

CARING FOR GUINEA PIGS



Recommendations

Sponsored by

The Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals

Basic Guinea Pig Care

Terminology

Female-Sow

Male-Boar

Young-Piglets

Housing

Guinea pigs are very social animals that prefer to live in small groups. Two or more females together will become friends. Males are competitive, and would not find it easy living in one cage. If males are desired, littermates will often get along. Females mate at a young age, so males and females should not be kept together unless it is for intentional breeding.

- A rule of thumb is to have at least 4 sq. ft. of space per pig with as large a cage as possible.
- Cages should not have wire floors as they irritate feet. Tub cages with wire tops are good. An aquarium should not be used because of poor ventilation.
- Cedar shavings should NOT be used for bedding due to the oils they contain. These oils are toxic to many small mammals. Grass hay or hardwood shavings is very good.
- Pigs love to hide when they play, cardboard tubes, and empty coffee cans (with smoothed edges) can be used for this purpose along with plastic pipes and flower pots.
- Pigs need a "cave" to sleep in, a medium sized flower pot, or a covered sleeping box should be provided.
- Cages should be kept inside away from drafts and extreme temperatures. Guinea pigs are very susceptible to heat stroke. Temperature should be kept between 60-80° F.

Diet

- Fresh commercial guinea pig pellets (not rabbit pellets) should be the bulk of the diet. Twice daily feeding is recommended.
- Cannot manufacture their own vitamin C, so they need fruits and veggies that are high in Vitamin C such as kale, dandelion greens, strawberries, quarter of an orange.
- Water should be made available free choice in an inverted water bottle with tube and changed daily.

General Care

- Soiled bedding, droppings, and stale food should be removed from cage daily. Cages should be cleaned with warm water and mild detergent at least weekly.
- Guinea pig's teeth grow continuously. They should be provided with something to chew on at all times. Untreated fruit tree branches are ideal since they are not prone to splintering.
- Guinea pigs are very sociable. Hand feeding them treats will build their trust, then they will be able to be easily picked up and handled.
- They are clean animals, but they should be brushed, especially long haired varieties.

Additional Recommendations

- Pregnancy and delivery are difficult for guinea pigs. Breeding of pets is not recommended.
- Veterinary care should be sought if the animal stops eating for a day, sneezes or coughs, acts very lethargic or sick in any way.



Possible Signs of Illness, Neglect, or Intentional Cruelty

Appearance of Animal

Fur standing on end, or wet, or matted; runny eyes and nose; thin; wet rump; evidence of fighting, such as bite marks around eyes, ears or rump; diarrhea.

Housing Conditions

Filthy cage; wet bedding and strong odor; lack of water and food; overcrowded quarters; too hot a location.

Behavior

Unresponsive; animals fighting with each other.

Reporting Cruelty

Animal cruelty should be reported to the police department of the town in which the animal lives. Please leave your name and contact information so that a follow-up response may be made.

Additional Resources

Guinea Linx: Medical and Care Guide

www.guinealynx.info

ASPCA

www.aspca.org/pet-care/small-pet-care/guinea-pig-care

Humane Society of the United States

www.humanesociety.org/animals/guinea_pigs

For more information about animal cruelty, visit

www.humane.nh.gov

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