



Guinea Pig Care Guide for Beginners.

Thinking about bringing guinea pigs into your home?

These gentle, social animals make wonderful pets but they do have specific care needs and are by no means inexpensive or low maintenance.

This guide covers the essentials to help you give your guinea pigs a happy, healthy life from day one.



Housing & Cage Setup

A proper enclosure is one of the most important parts of guinea pig care.

Minimum space requirements

At least 120 x 60 cm (for two guinea pigs)

However, bigger is always better! It is no longer advised that guinea pigs live outdoors, whilst it is possible to build a predator safe enclosure, think first, an animal should be part of your family and keeping

them indoors is not only safer and healthier, it allows them to become part of your family and involved in your everyday life.

Guinea pigs need room to move, explore and popcorn!

Best cage types

C&C (grid-style) cages, These can be built to fit in with your home and needs easily and are relatively inexpensive compared to much smaller, inadequate "pet shop" cages.

Large custom enclosures, a home made enclosure, built and thought out well, can look amazing as well as fill all the needs of your piggies, this can be more expensive but if you have the skills, is well worth the investment and a wonderful part of the process.

Essential cage items.

Soft bedding (fleece liners or paper-based bedding) try to avoid dusty bedding such as wood shavings, guinea pigs have extremely sensitive respiratory systems and benefit

hugely from a dust free environment.

Hideouts for security and comfort, don't forget they're prey animals, having a safe place to hide is essential for their wellbeing.

An area for hay, try to avoid hay racks and bags, hay should never be limited, big piles of loose hay fulfil dietary and enrichment needs.

Water bowl and bottle and food bowl.

Cleaning routine, this is important from the very beginning. Set yourself a routine, guinea pigs thrive on a set routine and quickly learn from a structured environment.

Spot clean daily! Yes, daily! Guinea pigs poop a LOT! If you have several, you may need to clean up several times a day. They also need fresh hay at very least once a day and must never run out.

Before you commit to these beautiful animals, consider if you are committed to spending time every day cleaning and also socialising your piggies.

Full clean once a week, this entails a full bedding change, wipe down their environment with a pet safe disinfectant, wash their laundry or change their paper bedding.

Diet & Nutrition Basics

A balanced diet is essential for preventing illness and keeping your guinea pigs thriving.

Daily diet essentials

Unlimited hay. A guinea pigs diet must consist of 80% fresh, high quality hay, meadow hay contains a variety of grasses and is an excellent choice.

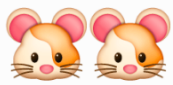
Fresh vegetables (e.g., bell peppers, leafy greens) a more detailed list is available on our diet and nutrition page.

High-quality pellets (small portion daily) avoid muesli based foods, these encourage selective feeding and so do not deliver balanced nutrition.

Fresh water at all times

Important note:

Guinea pigs cannot produce their own vitamin C, so they must get it from fresh foods every day.



Social & Emotional Needs

Guinea pigs are highly social animals and thrive on companionship.

Keep sows in pairs or small groups, often a neutered boar is also a great addition. Boars must be kept in Pairs only, a trio or more is a rare thing and not something to be attempted.

Avoid housing a guinea pig alone.

Provide daily interaction and attention

Allow safe floor time outside the cage

They may be shy at first, but with patience, they become affectionate and interactive pets, always be sure to make their free roam area safe by removing or piggy proofing all electrical cables and any household items that could pose a danger. Guinea pigs will

chew anything!



Grooming & Health Care

Routine care

Trim nails every few weeks, this can vary between guinea pigs, keeping nails clean and short prevents injuries to the nails and feet.

Brush regularly (especially long-haired breeds) begin this routine from day one, always be gentle and never pull tangles, if you have a long hair piggy, you may prefer to trim their hair, especially around their bottom, always do this carefully and safely.

Provide constant access to hay for dental health, teeth grow constantly and without hay, the teeth will soon overgrow, causing pain and preventing your piggy from eating, this would be a veterinary emergency.

Watch for signs of illness, as prey animals, guinea pigs are masters at disguising illness, always be vigilant and if you are worried at

all, never hesitate to take your piggy to an exotic vet immediately.

Some signs to watch for

Loss of appetite

Weight loss

Lethargy

Breathing difficulties

It's very important to register your guinea pigs with a specialist exotics vet as soon as they come home as waiting during an emergency could be a matter of life or death. Exotic vets are generally more costly but its important to register with one as guinea pigs are very unique and require specialist care. This expense is something to consider before committing.



Lifespan & Commitment

Average lifespan: 5–7 years. This can often be longer but sadly sometimes shorter.

Proper care and access to an exotics vet plays a big role in a long and healthy life.

Require daily care and regular cleaning, as mentioned previously, be prepared to spend time daily cleaning, feeding and spending time with your guinea pig.

Ongoing costs include food, bedding, and veterinary care, a single trip to the vet can stretch into the hundreds, be prepared for this. Fresh vegetables, hay and pellets all come at a cost.

Guinea pigs are a long-term commitment and they depend on consistent, attentive care.

Too many guinea pigs are disgarded and end up in rescues or worse, abandoned. Please consider long and hard before making a commitment to these beautiful animals.



Quick Beginner Checklist

Before bringing guinea pigs home, make sure you have:

- ✓ Spacious cage or enclosure
- ✓ Bedding, clean blankets or paper

- ✓ Hay supply (unlimited access)
- ✓ Fresh vegetables ready
- ✓ Pellets and water bottle and bowl
- ✓ Hideouts and enrichment items
- ✓ Financial and time commitments for a pair (or more) of guinea pigs



Final Thoughts

Guinea pigs are rewarding pets full of personality, but they are not “starter pets.” With the right knowledge and preparation, you’ll be well on your way to providing a safe, enriching home for your new companions.