



Guinea Pigs - a pet owner's guide

Guinea Pigs make excellent pets, and can be a particularly rewarding first pet for children, being very easy to handle, friendly and vocal.

However, it is, as with all pets very important to ensure that Guinea Pigs are well looked after and cared for to ensure they live a long and healthy life.

Pigs can be expected to live for up to 4-7 years, and often require minimal veterinary attention over the course of their lifetime, however below are the most common problems experienced:

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Cause</u>	<u>Action</u>
Overgrown Teeth	Insufficient teeth wear	Increase hay / grass in diet
Mange	Mites	Xenex spot-ons
Hair loss	Pulling fur out	Increase fibre in diet
Scurvy	Insufficient Vitamin C	Ensure diet is appropriate
Cystic Ovaries	Hormonal imbalance	Surgery

Diet:

The above table clearly shows the importance of diet in Guinea Pig health:
A few key points to remember:

- **Do:** Provide plenty of hay.
Hay / Grass should be a Guinea Pig's main source of food. This allows them to keep their teeth healthy
- **Don't:** Feed a muesli-style feed.
This type of food encourages selective feeding, which can lead to overweight pigs with bad teeth
- **Do:** Feed Guinea Pig-specific extruded pellets.
Guinea Pigs need Vitamin C just like humans. Other rodents don't, so non-Guinea Pig food may be lacking
- **Don't:** Overfeed concentrated foods. Ideally your Guinea Pig should be **between 750g and 1kg** in weight when fully grown.



Companionship

Guinea Pigs are best kept with other Guinea Pigs. They are naturally sociable animals, and two female Guinea Pigs and often two male guinea pigs can be kept together successfully. Owners often opt to keep Guinea Pigs alongside rabbits. However this can be extremely problematic and detrimental to both animals:

- Rabbits: Can often fight with Guinea Pigs, causing severe injury and even death.
- Rabbits: Carry bacteria, which cause severe breathing

problems in Guinea Pigs.

- Guinea Pigs: Require more specific nutrition than Rabbits, and can suffer from scurvy if fed on rabbit diets.
- Guinea Pigs: Also carry a bacteria in their mouths which can cause serious disease in rabbits.

When keeping Guinea Pigs together, it is important to ensure they have been sexed correctly. This can sometimes be difficult, and if you are in any doubt, we can be of assistance. Pigs can

breed from 5 weeks of age, and after a 63-day pregnancy can give birth to litters of up to 6 active piglets.



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Care

Guinea pigs may need their nails clipping at regular intervals. This can be done at home or at the vets. Nail wear will often be increased by allowing guinea pigs to have regular use of an outside run, but it is imperative to ensure that runs are both escape proof, and also secure against the entry of other animals.

Equally, runs and hutches need to be cleaned out fully at least once a week. Outside, Guinea pigs are just as prone to fly strike as rabbits, and consequently must be regularly checked that they are able and willing to sufficiently groom themselves.