

# Getting to Know Your Guinea Pig!

(also called a cavy)



Why or how your new pet came to be called a “pig” is not clear! This we do know. He is built somewhat like a pig – large head in relation to the body, stout neck and well rounded rump with a minimum of tail. Some of the sounds your cavy will make emulate a pig and your new found friend loves to eat. But know this! Your guinea pig is very adorable, very lovable and makes an excellent pet for a child once the youngster masters your guinea pigs personality and habits.

## ABOUT YOUR NEW PET

Appreciate his/her size! Larger than a hamster but smaller than a rabbit. Usually weigh a couple of pounds and has a life span of 3-5 years. Guinea Pigs are wonderful companions. They rarely bite and often squeak with delight when their favorite caregiver becomes visible.

Know that guinea pigs are social animals who like to live in small groups. Recommended that you house them in pairs. Singular guinea pigs often easily become depressed. House two females together and they will become great friends. Do the same with 2 males and they will probably fight a little and their hostility may tone down after getting accustomed to each other... Keeping males and females together is NOT recommended because they multiply too rapidly.

## THE GUINEA PIG'S RESIDENCE

You should allow a minimum of 4 square feet of space for each cavy. Note to all – this is the minimum space. Many guinea pig gurus recommend more – up to 7 square feet of space. You'll need a cage with a solid bottom. A cage with a solid bottom and a wire top works well. Avoid wire floors because they hurt the animal's small paws. Never choose a glass container like an aquarium because it restricts important air circulation and retards necessary ventilation.

The room in which you place the cage should be away from drafts and offer a temperature of 65 to 75 degrees F. Preferably it should be located close to household activities so that your small but

lovable pets are part of your daily lives. But know guinea pigs are very sensitive to noise so keep their cage away from TV sets and steos blasting etc.

Line the bottom of the cage with 1-2” of aspen or kiln dried pine shavings. Frequent changing (every 3-4 days) prevents odor and promotes good guinea pig health. Yes, you can teach your guinea pig to use a liter pan, but note, that takes time and patience.

Because guinea pigs enjoy hiding when they play be sure to place empty paper towel tubes and/or cardboard boxes, plastic pipes or plastic flower pots in the cage. Your cavy needs a cave for sleeping and resting! The flower pot or cardboard box will work well.

## AND THEIR FOOD

Guinea Pigs are strict vegans. No meat, no dairy, just fruits and vegetables. Carrot tops and broccoli are their favorites. Know that beetroot, and rhubarb leaves, oxalis, potato and its peelings are toxic to guinea pigs. Instead leafy greens (like romaine lettuce, spinach, kale, parsley) should comprise the rest of your piggy's fresh produce diet. A corn nugget or wheat cereal once in a while is good. Fruit works well as an occasional treat. Keep the portion small. Don't forget hay is a must and fresh water should be provided daily.

IMPORTANT! GUINEA PIGS ARE NOT ABLE TO PRODUCE ASCORBIC ACID SO YOU SHOULD FEED THEM SPECIAL PELLETS THAT ARE FORTIFIED WITH VITAMIN C (sold in all pet stores – about 1/8 cup of pellets each day).

Guinea pigs often kick uneaten fruit and veggies, bedding materials, even droppings into their food bowl therefore spot clean the bowl as needed throughout the week. Wash the bowl with soapy water, rinse and dry during the weekly cage cleaning. That's right a weekly cage cleaning with soap and water is an important part of the regimen!

 AMERICAN WOOD FIBERS



See other side to learn what bedding material is best for your small pet.

## ABOUT SMALL-PET HABITATS IN GENERAL.

Routine care and maintenance will keep your small pet's habitat clean, fresh, and safe — for your pet and for you.

- Habitats should be large enough to allow them to move around freely, and create “room” for various activities (e.g. eating, sleeping, going potty etc.).
- Habitats should be very well ventilated to prevent buildup of odor.
- Water supplies should be checked frequently, at least daily. Keep them filled with fresh clean water, and free of obstructions.
- Be certain the habitat is secure and that there is no way your pet can climb or chew its way out.
- Bedding should be replaced frequently — at least once a week — to absorb moisture and odors. Before adding fresh bedding, wash the habitat with a gentle all-purpose cleaner, rinse it with clean water, and dry it thoroughly.
- Choose bedding that is free from chemicals and toxins.
- All-natural wood shavings (pine, aspen) and sludge-free paper products are recommended.
- Sludge-based paper beddings (often called “reclaimed paper” or “reclaimed cellulose”) and recycled newspaper pellets are not recommended. Independent tests show they contain dioxins, which are known carcinogens.
- Cedar is not recommended in an enclosed habitat, as the natural scent might cause respiratory problems for some small pets.

There are many types of pet bedding on the market. For your guinea pigs maximum comfort we recommend those beddings checked. ✓



## Small Animal Bedding Matrix

	✓ Kiln-Dried Softwood/ Pine	✓ Kiln-Dried Aspen Shavings	Gray Paper Pulp (Sludge Based)	Wood Shavings Mixed with Paper Pulp	Paper Pellets- Gray, Colorized or Crumbled	Cellulose Paper Granules	Pelletized Pine	Colorized or Bleached Pulp	✓ Shredded Specialty Paper
Healthy	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
All-Natural	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★	★	★★★★	★	★
Odor Absorption	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★
Liquid Absorption	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Dust-Free	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★
Economical	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★	★	★★	★	★★
Nesting	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★	★★★★	★★★★
Flushable/mulchable	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★
Easy to Use	★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★
Softness	★★	★★	★★	★★	★	★★★★	★	★★	★★★★
Fun/Fashion	★	★	★	★	★★	★	★	★★★★	★★★★
<b>Dioxin Free</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Your pet guinea pig deserves the best! For that reason, we recommend the dioxin free bedding checked.



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