

# CARE ♦ PETS

Animal Hospital & Wellness Center

The Best Care For Your Companion

## All about Guinea Pigs

### Facts about Guinea Pigs:

- Guinea Pigs are rodents.
- A Guinea Pig is also known as a Cavy because of its scientific name, *Cavia porcellus*.
- Guinea Pigs can live 5 to 7 years.

### Guinea Pig Traits and Behavior:

- Guinea Pigs are known for their expressive vocalizations. They'll whistle and grunt when they are excited and squeak with delight when their favorite human enters the room.
- Guinea Pigs rarely bite, but they can nip if mishandled or fearful. If frightened, they may run around their enclosure at a very fast speed, which makes one hard to catch.
- Baby guinea pigs are born with full body hair, open eyes and are able to eat solid food within the first day.

### Habitat:

- Guinea pig cages should be well ventilated. Air should flow freely through the cage. Keep the cage in a cool, low humidity area out of direct sunlight away from air vents.
- The enclosure should be made of wire mesh, with a solid bottom. Wire flooring can cause foot injury. Guinea pigs need more space than other members of the rodent family (minimum of 2 sq. feet).
- Breeding guinea pigs need twice the floor space.
- Bedding should be provided in abundance. Aspen shavings and shredded paper are excellent sources.
- Bedding must be changed frequently to prevent feces and urine moisture to build-up.
- A hiding box is good for guinea pigs to sleep in or retreat to if they become startled.

### Diet:

- Guinea Pigs are unable to manufacture Vitamin C. They require a fresh daily dietary source of Vitamin C. Kale, greens, broccoli, green bell peppers, kiwi, apple and fresh tomato are good sources. Remember your guinea pig's size; only a few pieces are needed. Not the entire thing (for example- several small pieces of bell pepper, not the entire pepper).
- Feed a quality guinea pig pelleted diet.

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- Timothy hay should be the main portion of a guinea pig's diet and available at all times. Pellets should also be fed daily. Fresh sources of vitamin C should be fed daily because the vitamin C in the pellets has a very short shelf-life.
- Guinea Pigs have sensitive intestinal tracts; sudden changes in diet (including change in food brand) may result in serious health issues. All new foods should be introduced slowly.
- Alfalfa cubes, small amounts of green vegetables, strawberries and carrot tops can be given in small amounts as treats.
- Food bowls should be cleaned regularly as they tend to sit in the bowl to defecate.
- Fresh water should be available at all times. Clean sipper tubes regularly.

## Health:

- Guinea Pigs are very susceptible to heat stroke at temperatures of 80 degrees plus.
- Regular visits to the veterinarian are recommended for your guinea pig. Wellness check ups are necessary to recognize potential disease and treat it early.
- A guinea pig's front teeth never stop growing. It is important to give them healthy things to chew on. Chew sticks and other toys should always be kept in the cage.
- Signs of a healthy guinea pig include teeth and claws even, not overgrown; nostrils free of discharge; bright, shiny eyes free of discharge; no sneezing, wheezing or labored breathing; no abnormal lumps or scabs; good body weight, neither thin nor obese; alert, inquisitive nature.
- Things to watch for include decreased appetite, overgrowth of front teeth, diarrhea, hair loss, wounds on foot pads, lethargy, weight loss, crusts around the eyes, sneezing and blood in the urine.

If any of these signs are noticed, have your guinea pig examined by a veterinarian.