



Our Guide to



Guinea Pigs

What's Awesome About Guinea Pigs



Guinea pigs have a large vocabulary and love to chatter away to each other and their humans, especially at feeding time. They also have a variety of different coat types, from short to long, straight to curly, and even spikey. Originally from South America, these cute furry potatoes became popular pets after their domestication. They are naturally shy animals and need early socialisation to form close bonds with their human companions. However, with time, patience and lots of their favourite foods, they quickly grow in confidence.

Guinea pigs are also known as Cavies, with males called boars and females called sows, although they aren't in any way related to pigs. They also only have three toes on their back feet.



Things to Think About

Guinea pigs make wonderful pets, but there are a number of things which need to be carefully considered before adding guinea pigs to the family. They have a relatively long life-span of 6-8 years, so are a long-term commitment if taking on youngsters.

Those with allergies need to carefully consider whether guinea pigs will make suitable pets, they can be especially bad for some asthma sufferers and those with allergies to hay. With their need for a warm environment during winter they do need to be kept inside from early autumn to late spring, so may not be suitable for some households.

Long haired guinea pigs need regular grooming and trims to keep their coats in good condition and free from knots and tangles. It can take some time for them to get used to this, but they are generally pretty cooperative. If you can't commit to regular grooming short haired breeds would be more suitable.

Diet

Guinea pigs, like humans, are unable to manufacture vitamin C from their diet, so it is important that we supply them with a daily dose of the vitamin through fresh veg. Although many guinea pig pellets contain vitamin C, this doesn't provide enough of the vitamin to keep them in tip top health.



A commercial pellet specifically designed for guinea pigs should be offered once a day, we recommend Science Selective.



A good quality long stranded hay needs to be provided at all times and should make up the bulk of their diet.



Each guinea pig should have 1 cup of vitamin C rich fresh food everyday. Popular favourites are rocket, parsley, red bell peppers, cucumber, kale and spinach.



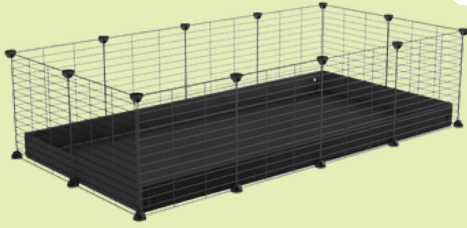
For a bit of variety and a treat you can add dried forage such as plantain, and small amounts of dried flowers.

Enrichment

Guinea pigs love items that provide cover, and should be provided with plenty of hiding spaces within their enclosure. Encouraging foraging behaviour is a great way to help keep them active and interested in their environment. Hiding dried forage and flowers around their enclosure, or under stacking cups is a great way to replicate foraging behaviours in captivity. Willow balls and other chewable items are also favoured by some guinea pigs.



Housing



Guinea pigs need to be kept indoors once temperatures drop below 12C. A pair of guinea pigs need a continuous floor space of at least 140cm x 60cm, with bigger herds requiring more space.

For indoor housing we recommend C&C cages, which can be purchased as ready made kits or you can buy the grids and cortex yourself. The best bit about C&C cages is that it's very easy to make them larger if you want to increase your herd size.

Other Important Things



Guinea pigs & rabbits - It used to be common place to house rabbits and guinea pigs together, however, it is no longer advisable. They have different dietary needs and rabbits can seriously injure guinea pigs.

Company - As social animals guinea pigs need company of their own kind. Males can fall out when they reach sexual maturity and we neuter all males to help prevent this. It is less common for females to fall out.



Vet Care - Guinea pigs are classed as exotics within the veterinary industry and therefore owners need to carefully select a suitable vet able to treat them. We recommend Origin Vets for West Wales and Origin Vets Clinic for South Wales.