



NORFOLK INDUSTRIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Part of *Independence Matters*

Guide to Guinea Pigs

Latin Name – Cavia Porcellus

Scientific Order - Rodentia

Average Adult Size – 20-25cms

Average Life Span – 5-7 years

Diet – Herbivore

General Information

Guinea pigs or 'cavies' are small, sociable 'chatty' rodents, with a compact rounded body shape, short legs and no tail.

They originate from the grasslands and lower slopes of the Andes Mountains in South America. They typically live in close family groups of 5-10 individuals, though several groups may live in close proximity to form a colony.

Guinea pigs are traditionally thought of as good first pets for children, although it should always be an adult that takes responsibility to ensure they are properly cared for.

Behaviour

Guinea pigs can learn complex paths to food, and can accurately remember a learned path for months. Their strongest problem-solving strategy is motion. While guinea pigs can jump small obstacles, they are poor climbers, and are not particularly agile.

They startle extremely easily, and either freeze in place for long periods or run for cover with rapid, darting motions when they sense danger. Larger groups of startled guinea pigs "stampede", running in haphazard directions as a means of confusing predators.

When excited, guinea pigs may repeatedly perform little hops in the air (known as "pop-corning"). They are also very good swimmers.



Equipment Required



- Hutch/Habitat – Ideally would be around 4 foot by 2 foot (120cm by 60cm) as a minimum. If keeping outside the hutch should be raised off the ground slightly to keep the floor dry and improve ventilation.
- A large exercise run connected to their shelter, filled with tubes, tunnels and boxes,

- Bedding materials- plenty of hay in sleeping compartment, floor should be covered in a thick layer of newspaper, paper based litter such as Norfolk Industries recycled shredded paper bedding -



www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/recycled-pet-bedding/newspaper-bedding/

paper flakes bedding -

www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/recycled-pet-bedding/flaked-paper-bedding/

or dust free wood flakes, DO NOT use shavings or bedding or cleaning products that contain essential oils as these can damage the skin.



- Food bowl – Preferably a weighted bowl so it cannot be easily tipped over.
- Water bottle which attaches to the side of the hutch. A larger bottle with a ball and spout is ideal.
- Food – provide a well-balanced diet, consisting of 75% good hay, fresh food made up of a balance of leafy greens and a little root vegetables, occasional fruit.
- Chews and wooden blocks designed with guinea pigs in mind.

- Animal House – such as Norfolk Industries Medium Animal house, see product details at www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/animal-house/animal-houses/



Maintenance Tasks

- ✓ Ensure fresh food and water are provided daily, never feed your guinea pig lettuce as this can cause diarrhoea, keep to small amounts of dark green, leafy vegetables like spinach, broccoli, kale, and cabbage.
- ✓ Remove soiled bedding from your guinea pigs' home and replace it with fresh bedding daily.
- ✓ Clean the entire home thoroughly with an animal-safe disinfectant once a week. Ensuring everything is fully dry before re-introducing the guinea pig.
- ✓ Cleaning can be stressful for guinea pigs as it removes their own familiar scents. Save some old but dry bedding to place in their newly cleaned home to ensure some familiar scent remains.
- ✓ Provide exercise time for them every day, either in an enclosed run outside or an enclosed area inside. With tubes and tunnels so they can hide if necessary.

Grooming and Hygiene

- ❖ Grooming is a vital part of the routine care of guinea pigs. Long-haired varieties need daily grooming as their coats can quickly become matted and uncomfortable.
- ❖ Check teeth once a week for signs of overgrowth. Overgrown teeth are best trimmed by a veterinarian.
- ❖ Guinea pigs are relatively clean animals so you should not need to bath them, if you need to give them a bath, limit this to only a few times in the year.
- ❖ Trim your guinea pigs nails every few weeks, if you feel unsure about doing this, take them to a veterinarian.

General Health Conditions



- Diarrhoea- loose stools, caused by poor diet or stress. Treat by consulting a veterinarian to determine cause.
- Vitamin C deficiency - Guinea pigs cannot synthesise vitamin C from other food substances so they require a direct dietary source of vitamin C. Treat by feeding your guinea pig fresh leafy green vegetables. Supplement this with small quantities of vitamin C rich food such as citrus or kiwi fruit. Vitamin C must be provided directly from food materials, Vitamin C liquid supplements (added to their drinking water) or processed vitamin C added to commercial feeds are not reliable sources.
- Respiratory Problems – Sneezing, discharge from nose and eyes and difficulty breathing. Caused by inappropriate bedding, or draughts. Consult a veterinarian to rule out viral or bacterial infection. Change to a dust free bedding and ensure the home is in a draught free, well ventilated position.
- Overgrown teeth (malocclusion) – treated by consulting a veterinarian to trim teeth.



- Skin problems – losing patches of hair, scratching. Consult a veterinarian for treatment.
- Ulcerative pododermatitis (ulcerated and swollen footpads) - a common problem when guinea pigs are kept on hard surfaces and/or uncovered wire mesh floor. Treatment by a veterinarian to treat any ulcers. Avoid bare wire or mesh floors, provide a solid based floor in their home, with a good floor covering of newspaper and/or dust free wood flakes. Or Norfolk Industries shredded paper bedding see product details at www.norfolkindustries.co.uk/products/recycled-pet-bedding/

General Care Information

It is important to check on your guinea pigs at least twice a day, in the morning and evening. However guinea pigs love human company and the more time you can spend with them the happier they are.



Handling - Guinea pigs love human contact, and love to be picked up and cuddled. They must be picked up and carried very carefully so that they do not fall and break a leg. If your new guinea pig appears a bit

skittish, running around their pen when you try to catch them, then spend some time just stroking them when you feed them, so that they become used to you first.



Always support the belly and bottom when picking up.

Guinea pigs are always very friendly and will not bite when you try to pick them up. It is usually best to support them with one hand under their chest, and one under their bottom, and then transfer them so that you are holding them supported against your chest as you move around.

Temperature -Guinea pigs are happiest within a temperature range of about 16 to 24 degrees Celsius. Any lower and they're liable to get chilled, any higher and they could suffer from heatstroke. It's best to keep them indoors when it's getting cold.

Keep the hutch slightly elevated and in a well ventilated position. If keeping indoors, keep out of direct sunlight, and away from sources of heat like radiators or fires. They like being somewhere away from the hustle and bustle of the house, where there aren't any loud noises, and where, if you have any other pets, they can't be reached.

Information supplied by –



NORFOLK INDUSTRIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Part of *Independence Matters*

95 Oak Street Norwich NR3 3BP

Tel: 01603 667957 email: sales@norfolkindustries.co.uk

Website www.norfolkindustries.co.uk

Company registration no 8530621

A Social Firm employing people with disabilities and providing voluntary placements to local people with various barriers to work. Utilising recycled materials in many products and providing a quality product to our customers, large and small!

THINK WORKABILITY, NOT DISABILITY

