



34 Walnut Road, TQ2 6HS
01803 606059
79 Kingsway Avenue, TQ4 7AB
01803 843836
info@greenbayvets.co.uk
www.greenbayvets.co.uk

CARING FOR YOUR PET GUINEA PIG

Diet

Guinea pigs are entirely vegetarian and forage on grasses, plants, vegetables and crops in the wild. They have very delicate digestive systems and need high levels of fibre in their diet to keep their gut moving. The majority of your pig's diet should be high quality feeding hay and grazed grass (never grass cuttings). There should always be fresh water available, that should be changed daily. Guinea pigs, like us, can't make their own vitamin C so they need a dose of this a day to keep them healthy. A high-quality pellet can contain this, and you can also include fresh greens into their diet to give extra nutrients and provide some variety. The PDSA recommend feeding a teacup sized amount of safe greens a day, you could include:

- Fresh parsley
- Dandelion leaves (ensure no pesticide has been used)
- A small amount of kale
- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Baby corn on the cob
- Carrot tops
- Celery leaves
- Green beans

Some safe fruits can be banana, blueberry, cherry, strawberries and kiwi. Do not overfeed citrus fruits as they can cause stomach upsets and obesity. Tomato leaves are also poisonous so do not feed these!

Housing

Your guinea pig's housing should be attached permanently to a larger space where they can exercise freely at any time of the day or night. The housing itself should be as big as possible but an absolute minimum of 1.5m x 1m with an additional 2m x 1m run. There should be several hiding places so they can hide if they feel scared, remembering they are prey species; this could include cardboard boxes and tunnels. Bedding you can use can be clean and fresh straw, hay or shredded paper, but ensure it is dust free. There are also several types of fleece liner available, but you must make sure it is washed regularly, and that your pig doesn't eat it.

Companionship

Guinea pigs love company and should ideally be kept in single sex groups or pairs. Males and females can be kept together but should be neutered to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Never keep guinea pigs with rabbits or chinchillas, they have very different food and housing needs, and your pig will likely get bullied by the rabbits as they are different species. You can also have a great relationship with your pet Guinea pig but it will take a little while to get used to each other. Give them time to settle in their new surroundings, speak gently when you approach their housing,

don't try to hold them straight away and start by offering tasty food or the odd treat to gain their trust (pigs tend to think with their bellies).

Health care

Dental disease is one of the most common health problems seen in Guinea pigs. It can be caused by a lack of abrasive fibre in their diet. If you notice your pig eating less than normal, then take them to your vet as soon as possible.

Parasites: Guinea pigs are susceptible to parasite infestations and fungal infections. If you notice hair loss, open wounds or thick dandruff on one of your Guinea pigs, take them to the vet.

Vitamin C deficiency: Guinea pigs can't make their own vitamin C which is why they need a diet with lots of vitamin C in it. Without it your guinea pig could develop scurvy which can cause blood clotting problems and issues with their skin and joints. If you notice your pig has less energy than usual, is struggling to walk, isn't eating much or develops diarrhoea then you should take them to the vet as soon as possible.

Pododermatitis: Pododermatitis, or "Bumble foot", is when pressure sores form on the soles of Guinea pig's feet. The inflammation can become infected leading to further and more serious complications. It is commonly caused by hard, abrasive flooring. Do not place wire flooring or any harsh bedding in your Guinea pig's house and remove soiled and wet bedding daily. If you have any concerns, then seek advice from your vet.

Urinary tract problems: Guinea pigs are prone to developing stones in their bladders, kidneys or ureters. They can also develop urinary tract infections. This is more common in female Guinea pigs. It is believed that many urinary tract issues in pigs are caused by stress. Signs to watch out for are blood in the urine, straining to urinate and loss of appetite. If you notice any of these signs or have any worries, then take them to your vet.

Neutering

Neutering is not without risk but is needed if you wish to mix males and females. There is not a health requirement to neuter female Guinea pigs unless there is a documented medical issue such as ovarian cysts (these can develop due to elevated hormone levels such as oestrogen and can lead to issues such as hair loss, constant heat, or infertility). Male guinea pigs can be neutered from 3-4 months, or as soon as their testicles have descended.