

Lifespan

With good care the average lifespan is about 4-8 years.

Behaviors

Guinea pigs can be kept single or potentially in pairs if they are both females or a neutered male with a female. Two neutered males can sometimes be kept together but males will often fight. Guinea pigs are very curious and enjoy time to explore outside of their cage but can be destructive by chewing on household items like baseboards and cords. Make sure your guinea pig is closely supervised if out of its cage.



When picking up your guinea pig try to scoop them up from the bottom supporting their belly and feet. Nails should be trimmed regularly (every 2-3 months) as they do get long and start to curl. You may see your guinea pig eat its own feces – this is normal and contributes to a healthy digestive system.

Spaying and Neutering

Neutering males can sometimes make them calmer and allow you to keep them together with a female potentially however it is not necessary to neuter them. Females are difficult to spay so it is not recommended unless there are medical problems.

Housing

Guinea pigs need a solid bottom cage at least four feet long and two feet deep. That space needs to be doubled if more than two guinea pigs are kept together. Time outside of the cage to explore a safe area is great enrichment. They will chew wood and plastic so only ceramic or metal dishes should be used. Water bowls get very dirty so water bottles attached to the side of the cage should be used. Carefresh (recycled shredded paper) bedding or layers of fleece bedding are the best options to use at the bottom of the cage.

There should be several hides that your guinea pig can get completely under to hide and sleep. Exercise wheels and balls should not be used for guinea pigs as their backs are not flexible enough and can cause injury.

Diet and Nutrition

All of the teeth of guinea pigs grow continuously throughout their life. Chewing grass hay wears the teeth down to keep them at an appropriate length. Hay also keeps the digestive tract functioning well and prevents obesity and diarrhea. *Grass hay (timothy, orchard, oat hay, etc) is absolutely necessary to the health of your guinea pig and should be available in unlimited quantity at all times.* Alfalfa hay should only be used in guinea pigs less than a year old or if they're pregnant/nursing due to the high level of calcium which can contribute to bladder stones.

Pellets specifically formulated for guinea pigs, which are fortified with Vitamin C, should be offered at 1/8 cup per guinea pig per day. Avoid mixes with nuts, corn, seeds, and fruit.

Guinea pigs have a higher Vitamin C requirement than other small mammals. Fresh vegetables like bell peppers, romaine lettuce, snap peas, cilantro, parsley, and carrots are a great source of dietary Vitamin C. Fruits should be offered very sparingly as they can cause digestive upset. The drops that can be added to the water bottle degrade within 24 hours so they are not recommended as a good source of Vitamin C.

Signs of Illness

If your guinea pig is not eating or not pooping it needs to be seen by a vet right away. Sneezing, discharge from the eyes, or nose are also problems that need veterinary attention.

Most of an adult guinea pig's diet should be hay!

