

New Pet Shopping List

- ☑ Water bottle
- ☑ Small heavy ceramic bowl for pellets
- ☑ Large cage – see Housing for particulars
- ☑ Toys – Igloo, plastic toys that your pig can throw around
- ☑ Safe litter – such as aspen shavings, Carefresh, Tek Fresh, Yesterday's News.
- ☑ Food – Plain dye-free high quality guinea pig pellets. Unlimited high quality, grass hay (timothy, orchard grass and bluegrass.
- ☑ Vitamin C
- ☑ Veterinarian – It's important you have a vet that has experience with guinea pigs. Just like any animals, guinea pigs will eventually need vet care, and getting one now before you need a vet later is a good idea

The Perfect Pet

A guinea pig can be one of the most endearing and wonderful pets. They may live as long as 9 years (the average is 5 to 7), so the decision to bring one into your home must be made carefully.

Your cavy (the proper name guinea pigs are known by) will depend on you for food, water, medical care and companionship.

Handling & Play

Daily exercise outside the cage will help your cavy maintain good health. Exercise wheels and exercise balls are not recommended for guinea pigs.

Resources

www.guinealynx.com is a great source of information. There is also a forum full of knowledgeable people willing to answer questions.

www.cavycages.com has directions for building your own cage using storage cubes and corrugated plastic.

Cavy Care Schedule

Daily

- Fresh water

Every Other Day

- Dump and refill litter boxes

Twice Weekly

- Clean cage and replace bedding

Weekly

- Scrub water bottles with bottle brush
- Weigh pigs and keep a record
- Health check:
 1. **Eyes:** Any discharge or cloudiness?
 2. **Nose:** Any discharge or "crusties"?
 3. **Mouth:** Look for broken teeth, swollen gums, rancid breath, incisors that are too long.
 4. **Skin:** Be alert for dandruff, scabs, red or greasy skin.
 5. **Feet:** Check bottoms of feet for swelling, redness, blisters and sores. Check for spurs on front feet. Look for broken/missing nails and nail bed fungus.
 6. **Coat:** Any missing fur? Thinning hair? Broken off shafts? Greasy hair? Mats or tangles, especially near the pig's bottom?

Sows: Check for weight gain, hair loss, enlarged or elongated nipples, discharge from the vagina, irritable behavior.

Boars: Check for full anal sac, discharge from penis, debris caught in the penile shaft, matted hair around grease gland.

Every Two Weeks

- Trim nails
- Clean boar's anal sac

Your Guinea Pig: a care guide



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Housing

Guinea pigs need lots of space to run around, and require a fairly large cage. Aim for 7 square feet for one guinea pig, adding 1 or 2 square feet for each additional animal. A larger cage will require less frequent cleaning and provide room to play, for toys and exercise. If you don't have other pets that will interfere with your pigs, an open topped cage is great as it allows unobstructed interaction. A great source for building your own cage using storage cubes and Coroplast is www.cavycages.com. Avoid wire bottoms, ramps or shelves as they can cause foot problems. Aquariums are too small and have poor ventilation.

Make sure the cage has good ventilation, as guinea pig urine produces ammonia vapors that can hurt the respiratory system. A guinea pig's cage needs to be cleaned at every 3 - 4 days. Cover the floor with 1 - 2 inches of aspen shavings, TekFresh, CareFresh or Yesterday's News. A layer of hay can be added over the litter, wet hay should be removed daily. Pine and Cedar wood chip beddings should not be used as they damage the respiratory tract, causing chronic respiratory disease, and asthma. Sawdust is too dusty, clay cat litters can clump to feet and corn cob litter is hard on feet and prone to mold. Wee Companions has many types of appropriate bedding available for purchase.

Breeding

Wee Companions does not endorse the breeding of animals and any guinea pigs adopted from us are not to be bred under any circumstances.

Breeding any animal responsibly means making an effort to improve the species as a whole, and guinea pigs are no exception. It's important to know the genetic history of guinea pigs that are bred so lines with possible health problems are not continued. Breeding guinea pigs should not be taken lightly; there are many complications that can arise during pregnancy and birth.

Diet

Vitamin C – Guinea pigs cannot produce their own vitamin C and require 10 to 30 mg/kg daily to prevent scurvy. You can provide this by giving a quarter of a 100mg chewable or plain vitamin C tablet daily. Young, ill, nursing and pregnant animals require extra vitamin C.

Water - Fresh, cool water should be provided in a drip bottle and replaced daily.

Pellets – A guinea pig requires approximately 1/8 cup of plain dye-free high quality guinea pig pellets daily, if they are also getting fresh hay and vegetables every day. Avoid mixes with nuts as they are considered too high in fat. Alfalfa pellets are suitable for young, growing and pregnant guinea pigs. After your guinea pig is a year old you may wish to switch to a timothy based pellet, which provides less calcium.

Grass Hay – Unlimited high quality, grass hay (timothy, orchard grass or bluegrass) should always be available no matter what age. Grass hay keeps their digestive system moving and helps prevent their teeth from over-growing. Alfalfa can be given to young pigs, pregnant, nursing or malnourished adults. Because of its high calcium content should be reserved as a treat for adults.

Vegetables – About a cup a day of fresh vegetables are an important additional source of vitamin C and other nutrients. Parsley, romaine lettuce (stay away from iceberg) small piece of carrot, tomato, green or red pepper, spinach, apples and cantaloupe are popular. They also love clean, pesticide-free grass, clover, dandelion greens, corn husks and silk. Cruciferous vegetables (cabbage, collards, bok choy and broccoli) may cause gas and should be given sparingly. This list of veggies isn't all inclusive. Give your pig a variety to keep them interested.

Avoid – Mixes or treats with nuts, seeds, dried fruit and dyed pieces. Do not give meat or dairy. Do not use mineral wheels or salt licks.

Health Care

Guinea pigs are susceptible to respiratory disease. Symptoms of a respiratory infection include any noises while breathing (grunting, whistling, wheezing, etc.) and sneezing. Lethargy is also a sign that your pig is not feeling well. It's important respiratory infections are treated promptly with a round of antibiotics.

Urinary tract infections are also something that needs prompt vet attention and antibiotic treatment. Signs include blood in urine and squeaking while urinating. Bleeding can also indicate a reproductive problem in sows or bladder stones in any guinea pig.

Maloccluded teeth are teeth that have not worn properly and over grow. Frequently the overgrowth of the front and back teeth occurs at the same time, although it may appear only the front teeth have overgrown. As the ability to chew deteriorates, the front teeth no longer receive normal wear. Typically the bottom molars grow toward and sometimes over the tongue while the upper molars grow toward the cheeks. These overgrown teeth prevent the normal chewing and eating of food and can cause sores and injuries to the mouth.

Guinea pigs are also susceptible to skin problems including mites, lice, ring worm and fungal infections. All are easily treated.

Please establish a relationship with a guinea pig knowledgeable exotics vet before a medical emergency arises.