**Guinea Pig – Care Sheet**

**Guinea Pig:** *Cavia porcellus*

Cute and cuddly, owning guinea pigs is an excellent introduction to owning exotic animals. Highly social animals, guinea pigs enjoy playing with their owners, and often benefit from being adopted with another guinea pig. While guinea pigs are relatively easy to care for (a guinea pig can be an excellent first pet for a properly supervised child), they have some specific needs, and it is important to seek regular veterinary care.

**Basic Info:**

Also known as cavy or cuy

Age: Usually 4-6 years, up to 8 years

Weight: 1.5 to 3.5 lbs.

Sexual maturity: 3-4 months

Gestation length: 59-72 days

Average litter size: 3-4

**Behavior:**

Guinea pigs are quite docile, and they hardly ever bite or scratch. They are quite vocal, making a variety of squeaks. They are highly social, so many will benefit from being adopted in pairs, or even more. If you plan to spend a lot of time cuddling with your guinea pig, it may do better on its own. They enjoy regular playtime outside of their cages. When outside of their cage, it is important to keep an eye on them so they do not injure themselves, hide, or chew on things they are not supposed to.

**Diet**

Like rabbits, it is important to keep a guinea pig’s cage well stocked with timothy hay or other grass hays. This can help promote dental and gastrointestinal health. Additionally, guinea pigs need a high amount of vitamin C, because they cannot produce it naturally. That means they need:

* Fruits like oranges, tomatoes, strawberries, honeydew, raspberries and kiwi
* Vegetables like healthy greens (collard, mustard greens, etc.), all colors of bell peppers, and broccoli
* 1/8 cup per day of vitamin C-enriched pellets specifically made for guinea pigs. Since vitamin C can lose potency, it is important to make sure the pellets are as fresh as possible. Reproducing females and juveniles can have alfalfa-based food, while adults need timothy hay based pellets.

There are also vitamin C-enriched snacks for guinea pigs.

Avoid food made from dried fruits, vegetables, grain or seeds.

Always provide them with fresh, clean water from a bowl or bottle.

**Environment & Caging**

Guinea pigs will benefit from a solid-floor cage so they can avoid getting their feet caught in any wires. Make sure the cage is well-ventilated (meaning it does not have glass walls). Keep them indoors in a quiet location that is between 65°F-75°F. Additionally, the cage should contain:

* Bedding made from aspen shavings, recycled newspaper product, or fleece
* A litter box (yes, they can be trained!) that is cleaned daily
* A hide box or two (big enough that they can move around in) that they can hide or bed down in when wanting a little extra privacy

If you plan on having your guinea pig out of its cage for play time, it is important to take the proper precautions to avoid any injuries. Remove hazards from the play area and make sure it can’t escape.

**Veterinary Care**

We recommend a physical examination every 6 to 12 months. Common guinea pig health problems can include:

* Dental issues
* Gastrointestinal ailments - it is very important to make sure they have plenty of hay to eat, and that a guinea pig is always eating and defecating
* Hair loss and skin issues caused by mites or lice
* Respiratory infections
* Bladder stones or other urinary tract problems

We also recommend a fecal exam to look for internal parasites, and can provide the proper education about providing regular toenail trimming, brushing long-haired breeds, and making sure your little guy gets plenty of exercise. Bloodwork or other tests can be ordered if needed.