

Guinea Pigs

Guinea pigs are **affectionate** social pets who will sit on your lap and enjoy being petted. They make a wide variety of entertaining sounds, including whistles, purrs, chortles, chuckles, and clucks.

Guinea pigs are a lot like little horses and play chasing games with each other. They come in a wide variety of colors and coat types, including fuzzy hair, long curly hair, and straight hair long enough to braid!

Guinea pigs make great lap pets for people of all ages.

One guinea pig, or more?

Because guinea pigs are herd animals, it's best to get at least two. Two pigs together will make more of their adorable sounds. However, just one guinea pig can do well with regular attention from its owner.

Feeding

Guinea pigs are strict herbivores and need special guinea pig pellets that contain vitamin C. They also need timothy hay for roughage and leafy greens such as dandelion leaves, bok choy, kale, cilantro, parsley and dark leaf lettuce every day. For treats, they can have carrots, celery, cucumber, very small amounts of oranges, peppers, and other veggies, and small amounts of commercial guinea pig treats. Guinea pigs love carrots so much they will learn to sit up to get them.

Housing

Guinea pigs need a cage at least 36" X 24" X 12" tall, and the bigger the better to provide room for them to run around. The floor of the cage must be solid, not wire, to protect their feet, and covered with aspen shavings or soft paper bedding. Do not use cat litter or cedar shavings.

Accessories

Guinea pigs need a large water bottle, a non-tip food dish or hopper, a hayrack and a mineral salt wheel. They also need a house to sleep in. They also appreciate a bed made of artificial sheepskin.

Sanitation

Clean the cage, accessories and bedding weekly. Urine deposits can be removed with vinegar. Be sure to scrub all parts of the water bottle and replace bottle every six months.

Maintenance

Provide fresh food and water daily. Guinea pigs need their toenails trimmed regularly and may occasionally need a bath. All guinea pigs benefit from an occasional brushing and longhaired guinea pigs need to be groomed often.

Health care

With proper care and feeding, guinea pigs tend to have few health problems, although Veterinary Pet Insurance (www.petinsurance.com) now offers health insurance policies for guinea pigs.

Special needs

It's important for guinea pigs to be socialized the day they are born. Those that aren't can be flighty, so try to choose a pig that isn't afraid of people. Because guinea pigs are passive and tend not to bite or scratch, young children need to be taught not to squeeze their pet too hard. Care should also be taken not to drop a guinea pig, as they are easily injured.

Life cycle

Guinea pigs live an average of 4 to 6 years but can live up to 10 years. They can breed as young as 4 weeks but should not until 4-6 months. The gestation period is 65-70 days and the average litter size is 2-3. The piglets are born fully furred with their eyes open and can be weaned at 4 weeks.

Expert Help

If you have questions about your guinea pig, do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to help you choose a guinea pig care book for more complete information.

Supplies Checklist

Large cage	Timothy hay
Bedding	Treats
Water bottle	Mineral salt wheel
Non-tip food dish or hopper	House
Guinea pig food	Nail clippers
Hay rack	Brush
Shampoo	