



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TAKING CARE OF YOUR GUINEA PIG



PET INFORMATION BUREAU

"WE CARE ABOUT PET CARE"™

"WE CARE ABOUT PET CARE" and we know you do, too!

This guide will answer many of your questions and will help you take good care of your guinea pig. Sometimes you will have to consult your veterinarian on animal health problems. You, your veterinarian and your pet store will form the team which will be responsible for your guinea pig's well-being during its lifetime. A guinea pig is a lovable pet, good with children and well-suited for apartment living.

Characteristics

Guinea pigs (or cavies from their scientific classification, *Cavia porcellus*) originated in the mountains of Peru. Their popular name harks back to the Age of Exploration when sailors visiting ports in South America were introduced to these pets. The animals' squeals so reminded the sailors of the barn yard pigs back home that the name stuck. Even today, the males are called boars and the females are known as sows.

Guinea pigs come in many varieties of color, can have long or short hair and are cuddly and affectionate. The three most common haircoats are the smooth shiny short hair variety, named the English (or American). The most popular haircoat is swirled, with rosettes on both head and body. This fur pattern is called Abyssinian (or Texas). The third, named the Peruvian, has very long hair which is parted down the middle of the back and gives the pet the appearance of an animated dust mop.

Guinea pigs squeal or whistle when they recognize the footsteps or voice of their owner, when they are hungry, or interested in a cage mate. Guinea pigs rarely bite, pre-

ferring instead to hide if frightened or sensing danger. These animals do well alone, bonding very quickly with a gentle, caring owner. By nature, guinea pigs are social creatures and do well in colonies or with one another, however, hair chewing may occur as a dominance pattern is established.

Handling

Guinea pigs respond to love and attention. Talk to and pet your guinea pig while you are holding him, during visits, and at meal time. Always handle your guinea pig gently. Begin holding it while it is young so it will become used to you. To pick a guinea pig up, hold it gently but firmly in the neck and shoulder area with one hand. Cradle the rest of its body with your other hand and arm. Avoid twisting its body or other rough handling which could damage its spine. Remember that guinea pigs are fragile, so please handle with care! Limit the number of times you pick up your pet. Too much handling can cause stress.

Housing

Your pet shop can suggest a good enclosure for your pet. The number of guinea pigs you wish to house together should determine the size you need, about two square feet of floor space per animal. A good cage will have a solid or slatted flooring with a cage-like top. Never use chicken wire or wide meshed material for the floor of the enclosure. The tiny feet of your pet could pass through a mesh flooring, resulting in serious injury. The cage should provide good ventilation (avoiding drafts and sudden temperature changes), easy observation of the animal, and protection from other pets such as dogs and cats.

Make sure one end of the enclosure can be used as the resting area. Guinea pigs do not jump or climb very well, but they enjoy crawling up slight inclines. A ramp leading to a sitting area serves this purpose nicely.

Keep bedding clean and dry. Change frequently. White pine chips, peat, hay, or alfalfa are all inexpensive and comfortable bedding and nesting material. Corn cob granules and sawdust are not recommended as they tend to adhere to the genital orifices. If red cedar chips are used, they should be mixed with one of the other recommended bedding materials.

Check the enclosure daily, removing any wet bedding material, wilted greens, or droppings. Clean the housing unit thoroughly once a week. Flooring should be washed with a detergent soap and hot water and a mild disinfectant. Rinse, then dry with paper towels before adding new bedding material.

Feeding

An important factor in keeping your guinea pig healthy is its diet. The diet must be a good quality guinea pig food available at your pet store. This food, made in pellet form, is a mixture of vegetables and grains fortified with vitamins and minerals. Guinea pigs will eat several meals a day, so make sure pelleted food is available at all times.

Guinea pig diets contain vitamin C which your pet needs on a daily basis because it cannot internally manufacture this vitamin. Without daily doses of this important vitamin, your pet would soon develop scurvy and become paralyzed. Your pet store also carries a vitamin supplement, in liquid or

powder form, which completes the nutritional needs of your pet. In addition, guinea pigs enjoy munching on carrots, apples and a variety of green vegetables, including: cabbage, cauliflower, dandelions, lettuce, and chickweed.

Thoroughly wash green vegetables before offering them to your pet. This rids them of harmful pesticides or dirt particles. Dry the greens well. (Wet vegetables or excessive amounts of fresh foods may trigger diarrhea.) Remove uneaten fresh foods from the animal's cage daily. Various other guinea pig treats are available at your pet store. Guinea pigs enjoy sun-dried alfalfa and seed treats. You may keep these in the enclosure at all times. Never feed your guinea pig rhubarb. The leaves of the rhubarb plant contain a poisonous acid, which if ingested, could be deadly to your pet. Rabbit food should not be fed to your guinea pig, as it does not contain the needed vitamin C.

Furnish your pet with a salt and mineral block. Like all non-meat eating small animals (herbivores), guinea pigs require salt and mineral supplements to their diet. Additionally, these mineral blocks aid in keeping your pet's teeth even and uniform. Your pet store also has wood chewies and sterilized bones available to prevent tooth overgrowth.

Fresh water must be provided at all times. Open dishes are not recommended, since the guinea pig could easily tip over the water and wet the bedding. A water bottle with a sipper tube can be easily attached to the housing unit which prevents it from being knocked over or spilled. The bottle should be emptied, rinsed and filled every day and sanitized once a week.