

To ensure the guinea pig is healthy and not experiencing pain, daily visual health checks should be carried out.

Eyes

- ✓ Open and close freely
- ✓ Clear, bright
- ✗ Discharge
- ✗ Unable to open & close freely
- ✗ Cloudy

Ears

- ✓ Responds to sound
- ✓ Clear
- ✗ Blood or discharge
- ✗ Smelly
- ✗ Excess wax
- ✗ Visible mites

Nose

- ✓ Dry
- ✗ Blood or discharge
- ✗ Sneezing or wheezing

Mouth

- ✓ Eating well
- ✓ Aligned teeth
- ✓ Pink gums
- ✗ Dropping food/dribbling
- ✗ Reluctant to eat
- ✗ Overgrown teeth
- ✗ Pale gums



Legs, feet, claws

- ✓ Move freely
- ✓ Nails not curled over
- ✗ Overgrown claws
- ✗ Reluctant to move/ weight bear
- ✗ Redness

Body/Skin

- ✓ Smooth, glossy coat
- ✓ Complete coat
- ✗ Dull coat
- ✗ Bald patches
- ✗ Red/broken skin
- ✗ Scratching

Anogenital area

- ✓ Clean and clear
- ✓ Evidence of regular faeces production
- ✗ Blood or discharge
- ✗ Sticky faeces/ matted fur
- ✗ Smelly
- ✗ Swelling



PET INDUSTRY FEDERATION
 Pet Industry Federation
www.petfederation.co.uk
 Company registration no. 7252816



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Looking after your Guinea Pig



Facts

Guinea pigs can live for approximately 6 years

A guinea pig's diet should be predominantly hay or grass

Guinea pigs are social animals and should be kept in pairs or small groups

Guinea pigs need lots of exercise to prevent them getting bored and fat

To ensure all pet animals are well cared for, the Animal Welfare Act 2006 was introduced.

This law states that all animal owners have a legal duty of care to meet their animal's five welfare needs.

The five welfare needs are:

- The need for a suitable environment
- The need for a suitable diet
- The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals
- The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.



The need for a suitable environment

It is important to provide the guinea pig with safe, suitable accommodation which is clean, comfortable, secure and has appropriate environmental conditions, including temperature, ventilation and drainage.

Guinea pigs require regular exercise so a large hutch and daily access to a run is recommended. All accommodation should be secure and prevent predators attacking.

The hutch should have a bedding area containing suitable warm, absorbent bedding material (i.e. dust free hay). The other end of the hutch should contain hay and water.

Guinea pigs are highly susceptible to extremes of temperature so the hutch should be placed out of direct sunlight and will require additional covers in the winter. Some owners move the guinea pig hutch into a shed or garage during the winter, making sure that there is suitable ventilation and light.

Guinea pig accommodation should be cleaned out twice a week to prevent the build-up of ammonia and bacteria. Animal safe disinfectants should be used.

The need for a suitable diet

For a guinea pig this means providing it with its own body size in hay or grass each day. The diet can also be supplemented by small amounts of green leafy vegetables and an eggcup full of either guinea pig muesli or nuggets.

Fresh water must always be available to the guinea pig.

Unlike many other animals, guinea pigs are not able to produce their own vitamin C, so it must be provided in their diet. Herbs and green leafy vegetables are a good source of vitamin C and commercially produced guinea pig food (nuggets and muesli) have added vitamin C to prevent deficiency occurring. For this reason, it is not recommended to feed a guinea pig on manufactured rabbit food.

Not providing the correct diet to a guinea pig can lead to a number of health problems including:

- Vitamin C deficiency causes swollen joints and internal bleeding. Symptoms include lethargy, when moving and diarrhoea.
- Dental problems – Guinea pigs teeth continually grow and need to eat often to wear them down. Unworn teeth can be sharp, causing pain when eating resulting in the guinea pig developing anorexia.
- Bumblefoot - a bacterial disease, caused by standing in unclean bedding.



The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

Guinea pigs are vocal animals and will squeak and chatter to each other and in response to food and enjoyable experiences. It is recommended that guinea pigs are kept in pairs and are provided with daily access to a run to allow them to perform natural behaviours.

They also benefit from having somewhere to hide in their enclosure. There are also a variety of toys and enrichment objects which can be provided to help keep the guinea pig occupied and prevent unwanted behaviours.

The need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals

Guinea pigs are social animals. They should be kept in same sex pairs or small groups. Male guinea pigs should be neutered to prevent unplanned breeding.

The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

By providing a suitable diet and accommodation the guinea pig will be less likely to develop some diseases and disorders.

To ensure guinea pigs do not experience pain when being handled they should be handled correctly. Carefully place one hand under the guinea pig's belly, and the other hand underneath the back legs and lift the guinea pig up. Hold the guinea pig close to your body and ensure it is fully supported.

Should the guinea pig become ill providing suitable care and where necessary veterinary treatment is essential. Some common guinea pig diseases are:

- **Flystrike** - in the summer months flies are drawn to any wet or matted faeces around the guinea pig's bottom. The flies lay their eggs in the faeces, the eggs hatch into maggots and the guinea pig begins eating the guinea pig's flesh. To prevent this ensure the guinea pig's bottom is kept clean and dry
- **Parasites** – guinea pigs can suffer from intestinal worms, ticks and fleas. Regular treatment with preventative treatments will prevent infestation