



Guinea Pigs

Did you know that guinea pigs originate from South America?

Guinea pigs usually live between five and six years although some do live longer.

Guinea pigs are very social animals and it's advisable to keep them in small groups together and we would always recommend castrating (neutering) the male guinea pigs.

It's best not to keep guinea pigs and rabbits together as some rabbits can be aggressive towards guinea pigs. Rabbits also carry bacteria that can make guinea pigs ill (giving them respiratory infections).

Guinea pigs can't climb but they do like running around and being active. They also like digging and stretching out when they sleep.

Guinea pigs don't like it when it's very hot or very cold and can be ill if they are in temperatures below 15°C or above 26°C. It's therefore important to ensure that their home and bedding is appropriate for them.

What type of house would my guinea pig like to live in?

There is a large variety of hutches and cages to choose from for your guinea pig. In the summer months, guinea pigs can be kept outside as long as their hutch is in a good draught-free but well-ventilated area. It should also have an area of shade from the hot sun. You should ensure that their hutch is well protected against cats and/or foxes. Their hutch should be cleaned out and fresh bedding laid at least once a week.

Guinea pigs also like to spend some time in a run on the grass but again you must ensure this is secure from other animals like foxes and has a dry covered area in case of rain and also providing protection from the sun.

Your guinea pig will need straw for their bedding as well as a bowl for their food and a water bottle to drink from. You should ensure they have access to fresh water daily which should be checked particularly in winter when it can potentially freeze over if your guinea pigs are living outside. They may also like untreated wooden toys to chew on and a pipe or special place to play or hide in if he/she feels spooked or scared.

What should I give my guinea pig to eat?

The main staple for a guinea pig's diet should be good quality hay which can be purchased from Hillside Vets or other good pet shops. This can also be topped off

with grass pellets which can also be purchased from us or other pet stores.

Guinea pigs like to graze on grass, herbs and plants like dandelions. They also like green leafy vegetables like kale and broccoli which can be given as a treat, but they shouldn't be given citrus fruits, like oranges and lemons to eat. They are unable to make their own Vitamin C so need to have this in their food from the fruit and veg they eat.

If you are considering a guinea pig, or already have one and would like further information about caring for them, then please call the surgery to make an appointment with one of our nurses.

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