



Paws, Claws & Wings

Physical and Behavioral Rehabilitation for Animals



Guinea Pigs:

Vital statistics:

Origin: South America

Size: 20 to 30cm.

Longevity: 4 to 7 years.

Weight: 700g - 1.2kg



Guinea Pigs are social, docile, curious and loving animals that crave attention. They are relatively easy to keep. Guinea Pigs are good swimmers but most do not enjoy the activity. When a guinea pig is excited it may jump up and down, this is often referred to as pop corning. Guinea Pigs are also quite vocal, and can learn easily to whistle and chirp for their owners, they also often can make bubbling noises, purr, rumble, whine, chatter, squeal and can even shriek. It is still a mystery why they are called 'pigs' and they can also be called cavies.



Diet:

A guinea pig diet can be divided into 3 components. High quality guinea pig pellets. Fresh fruit and vegetables: beans, broccoli, cauliflower, apple, pear, herbs, romaine lettuce, carrots ect. Hay, teff and grass, this is the most important component as it assists in grinding the teeth down. Never feed: celery, alcohol, chocolate, avocado, rhubarb, onion. Always have fresh, clean water available. As guinea pigs cannot synthesize their own Vitamin C they need to be supplemented with 30mg to 50mg

Sr Emmylou Rivers

Veterinary Nurse

emmylou.rivers@gmail.com

082 576 7647

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Vitamin C daily, depending on the quality of their diet. Guinea pigs have teeth that constantly grow so they need to chew regularly to keep their teeth from overgrowing. As with Rabbits, Guinea Pigs produce caecotrophs which are eaten directly from the anus.



Housing:

The larger the better, ensure the cage is large enough for the guinea pigs to have a decent area to run, a separate eating and sleeping area and an area to play in. The cage must be at least 60cm x 60cm x 30cm per guinea pig. Always provide a safe shelter and a nest for them to retreat to, hide in and sleep in. Never keep uncastrated males with unsprayed females as they breed very quickly and from a very young age. Adult uncastrated males can also become very territorial and therefore very aggressive to other males. It is best to keep females together or a castrated male with spayed females. Take care if using a cage with a mesh floor as the pigs' feet can be caught in the holes and bumble foot can also occur. Guinea Pigs are very messy and their cage will need to be cleaned often. Guinea Pigs mark their territory by urinating and then dragging their body over the floor of the cage. It is ideal to keep Guinea Pigs apart from other animals, especially rabbits for a number of reasons, the most important being: larger animals may unintentionally jump on them, become aggressive to them and hurt them, rodents increase the chances of respiratory infection; rabbits have different diets and may harbor Bordetella and Pasturella.





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Care:

They are agile and are not very good at climbing or jumping. Being prey animals they startle easily and will freeze for a while or run in a zig zagging pattern when scared. As

they enjoy company it is recommended to keep them in groups as single Guinea Pigs often suffer from stress or depression. Guinea Pigs tolerate being handled well, as long as they are handled regularly. As Guinea Pigs are prey animals, avoid frightening them, always move slowly, speak softly and gently and avoid any sudden loud disturbances near them. Guinea Pigs may be cleaned using a damp washcloth and brushed with a soft brush to keep the coat knot free, depending on the coat; they may need to be brushed on a daily basis. They indulge in social grooming and often also self-groom. Males will often chew on each other's fur but this is a hierarchical expression, not one of grooming.

Guinea Pigs are crepuscular and are most active at dusk and dawn.



Health:

Guinea Pigs are generally healthy if well looked after and given the correct nutrients but here are some common ailments they can suffer from and their symptoms.

Upper respiratory tract infection: anorexia, weight loss, dyspnoea, coughing, weeping eyes, sneezing, coughing, ungroomed coat, dull or sunken eyes, lethargy, hunched over.

Malocclusion: Anorexia, weight loss, drooling, ungroomed coat.

Bladder stones: anuria, hematuria.

Urinary tract infection: hematuria.

Guinea Pigs are very sensitive to Amoxicillin so do not use this antibiotic.

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