

Hilltop Pet & Aquariums

Guinea Pig Information Sheet

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Open Monday - Friday 9:30am-6pm Weekends & Public Holidays 10am - 5pm

Introduction

Guinea pigs are also known as cavies. Guinea Pigs are ideal first pets, especially for children. They are easy to care for, don't take up much room and are virtually smell free.

Housing

A variety of hutches are available, including indoor and outdoor. Size requirements depend on how many guinea pigs are to be housed and how often the guinea pig is going to be taken out for regular exercise. Flooring of hutches is very important as guinea pigs must have a smooth floor. If the hutch has the traditional 'chicken wire' flooring, trays are a must as the flooring may damage their feet or break their toes and legs.

Typical bedding used for Guinea Pigs is straw or pet pine shavings. Guinea Pigs do not like dirty living conditions, so the bedding should be changed regularly.

Take care not to house Guinea Pigs in treated wood hutches as Guinea Pigs gnaw and the wood may be toxic to them.

Feeding

As a base diet, pellets or rabbit and guinea pig mix should be fed, and supplemented with fresh fruits, vegetables and grass (free from pesticides, etc). Guinea Pigs cannot produce or store Vitamin C; therefore they should be offered fresh grass, lucerne, oranges or carrots every day. Any uneaten vegetables should be removed after 24 hours.

Commonly fed vegetables include carrots, corn cobs, celery, broccoli and lettuce. Lettuce is best avoided as too much can cause diarrhoea and holds almost no nutritional value.

Avoid feeding Guinea Pigs potatoes (and their peel), beetroot and rhubarb leaves, these are toxic.

Vitamin and mineral supplements are available and should be given at least once to twice a week to ensure a happy and healthy pet.

Guinea Pigs should have access to wooden gnawing blocks to prevent their teeth from overgrowing.

Fresh water must always be available by means of a gravity bottle (which attach to the outside of the cage) for easy access for re-filling and the Guinea Pigs can not mess in it. Food bowls can be used but must be heavy, e.g. terracotta, so the

Feeding (cont.)

Guinea Pig can not tip it over. Bowls should be cleaned and refilled on a daily basis due to possible contamination from bedding, excrement, etc. Gravity waterers should be refreshed daily or more often if the bottle is small and cannot hold much water.

Temperament

Guinea Pigs are social and affectionate creatures. They can become quite tame if correct handling and tender loving care is used. Young children should be supervised when handling animals to ensure they are

Temperament (cont.)

not rough and do not squeeze their pet. Guinea Pigs will enjoy gentle handling and calm down a lot more if they are treated with care.

When Guinea Pigs come out for 'play time', it is very important to supervise them as they can be mischievous little creatures. They must also be protected from any other family pets, e.g. the dog or the cat, if necessary.

They can be housed alone, in pairs or in groups (cage size dependant). Females can be housed together. Males can be kept together if they are housed with each other from a young age. They can have the tendency to fight, especially if they have been mated with a female. Females can fight when they are in heat. If you intend to keep a Guinea Pig by itself, it will need love and attention as they can become a solitary animal, not inclined to handling.

If you are planning on housing a male and female together and do not want baby guinea pigs, desexing the male is recommended. The cost of desexing a male guinea pig is similar to the cost of a male cat.

Health

The general life span of a Guinea Pig is approximately 4-6 years.

A Small Animal Wormer should be used every three months to control any possible intestinal worms.

Guinea Pigs are not prone to any particular disease and they do not require vaccinations. Vitamin C deficiency is one of the more common problems seen due to incorrect feeding and insufficient supply of Vitamin C.

Guinea Pigs are prone to weather extremities, if it is over 30°C, they should be brought indoors into cooler conditions and should be kept dry and covered from draughts in cooler conditions. A moist bed will soon become the breeding ground from varying bacteria and fungi, which will affect the health of your Guinea Pig, often leading to death.

Guinea Pigs can suffer from dry skin (similar to human dandruff) so bathing can be done every 8-12 weeks using a Small Animal Shampoo.

Breeding

Breeding should not be entered into unless you are prepared. Male and females should not be housed together otherwise they will breed as often as possible which will affect the mother and the offspring. Should you choose to breed guinea pigs, vitamin and mineral supplements are available and should be offered to the female guinea pig.

Veterinarian Checks

You must be prepared to take any sick or injured animal to a vet without delay to minimize any pain or further complications to the health of your pet.

Something that may begin as a minor problem can easily end up developing into something major, and possibly life threatening, so it is advisable to contact your vet without delay.

Mites and mange can be a problem with any small animal. If you suspect mites or mange, please feel free to contact us or your local veterinarian for advice on treatments available.

This brochure was put together by the staff of Hilltop Pet & Aquariums as a general guide to assist you in raising your pet and advising requirements to keep your friend happy and healthy.

If you cannot provide the proper care and housing, we strongly suggest you not purchase the animal.

We have books available for sale should you require more information.