



Animal Welfare Association

All About Guinea Pigs

Guinea pigs are social, affectionate and comical pets. However, they are also relatively messy pets that require lots of maintenance and cleaning. Guinea pigs are rather vocal pets that quickly become conditioned to the sound of veggies being chopped, the refrigerator door being opened and the sound of a plastic bag being brought through the door. The average lifespan of these cute cavy is about four to six years. Guinea pigs are very social animals that enjoy the company of other pigs. If you have only one pigger in the house s/he can live a happy, healthy life as long as s/he receives enough attention from a human companion.

Diet

The most important aspect of a guinea pig diet is vitamin C. Vitamin C can easily be provided in a good, balanced diet. Guinea pigs should be provided with a good quality pellet on a daily basis. Timothy hay should be provided in unlimited quantities also on a daily basis. In addition to pellets and hay, all guinea pigs should be provided with fruits and veggies. Kale, cabbage and parsley are great sources of Vitamin C and should be provided on a regular basis. Avoid giving your pig broccoli because it will cause gas.

Health

Guinea pigs do not require vaccinations. Keep your eyes open for hair loss and intense scratching because external parasites such as mites and lice are often observed in pet piggers. Guinea pigs can also suffer from upper respiratory infection. The symptoms of an infection may include nasal discharge, sneezing, lack of appetite and difficulty breathing. If you notice any change in your pigger's normal routine including lack of appetite or diarrhea go immediately to a vet who specializes in small animals. Because guinea pigs have ever-growing teeth it is very important to make sure they are not becoming overgrown. Make sure to provide appropriate items to chew on so that you can avoid malocclusion. Malocclusion results when the upper and lower premolar teeth do not meet correctly when chewing.

Housing

Pigs do not climb like rats and mice so height is not important when choosing a cage. Make sure to purchase a cage that has plenty of space for running around and a large, sturdy platform for jumping up on. Solid bottom cages are a must in order to avoid foot sores or infections that are often observed in small animals housed in wire bottom cages. Do not provide your guinea pig with an exercise wheel; it will cause them serious spinal injury!

Fun Facts

- Guinea pig babies are born fully furred with their eyes open.
- Hairless guinea pigs make great pets for those with allergies.
- Guinea pigs have 20 teeth in their tiny mouths.