

CRITTERS: Guinea Pigs



Though naturally skittish and timid, deep down guinea pigs are social creatures and enjoy the companionship of humans. They can be very vocal and will let you know how they're feeling through a variety of adorable squeaks, chatter, and whistles. Guinea pigs do best with a buddy of the same sex.

DIET

Guinea pigs need Vitamin C-fortified guinea pig-specific pellets, ideally made from Timothy hay. Avoid mixes with seeds, nuts, artificial colors or sweeteners and fillers. Guinea pigs should have 1/8 cup of pellets each day, along with fresh water. Unlimited Timothy hay is essential to their digestion and helps keep their teeth evenly worn. They also love to play and nest in their hay. Piggies love vegetables, and a good variety helps provide that all-important Vitamin C! Leafy greens such as romaine lettuce and parsley are great choices. Fruit, such as seedless grapes or apples, should only be an occasional treat. Some vegetables, such as iceberg lettuce, should be avoided. Do not feed potatoes, processed foods, meat or dairy products.

HABITAT

More space is always better, especially if you have more than one pig. Plentiful space enables exercise and enrichment, and increases the likelihood that pairs or groups will get along. Ensure the cage is in a draft-free area, in the 65 - 75 degree range, and provide places for them to hide. Keep the cage in a family area, but away from TVs, stereos and humidity. Use small animal bedding or fleece in the cage. Ensure the cage is cleaned regularly.

HEALTH CARE

Weigh your pig weekly. A 4-ounce loss needs immediate veterinary attention. Watch out for wheezing, crusty eyes, limping, diarrhea, hair loss, fluffed-up coat, or any behavior which is unusual for your guinea pig. If antibiotics are needed, ensure your vet prescribes guinea pig-friendly antibiotics, not penicillin.

OUT OF CAGE TIME/TIME WITH HUMANS

Guinea pigs are social and do best with a companion of the same sex. Handle them gently by supporting the chest and their hindquarters. Floor time is great for exercise. They will 'wheel' loudly for attention!

LIFE SPAN

5 - 7 years

CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON FOR TOTAL CARE; ADULTS MUST MONITOR

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