



Fish & Feather

GUINEA PIGS

HOUSING

Guinea pigs need a draught free, dry, sleeping area and plenty of dry bedding. Line the sleeping quarters with newspaper, a decent layer of sawdust/shavings and plenty of fresh hay. Clean out weekly or sooner if bedding gets wet.

Wire for runs should be small enough that they cannot get their noses through and strong enough to protect them from other animals. Guinea pigs can withstand cold, but must remain dry. In extreme weather put hutch under cover.

DIET

Guinea pigs need a good diet with plenty of vitamin C. They should be fed a minimum of 10mg of vitamin C daily or 20 mg if pregnant. They need good quality hay or roughage and need fresh water daily.

Hay is used by Guinea pigs to help them digest other foods. Without hay some guinea pigs will chew their own hair or the hair of their mates and will certainly have tummy upsets. Hay should always be fresh, clean and have no sign of dust or mould. Once it is wet replace it. A good quality mix that contains pasture pellets, oats and grain as a base diet with plenty of fresh vegetables such as corn on the cob, carrots, beetroot, chicory, cauliflower leaves (must be fresh and green), broccoli leaves spinach, apple and watercress. Cabbage is not recommended as it can cause colic. Lettuce can cause runny motions. Never feed lawn clippings and only feed celery as a treat.

DO NOT FEED

Cabbage, lettuce, lawn clippings, bracken, buttercups or any plants that grow from bulbs.

BREEDING

The male guinea pig is called a 'boar' the female a 'sow'. They are sexually mature from about 6 weeks of age depending on the breed. Most boars are ready for breeding at 10-12 weeks but sows should be at least 5 months old before being bred. If you intend breeding from a sow you should do so before 12 months of age as older sows often have trouble with a first litter. Once the boar is mature or even over 6 weeks of age he should not be left with any males if there are females present.

Babies are born after 70 days (approx.) gestation, fully furred, eyes open and within a couple of hours are eating. The sow will normally have four young and will nurse them for 3-4 weeks. They can be separated from her at 4 weeks of age. Make sure she gets plenty of food, vitamin C and vegetables and give some bread mixed with diluted milk for the 3-4 week period of nursing.

CARE

Guinea pigs are susceptible to mite and lice. They lose their hair in patches and scratch themselves leaving scabs on the skin. We recommend using a pyrethrum based rinsed. 'Petclean' mix 10ml to 1 litre of warm water. Dip the guinea pig in the solution, leave on for 5 minutes then rinse in plain warm water, towel dry (in summer) or blow dry if cool. Repeat every four days until it is cleared up. A mite and lice spray used sparingly can also be of benefit to prevent other guinea pigs getting mite or if washing is not possible.

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