



www.cavyhaven.org

(714) 242-7548

2052 Newport Blvd. #6-189 * Costa Mesa, CA 92627

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. At least one guinea pig friend of the same sex is recommended. With proper care and nutrition guinea pigs can live up to 10 years, though the average is 6-8 years.

Essentials

- Large Cage (as large as possible, no wire floor, no aquariums)
- 2 water bottles
- 1 ceramic food bowl or aluminum trough
- 2 hay racks
- 1 hiding house
- Bag of bedding, Thoroughbed, Aspen, Kiln Dried Pine or Carefresh (no cedar)
- Large bag of green Timothy hay
- Additional bag of Alfalfa hay for babies up to 6 months old and pregnant mothers
- Plain Guinea Pig pellets (no seeds or nuts)
- Fresh green vegetables (Variety! Romaine lettuce, cilantro, chard, carrot...)
- Small piece of fruit (cantaloupe, kiwi, orange...)
- Nail Clippers
- Carrier for Travel

General - Regular exercise outside the cage is essential to your guinea pig's health and is great fun for the whole family. A room can be made safe for guinea pigs by preventing access to electrical cords, blocking gaps under appliances and furniture and removing hazardous items. Alternatively, a playpen will allow your pets to romp in safety. Guinea pigs enjoy a variety of safe toys such as wide tubes, cartons, and wood bird toys.

Most guinea pigs love being petted once they are on your lap, but are cautious about being picked up. Children must be supervised when holding a guinea pig and taught not to hold it too tightly or allow it to fall or jump. Guinea pigs are easily injured and may nip if not treated kindly.

Housing - Guinea pigs should be kept indoors, safe from predators and climate extremes. Choose or make as large a cage as possible, with plenty of room for exercise. Aquariums are not suitable, due to poor ventilation. 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, Kiln dried Pine or Aspen shavings. Avoid cedar, which contains harmful oils, and sawdust. (Continued...)

Housing Continued -The cage is best in a room where your pets can enjoy your company, out of drafts and direct sunlight. A temperature range of 65-75 deg. F is ideal. Guinea pigs love a house or igloo to rest in and appreciate a few safe toys to play with, such as untreated wood bird toys. Choose heavy food dishes, or those that clip onto the cage, so the contents don't spill.

Many guinea pig enthusiasts build their own cages. The homemade Cube and Coroplast, or “C and C” cage is inexpensive and easily assembled in about 30 minutes. You can find out all about these cages at www.guineapigcages.com

Diet - A healthy diet for adults is based on quality grass hay, e.g. Timothy, and guinea pig pellets, both freely available at all times. Babies under 6 months and pregnant sows need alfalfa hay. A constant supply of hay provides fiber, vital to keep the teeth and digestive system in good shape. Guinea pigs must have adequate Vitamin C in their diet or they can develop a disease called scurvy and die.

Look for plain pellets containing vitamin C but without seeds, nuts or colored treats. The bag should be date stamped to ensure freshness and Vitamin C potency.

Also provide each guinea pig a cupful of mixed fresh vegetables and fruit daily. Choose produce with a high Vitamin C content, such as parsley, Romaine lettuce, bell peppers and dandelion greens. Nutritional supplements are not necessary if a good, varied diet is provided. Your guinea pig's water should be changed daily so that the water is fresh and clean.

Cleaning - Spot clean soiled areas 2-3 times a week and add clean bedding. Scrub out the entire cage weekly, as well as food dishes and water bottles. Always rinse and dry the cage well before adding fresh bedding.

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.

Health - Find a veterinarian specializing in exotic animals and experienced in treating guinea pigs before you have an emergency. Guinea pigs try to hide signs of illness, so by the time you notice something is wrong the illness is usually well-advanced.

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. Keeping a weekly record of your pet's weight will alert you to weight loss, which often indicates a health problem.

Warnings - Penicillin-based drugs, commonly prescribed for other pets, are TOXIC to guinea pigs. Exercise wheels and balls can cause injury to guinea pigs and should never be used. Never leave your guinea pigs unsupervised where a predator or other pet could harm them.

More Info www.guinealynx.com www.pigloo.net, <http://www.aracnet.com/~seagull/Guineas/>
www.cavyspirit.com, www.guineapigcages.com, www.guineapighome.com