

# A GUINEA PIGS JOY OF MOTHERHOOD

68 days - that's the average gestation period for guinea pigs. A short time compared with the childbearing period for us humans, but not when one is excitedly awaiting the cute little baby guineas! Vets from the specialist retail chain Maxi Zoo explain what animal lovers should look out for when extending their guinea pig family.



First of all: please don't instigate the proliferation of guinea pigs indiscriminately and without thinking carefully about it. The decision to mate your animal should be a fully conscious one. Best is to find animal-loving homes for the babies in advance or consider whether you have enough room for them yourself. Three animals need a stall measuring at least 150 x 70 cm. A female guinea pig at five to ten months and a weight of 700 g is the best suited to becoming a mother. If you choose an older one, the birth could be dangerous because the pelvis will already have begun to ossify, i.e. become less "elastic". When the boar and the mother-to-be are put together, there will be a lot of chasing around and squealing. Females are only receptive to the boar when they're in heat. That's about every 18 days, so leave the two of them together for about four weeks, just to be sure. You will notice if the pairing has been blessed when the sow gets fatter and fatter.

As a rule, giving birth proceeds quickly and without complications. The mother doesn't build a nest – she

just lies down in her den. Normally she will have a litter of between two and six young weighing around 60 to 110 g each. As nest absconders, they are able to run straight away. The newly-born are completely covered in hair, they can see and smell and already have their second teeth. If you have other guinea pigs apart from the mother and her babies, they

will mostly form one big happy family.

Although guinea pigs grow up really problem-free, you should keep a close eye on them for a while. Is the mother giving her milk to all of them? Are the kids lively, clean and eating hay? Then everything's OK. It is recommended weighing them on some kitchen scales every two to three days. Baby guineas can easily put on up to 10 g per day. Weighing them also lets the little ones get quickly used to you. Give them some carrot and other tasty morsels, stroke them and talk calmly to them.

They will soon become tame. By the way – young guineas like running and jumping, so it's a good idea to offer them room with some small obstacles. At 4 weeks, they are old enough to be given away to new owners.

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## HOW THE LITTLE ONES BEHAVE

Little guinea pigs learn from the big ones. They integrate into the social community right away and get involved in everything. At first, of course, they stick close to their mother but already after one to two weeks they start surveying their surroundings without mum.

"Foreign terrain" is typically explored in single file. In doing so, one animal has its nose at backside of the preceding one and, quietly chortling to themselves, the team sets out – slowly and carefully. But it's not only the young who do this – all guinea pigs do, no matter how old.



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