

Guinea Pig

(*Cavia porcellus*)



Adult Size	1 – 2.5 lbs, 8 – 10 inches
Lifespan	4 – 5 Years
Male/Female Difference	Sexing can be difficult when young. Invert the urethra to check for a penis. There is no difference in external appearance. Genitals can be obvious on males.
Compatibility	Females get along with each other, and a male can even be added. Males usually get along, after some settling of hierarchy, but will fight over a single female. 2 males together are not recommended.
Origin	Native to the Andes mountains of South America.
Climate	Local climate is ideal. Avoid extremes of heat and cold.
Day Cycle	No cycle, wake and sleep 27/7
Temperature	Room temperature works best.
Lighting	No special lighting required except a natural day and night schedule.
Humidity	Ambient humidity is fine.
Habitat/Territory	They make their homes in the cool and dry areas of the Andes. This terrain is void of large vegetation and so they exist on grass.
Substrate/Bedding	Provide a safe and soft bedding, the less dusty the better. Cedar bedding can be toxic and pine too dusty, and corn cob can harbor mold spores. Good litters are shredded or pelleted aspen or recycled paper products. Supply nesting materials and dry hays.

Hiding Place/Den	Wooden huts provide a safe sleeping place. Edible home can provide a treat in addition to a hiding place.
Cage Type	Wire cages are proof against nibbling. The larger the cage the better, although a guinea pig still needs daily exercise outside of his home.
Diet	Pelleted guinea pig food provides the basic diet, 2 tbs pelleted with ¼ cup chopped vegetables, such as dark leafy greens and carrots. Timothy hay is an important addition as it provides fiber to keep their digestive system working properly. Small amounts of yoghurt help maintain intestinal flora.
Supplements	Vitamin C should be added to the food of guinea pigs to help prevent vitamin deficiency. Digestive enzymes help guinea pigs get more nutrition from their food.
Diet Precautions	Excessive alfalfa hay has been known to cause obesity. Always have timothy hay available as a source of fiber. Nuts and seeds should never be given.
Feeding	Feed fresh pellets daily, as vitamin C content can deteriorate. Treats can include fruits such as apples and small amounts of yoghurt.
Water Source	A water bottle, cleaned and filled daily, is preferable to a water dish. Guinea pigs can kick substrate into and foul water dishes.
Grooming	Guinea pigs groom themselves to keep clean. Occasional cleanings with pet safe wipes and once monthly baths with mild pet shampoo can help keep their coat smelling fresh and free of debris. Long-haired, or Angora, breeds should be brushed frequently.
Oral and Foot Care	A guinea pig's nails grow continuously, and need to be clipped monthly. Long nails can cause a condition called "bumblefoot." This can be done at home with proper instruction. Your vet or Wilmette Pet can also perform this service. A wooden chewing block or pumice stone, or hard, crunchy treats will help keep their teeth trimmed.
Proper Handling	Scoop a guinea pig from underneath, rather than grabbing from above. Keeping them next to your chest at first calms them and makes them feel safe. Avoid grabbing around middle as it can damage internal organs.

Habitat Maintenance

Guinea pigs have a natural urge to keep their homes clean
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and often can be trained to potty boxes in their cages. These and other wet areas should be cleaned daily, and the entire substrate replaced once a week.

Health Concerns

Common ailments in domestic guinea pigs include the above mentioned bumblefoot, respiratory infections, diarrhea, scurvy (vitamin C deficiency, typically characterized by sluggishness), and abscesses due to infection.