



guinea pigs

the right pet for you?

Guinea pigs are friendly and easily tamed but they require commitment and regular attention. Long-haired guinea pigs can be especially hard to look after. Before you think about getting a pet you should think very hard about whether you can provide everything it needs.



what do guinea pigs need?

- Companionship from other guinea pigs.
- Feeding twice a day with a mixture of meadow hay, pellets, washed fruit and vegetables.
- A constant supply of fresh, clean water in a drip-feed bottle with a metal spout.
- A large' weatherproof home that is kept off the ground, out of direct sunlight and strong winds.
- A separate covered sleeping area for each animal inside the home.
- A clean layer of wood shavings on the floor of their home with plenty of hay or shredded paper.
- Daily exercise in a large, grassy area, safe from predators.
- Their home cleaned every day and their bedding changed every week.
- A gnawing block to wear down long teeth.

- To be combed every day if they have a long coat.
- To be neutered at an early age. Ask your vet for advice.
- Injections to prevent serious diseases.
- To be taken to a veterinary surgeon if they are ill or injured.
- To be looked after when you are away on holiday.

lifespan

Guinea pigs can live for up to seven years.

behaviour

In the wild, guinea pigs live in large social groups. It is unkind to keep one guinea pig on its own. However, two adult guinea pigs that don't know each other may fight. It is best to choose two young litter mates of the same sex.

Rabbits and guinea pigs may live happily together if introduced when very young.



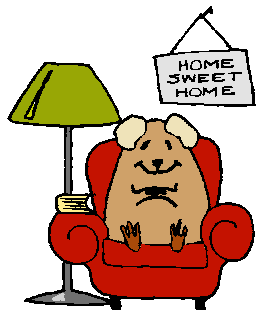
handling

Approach the guinea pig from the front. Pick it up using both hands, one around the hindquarters, the other around its shoulders (for a young guinea pig) or its chest (for an adult).

Guinea pigs may become upset by too much handling.

breeding

The RSPCA strongly advises that you do not breed from your guinea pigs as it is very difficult to find good homes for the young.



health

Guinea pigs should be checked regularly for overgrown claws and teeth. Both can be trimmed by a veterinary surgeon if necessary.

Too much scratching results from skin problems and is often caused by lice or mites. Your veterinary surgeon can provide suitable treatment.

Long haired guinea pigs in particular may suffer from the potentially fatal disease flystrike, cause by flies laying eggs in soiled fur. To avoid this, make sure the guinea pig's home is cleaned every day and their bedding changed regularly. Groom guinea pigs every day, checking their fur all over for any dirt, especially under the tail.

If a guinea pig develops bald patches

this could be the fungal disease ringworm. Seek veterinary advice immediately. This disease can be passed to humans.

food

Guinea pigs can suffer from vitamin C deficiency, which causes weight loss, general weakness and swollen joints. Like people, guinea pigs cannot make Vitamin C and need to eat fresh greens every day.

Rabbits can make vitamin C and so rabbit foods are not good for guinea pigs as they do not have vitamin C added. Ask your veterinarian for advice on how to provide your guinea pigs with an adequate supply of this vitamin.

