

Guinea Pigs

Cavia Asperea

Introduction and Origin

Guinea pigs have been kept in captivity for hundreds of years, originating from the forests and grasslands of South America where their wild relatives still roam. Their scientific name is 'Cavia Asperea' so they are also known as Cavies.

There are quite a few different breeds of guinea pigs with their coat and colour defining the difference between the breeds. They come in Standard Shorthair, Abyssinian, Crested, Sheltie, Peruvian, Texel and Rex to name a few.

A female guinea pig is called a 'sow' and a male guinea pig is called a 'boar', with their average lifespan being between 5-8 years. Guinea pigs are a relatively low cost and low maintenance pet who prefer to be housed with at least one or two other guinea pig friends.



and wood shavings are good if the hutch has a solid base. The hutch needs to be sturdy in order to protect your guinea pig from dogs, cats and other potential predators.

The more you handle your guinea pigs, the quicker they settle and the friendlier they become. Your hutch should be cleaned out at least once a week, depending on how many guinea pigs are housed together.

Remove all bedding, clean with hutch cleaner, scrub igloos and bowls and then replace with fresh bedding, clean igloos, a clean food bowl and fresh water.

Diet & Water

Your guinea pigs should have access to a bowl of specially formulated guinea pig mix, as they are grazers and tend to eat on and off all day long. This should be offered in a ceramic bowl so it is not easy to tip over.

Guinea pigs also need a handful of Lucerne Hay and plenty of fruit and vegetables each day. Guinea pigs do not make or store their own Vitamin C so it is essential that they be given to them in the form of fruit and vegetables each day.

Some of their favourite fruit and vegetables are carrot, apple, corn, spinach, orange and broccoli. Do not feed lettuce, celery, rhubarb, potato or onions to your guinea pigs.



Housing

While guinea pigs aren't exactly active little creatures, they still need to be provided with a decent sized hutch where they can stretch out lazily for a snooze and are able to have an igloo or two to hide in.

Your hutch can be indoor or outdoor, made of wood, metal or plastic, and should be at least 3 feet long for two or three piglets, and longer for more. Straw is the best bedding for wire-based hutches

Guinea pigs are born with fur and with their eyes open.

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Throw away any uneaten food daily – don't feed any spoiled or rotten food. Wood chews also need to be provided as their teeth constantly grow and chewing on wood keeps their teeth trim and healthy.

As guinea pigs need an element of salt in their diet, it is important to provide them with a salt lick stone. Fresh, clean water should be available at all times and is best offered in a water bottle as it is easy to refill and much more hygienic as your pigs can't dirty it.

Worming & Flea Prevention

While guinea pigs don't require any vaccinations, they do need to be wormed every three months with a small animal wormer which can be added to their water.

Grooming

If you decide to bath your pigs, be sure to bath them in a shampoo specially formulated for guinea pigs or small animals.

Ears should be checked regularly and cleaned as necessary, and nails should be trimmed when needed, being sure not to cut the quick.

All breeds of guinea pig can be given a weekly brush if desired but long coated breeds need more regular attention to prevent knots and matting.

**Learn more
from the team
at Kellyville Pets**

Parasites such as lice, mites and fleas are easily treated with a small animals parasite powder or avian insect sprays.

Facts

- Guinea pigs are extremely susceptible to heat. Make sure their hutch is not in direct sunlight and provide your guinea pigs with frozen water bottles to keep them cool in summer.
- It is possible to put a specially designed harness on your guinea pig to allow them freedom without losing them.

Further information on diet, hygiene, worming, vitamins, Vets and much more is available from the team at Kellyville Pets.



At Kellyville Pets, we encourage responsible pet ownership.

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