Guinea Pigs
Cavia porcellus

Approximate life span: 5-8 years
Estimated adult size: 700-1200 grams
Difficulty Level: Beginner

The guinea pig, also called a cavy, is neither native to the Guinea region nor related to pigs. They are a species of rodent from the family Caviidae, with several different breeds in a variety of coat lengths and colors. Guinea pigs are born fully furred and begin eating solid foods within a few days, though they do not wean for two to three weeks.

HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

Guinea pigs are highly social animals and should be housed in pairs or groups whenever possible. They require a minimum of eight square feet for a pair, in a well-ventilated cage with no wire flooring as this can damage their feet. Add at least two square feet for each additional pet. Line cages with soft fleece or paper-based bedding. Avoid wood shavings as they can contribute to respiratory illness. Change litter or bedding at least once per week and spot clean daily.

DIETARY NEEDS

Hay: Guinea pigs need free access to grass hay at all times to promote dental and GI health.
Pellets: Newborn, juvenile, and pregnant or lactating guinea pigs should have free access to an alfalfa-based pellet. Adult guinea pigs over 6 months old should be fed a timothy-based pellet, in more limited quantities (⅛-¼ cup daily, depending on veterinary recommendations). Pellets should feature Vitamin C, since guinea pigs are unable to produce it on their own. Avoid pellets with added grains, seeds, fruits, and nuts as these items are too high in fat and carbs, which can lead to obesity and other health issues.
Greens: A salad about the size of the guinea pig should be offered daily, including a wide variety of greens for added hydration and enrichment.
Treats: Starchy vegetables and fruits should be limited to no more than ½ tablespoon per day.

RECOMMENDED VET CARE

- Annual exams
- Spay/neuter to prevent reproductive illness
- Nail trims, as needed
- Common illness: bladder stones, ovarian cysts, respiratory infection, GI stasis