



All About the

Guinea Pig

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The Guinea Pig

About the Guinea Pig

Guinea pigs are small rodents, closely related to the porcupine, yet are without quills. They first originated in South America, specifically the Andes Mountains region, where they can still be found in the wild. Very clean and gentle, these animals make great pets, especially for young children.

Guinea Pig Characteristics

The Guinea Pig is a social, loving animal that is quite popular in many households. There are three common breeds: the smooth-coated, the Abyssinian (appears to have cowlicks all over the body), and the Peruvian (long, silky hair). Generally, the smooth-coated and Abyssinian are what most people will find in pet stores. The average weight of a Guinea Pig is around 2 pounds, and they range from 8-14 inches in length. Because they are social animals and in the wild they run with groups, they often do better in captivity if they are paired. Females will generally do ok with 2 or more; however, males should not be placed in a group with other males, or they will fight.

Selecting Your Guinea Pig

A Few Words about Breeders

In order to select the exact breed of Guinea Pig that you want (and even coloring), it might be best to work directly with a breeder. While Guinea Pigs are small and seem like easy animals to care for, they do require a bit of work and have some special needs. A breeder would be able to help you understand these needs and requirements before you make a final decision. Perhaps you may decide that purchasing an older Guinea Pig, rather than a newer one, would be better for you. Several breeders will carry both old and new and can help you find the Guinea Pig that matches you the very best.

A Few Words about Pet Stores

Guinea Pigs are available for purchase at most pet stores, usually the larger ones. It is best to buy from a pet store that carries all the supplies you will need for your new pet, including a cage and the bedding supplies. Be prepared to shop around a little to select a Guinea Pig that is in good health and the overall appearance is good. Do not be tempted to purchase the very first one that you come across without thoroughly examining them. Guinea Pigs require daily care to their cages, cleaning old food and soiled bedding. If you find that their living conditions are very poor at any pet store that you visit, it is best to avoid making your purchase there.



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How to Choose your Guinea Pig

Purchasing one Guinea Pig may already seem like a lot; however, if possible, try and buy them in pairs (two males or two females), since they like to be with more than one, and will be less lonely. If you are not picky about the specific type of breed, it is probably best to select a short-haired Guinea Pig, since they will be the easiest to maintain. Puppies (Guinea Pig babies) should be nice and plump, clean ears and nasal passages, bright, clear eyes, and shiny coats. Guinea Pigs are quite shy, and may hide from you at first. After a while, they will become more comfortable and less afraid.

The Guinea Pig Pup

New pups are born after 9 weeks of gestation in litters of 1-4. Born with their eyes open and plenty of hair, most will be ready to go to their new home around six weeks of age. Pups will nurse on their mother for 2-3 weeks, yet will begin to eat some solid food around 3 days of age. New pups are extremely active and will be very playful, running and romping around with their siblings.

The Guinea Pig Adult

After the Guinea Pig has grown, the wild, active behaviors will go away, and they will become the shy, docile animals that we know. They will measure up to 30 cm in size when fully grown. The female Guinea Pig can give birth to her first litter after only 3 months of age. They are hardly possessive of their pups, and will even nurse others outside of their own litter.

The Guinea Pig Senior

As Guinea Pigs age, they can develop several medical issues, and may need a trip to the vet for treatment. Older Guinea Pigs become even mellower and will cuddle with their owners for longer periods of time.

Medical Considerations

Similar to older humans, kidney problems, sore joints, poor circulation, and failing eyesight are just a few of the ailments for Guinea Pigs. Most of these ailments can be relieved with medications prescribed by a veterinarian.

Necessary Items

Guinea Pigs will need a cage that measures 28" long x 14" wide x 14" tall. The bottom can be lined with newspaper and then another layer of shredded paper for padding. A water bottle that can be attached to the cage is also a necessary item. Pet stores will carry special Guinea Pig pellets that they will need, which provide the right amount of protein and fiber. Fresh vegetables and fruit can also be given in small amounts, as well as daily vitamin C.



Popular Products for your Guinea Pig

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