

## Health Care

Guinea pigs need hard objects to chew to keep their teeth short, clean and healthy. These provide valuable entertainment for them and satisfy their natural urge to gnaw. The most popular items for this purpose are flavoured salt and mineral lick stones, and various types of wood chews.

Because of the different PH levels between guinea pig and human skin, human shampoo should never be used on your guinea pig. Instead use a shampoo made especially for small animals to keep them smelling sweet! Shampoos that contain pesticides can make your guinea pig ill, so always ensure you read the label thoroughly and if in doubt please ask one of our Small Animal Staff for assistance.

Most animals need regular worming and guinea pigs are no exception. Guinea pigs are easily wormed using a specially formulated sweet liquid which is given directly by mouth. This is given 2 consecutive days every 3 months for life.

The most common ailments to afflict guinea pigs are two different types of parasite – lice and mites.

Lice are a common parasite that live on guinea pigs, biting and irritating them (they are very similar to fleas on dogs or head lice on humans). Symptoms include constant itching, red skin, and a dull coat. They are easily treated by directly applying a spray or rinse. The cage and bedding should also be treated. Treatment should be reapplied in 7 days to cover any lice eggs that may have hatched in that time. Repeat this until your cage is free of lice. This strain of lice is not contagious to humans.

Mites are a parasite that live under the skin. Symptoms include constant scratching, red or scabby skin, lethargy and a dull coat. Left untreated mites can cause death. They are best treated orally by a vet.

## Treats

Below is a list of foods that are very good for Guinea Pigs, Some food and plants can be quite toxic to Guinea Pigs so if you are not sure whether a certain food is safe then it's best not to feed it!

### THESE ARE GOOD FOR GUINEA PIGS!

|                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Lettuce (sml amounts) | Parsley                     |
| Parsnips              | Beans                       |
| Turnips               | Cabbage (sml amounts)       |
| Spinach               | Cauliflower                 |
| Silverbeet            | Cauliflower stalks          |
| Beetroot              | Fresh cut green grass       |
| Watermelon            | Nectarine                   |
| Rockmelon             | Carrots                     |
| Cucumber              | Hullsted or rolled oats     |
| Choko                 | Bran                        |
| Tomato                | Sunflower stalks and leaves |
| Apples                | Thistle                     |
| Pumpkin               | Weetbix                     |
| Strawberry            | Cornflakes                  |
| Plum                  | Brown bread                 |
| Zucchini              | Corn                        |
| Orange                | Alfalfa                     |
| Banana                | Lucerne (fresh & dried)     |
| Celery                | Dandelions                  |

### DO NOT FEED THESE !!

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Rhubarb                                | Onions          |
| Bulb plants of any type                | Dairy products  |
| Almonds                                | Onion grass     |
| Liquorice                              | Raw red cabbage |
| Nuts                                   | Green bananas   |
| Deadly Nightshade                      | Avocado         |
| Butter Cups                            | Garden Shrubs   |
| Potato tops & skins or any green parts |                 |
| Any unripe fruit or vegetables         |                 |



## Pet City GUINEA PIG CARE SHEET

Guinea Pigs make wonderful pets for both children and adults alike. But just because they are small doesn't mean there isn't a lot to consider before adding one to your family.

Responsible pet ownership always involves a certain amount of planning, commitment, time and expense. So in all fairness to you and your pet, always do your homework first and learn as much as possible about the animal, including its requirements, health and behaviour.

At *Pet City* we do our best to ensure that your new pet is as healthy and happy as possible. This brochure has been created by *Pet City* to give you some helpful tips and practical information for keeping Guinea Pigs.



## Cage Care

Guinea pigs need lots of space to play and explore. The size of the cage you select will depend on the number of guinea pigs you decide to keep. Remember that guinea pigs are colonial animals that do best when they can interact with other guinea pigs. They enjoy group housing and socialization and for these reasons you should consider keeping a minimum of two. Guinea pigs should be kept with the same sex as they are prolific breeders.

Guinea pigs can be housed indoors or outdoors. Most outdoor hutches are NOT dog proof, so your guinea pigs should not be left in an outdoor hutch when no one is home or overnight. The hutch must always be in the shade as guinea pigs are very susceptible to heat stress. Note that guinea pigs that are housed indoors are usually quieter, and more interactive. Their cages are also a lot easier to clean!

Cages with wire floors should only be used on grassed surfaces. Take care not to place the cage on a slope as their little feet may get caught in the wire. If your cage has a wire floor and you cannot have it on grass consider taking the wire out and using the cage base filled with soft bedding instead. Your guinea pig always needs to have access to soft bedding in the cage. The best type of bedding for guinea pig cages is made of untreated wood shavings, as it is absorbent and soft on little feet! Special care should be taken to avoid any scented or oiled types as these can cause respiratory problems. Straw is not recommended as bedding as it can damage their eyes and it is not very absorbent.

Guinea pigs should always have a dark place to hide within their cage. Bright light can cause pain and eye damage to sensitive guinea pig eyes, especially with albinos.

The cage should be cleaned at least once or twice a week. It is recommended an antibacterial cleansing spray is used to wipe down the cage. This will kill any germs and assist with eliminating smells. Be careful as cleansing agents that contain eucalyptus or menthol can kill your pet. Ensure that you rinse the cage well before putting your guinea pig back in.

## Feeding

As Guinea Pigs require a varied diet we recommend that you feed a good quality Small Animal Mix, and mix in an equal portion of Lucerne chaff. Note that long haired guinea pigs require more Lucerne in their diets than short haired to keep their long locks in good condition.

Alternatively you can feed a premium food such as "Lil'Friends" or "Kaytee" which has all their dietary requirements perfectly balanced and conveniently packaged.

Guinea pigs need a lot of water to fuel their fast metabolisms. Make sure they always have plenty of fresh water available in a specially designed hanging water bottle. A water bottle is the best choice as they cannot soil in or contaminate the water. To prevent algae from building up in the water bottle you can use "Small Animal Water Guard Drops".

There are a wide range of commercial treats available for guinea pigs. Fresh fruit and vegetables also make nutritious treats and are an essential part of a guinea pig's diet. Guinea pigs cannot synthesize vitamin C and they will suffer from scurvy if their diet lacks it. They must have fruit & vegetables every day, never unripe ones though as these can be toxic.

Another excellent source of vitamins for guinea pigs is a vitamin supplement that can be added to their drinking water. Easy to administer and readily available "Aristopet Small Animal Vitamin Supplement" will help to ensure your pet is receiving the correct balance of vitamins. Salt and mineral lick stones placed in the cage can also be of benefit.

Some signs of vitamin deficiency are dull coat, lethargy, skin lesions, susceptibility to infection, and reluctance to walk. If you have guinea pigs that show any of these signs it might be a good idea to review your pets diet. In extreme cases please contact your vet for advice.

Check your guinea pig's teeth regularly to ensure they are not chipped or overgrown. If your guinea pig is having trouble eating or losing weight it may be due to teeth problems. A wood chew will help keep teeth healthy and stop them becoming too long.

## Entertainment

Guinea pigs are sweet natured creatures. Their favourite past time is eating! They enjoy it when there are a variety of tunnels and ramps in their cage to make their life more interesting.

You can spice up their lives by hiding fruit treats around their cage on top of ramps and inside PVC pipes and terracotta pots

Wheels are not recommended for Guinea Pigs to play on as their bodies are not flexible enough to conform to a wheel. However mostly they are uninterested in exercise.

There are harness available to walk your guinea pigs with. Walking should be restricted to short jaunts around the yard as their little legs are not designed for extensive exercise. Care must be taken to ensure that the harness is done up securely as they are quick to escape if the harness is loosely fitted.

PVC or clay piping is an ideal sized toy for guinea pigs as it can be cut to any size. Corner and tee shaped pieces are available to make little mazes and tunnels for them to play and hide in

Wooden chew toys or salt licks will also entertain your guinea pigs, as they love to gnaw and chew to keep their teeth healthy and short.

The best way of all to ensure your guinea pig is not bored is to make sure it has a friend! When introducing a new guinea pig to your existing one, it is a good idea to clean out the cage first making it a neutral smelling territory for all involved. This may help reduce any possible territorial disputes! Having a separate hiding place may also help prevent any minor disputes.

