



## Guinea Pig Information

### *Check list*

- A hutch
- Straw or pet hay
- A vitamin & mineral supplement
- Water bottle or bowl
- A salt lick or stone
- Shampoo
- Wormer
- Toys
- Water bottle
- Food bowl
- Litter tray and litter
- Hutch cleaning spray
- Small animal mite and lice spray

### *Arriving home*

Your new guinea pig is likely to be nervous. For the first few days make sure you talk to him regularly before introducing your hand into the cage or stroking him. When he is used to this you can then pick him up. Use both hands, one under the chest with the guinea pig's front legs on either side of your fingers, the other resting on his neck and back. Hold him close to your body so he feels safe and won't fall. Once they are used to you, guinea pigs love being handled.

### *Bedding*

Guinea pigs can be kept outdoors all year round or indoors if you prefer. If kept outside, they should be kept in a weather-proof hutch that is raised off the ground and away from the wind. A guinea pig hutch should be at least 76cm x 38cm x 38cm with a separate living area and run. In the warmer months you can place the guinea pig's hutch onto your lawn. However, you must move it frequently to prevent overgrazing and ensure the hutch is not in direct sunlight. Wood shavings, breeder's choice litter, straw or hay should be used as substrate on the floor of the hutch. You should remove all substrate weekly and thoroughly clean the hutch using hutch clean spray. If you have more than one guinea pig you will need to clean the hutch at least twice a week. Your guinea pig will choose one area in its hutch as a toilet spot. Once this spot has been determined you can place his litter tray with litter there. Place some of your guinea pig's droppings into the litter tray so he knows this is still his toilet area. Clean the litter tray each day. For the first few times after cleaning the litter tray you should still put some of his droppings in there until your guinea pig is used to the litter tray. We recommend using the small animal corner litter trays. They have been designed to fit into the hutch without using up too much of the guinea pig's space.

### *Feeding*

We recommend feeding your guinea pig a rabbit and guinea pig mix along with fresh fruit and vegetables. You will need to add a vitamin and mineral supplement to your guinea pig's water as guinea pigs cannot produce their own vitamin C. Your guinea pig can eat apples, pears, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower leaves, celery (in small amounts) lettuce (in small amounts), Corn on the cob, silver beet, spinach and also milk thistle. Occasionally you can treat your guinea pig with bread but not too much as yeast can be harmful in large quantities. Remember to remove any uneaten fruit or vegetables daily to prevent your guinea pig from getting ill from eating soiled food. We recommend using a ceramic dish for your guinea pig's food as they are easy to keep clean and are too heavy for your guinea pig to tip over. Your guinea pig will graze constantly during the day, if you notice that the rabbit and guinea pig mix has been finished each day then you will need to increase the amount that you are feeding your guinea pig.

### ***Worming***

Your guinea pig will require worming every three months just like cats and dogs. The small animal wormer can be given to your guinea pig by mixing it with his water or by drops directly to the mouth. Always follow the instructions on the bottle. If left-untreated worms can make your guinea pig quite ill with, diarrhoea, weight loss, dry skin and a dull coat.

### ***Grooming***

You should start grooming your guinea pig from an early age so they become used to the feeling. We recommend regular brushing with a slicker or bristle brush. You can wash your guinea pig using small animal shampoo or a dry shampoo in the colder months. Once a month you need to spray your guinea pig and hutch with small animal mite & lice spray to prevent or treat against mites and lice.

### ***Breeding***

Guinea pigs are prolific breeders! Females can start breeding from 1 month of age. The gestation period is between 60 – 65 days, with the average litter size of 3-4 babies. Make sure you remove the male, as the female can become pregnant again within an hour of giving birth! When planning to breed your guinea pig you will need to increase the amount of calcium in her diet before and during pregnancy and make sure you have wormed her prior to breeding. If you are not planning to breed your guinea pigs you can have the male de-sexed to prevent any accidents, or you can keep two guinea pigs of the same sex together even two males as long as they are introduced together from a young age. Guinea pigs are extremely sociable animals you should avoid keeping them on their own.

### ***Toys***

Believe it or not toys play a vital role in the guinea pigs life as they do for many other animals. Guinea pigs enjoy new things to explore and play with. Other than relieving boredom toys are also important to keep their teeth in perfect condition. Guinea pigs will even enjoy having a good chew on sticks, coco chunks and even dentabones.

### ***Fit and healthy guinea pigs***

A healthy guinea pig will be alert with bright clear eyes, dry nostrils and a clean and shiny coat. The droppings should be small, firm pellets. Signs of illness are a dull, dirty coat, loss of appetite, skin sores, loose droppings, or a runny nose. Poor hygiene is a common cause of illness. If these symptoms are present you should consult your vet.

### ***Clubs and shows***

If you want to have even more fun with your guinea pig you can get involved with your local guinea pig (cavie) club and join in with activities and shows. You can find the guinea pig clubs listed under clubs in your local phone book or via the internet.