

SHOPPING LIST:

- ✗ information leaflet about guinea pigs
- large cage
- nest box
- heavy feeding bowl
- hayrack
- water bottle
- floor covering (e.g. MultiFit straw pellets + straw)
- triangular toilet
- hay (rich in herbs, dry, dust-free)
- dried herbs
- guinea pig food (premium food)
- snack ball
- mineral stone, salt lick
- vitamin supplements (Vitamin C + Ascorbic Acid)
- intestinal conditioner
- wood for gnawing on (wooden gnawing block, wicker bridge)
- nibble sticks
- guinea pig brush
- disinfectant/detergent for cleaning the cage
- enclosed run in the garden with a mesh cover
- book about guinea pigs

For more tips and further information on guinea pigs visit our website at: www.maxizoo.ie



WHAT DO I LIKE TO EAT?

Guinea pigs are herbivores, so fresh hay forms the basis of their diet and there must always be a fresh and clean supply in the cage. Approx. one tablespoon of prepared guinea pig food per animal per day is also necessary. The main diet is supplemented by a moderate supply of fresh food. Dandelions and herbs, fodder beet or turnips and small amounts of potatoes, spinach, celery, carrots, tomatoes, gherkins, apples, pears and green cereal are all suitable for this purpose. Branches from fruit trees and wooden gnawing blocks can also be put in the enclosure for playing with and also to wear down the front teeth that continue to grow throughout the animal's life.

It is extremely important to ensure that there is always enough drinking water available. It is quite normal for guinea pigs to eat their droppings and this gives them vital vitamins derived from the intestine. Guinea pigs have an extremely high Vitamin C requirement. For this reason, Vitamin C and ascorbic acid are to be added to the drinking water every day.

The wrong food, for example silage, foods high in sugar and starch, cabbage leaves and sudden changes in diet, can lead to potentially fatal intestinal problems. It is essential that fresh grass is introduced to the animal's diet very slowly in spring. Sudden changes in diet are to

REPRODUCTION

1. Male guinea pigs reach sexual maturity at 60 days; the females at just 28-35 days.
2. The gestation period is 59-72 days.
3. The average litter consists of 2-5 young.
4. The young are able to see and are covered in fur at birth and are able to eat independently after just a few days. Nevertheless they are still nursed by the mother for 2-3 weeks.

be avoided at all costs. The guinea pig should not be subjected to a change in diet in the first 2-3 weeks following purchase, so make sure you ask exactly what the guinea pig has been given to eat so far.

HOW I SHOULD BE HANDLED?

The guinea pig will behave in a very shy and withdrawn manner for the first few days. It is important to spend a few days just talking to it before letting it get used to your hand. Approach the animal slowly from the front and talk to it gently at eye level, without touching it. Hold out something healthy for it to nibble and you will quickly succeed in gaining the trust of this cute little animal. It comes up close to your hand voluntarily and out of curiosity and it will nibble from the proffered snack. You can now start to stroke the guinea pig extremely carefully. When it has got used to that, you can pick it up. It is important to use both hands for this. One hand should go under the ribcage and front legs, the other should support the hind-quarters. The hands have to go around the guinea pig like this to prevent it from taking flight or being dropped.



My guinea pig

Everything you need to know about guinea pigs as pets

Everything for your pet



www.maxizoo.ie

AM I THE RIGHT PET FOR YOU?

Guinea pigs are the ideal pets for children. They sometimes act a bit nervously, but they rarely scratch or bite. They are also inquisitive and friendly. They love to be stroked and are very responsive. The life expectancy of guinea pigs is between 4-8 years.

WHERE DO I ORIGINATE FROM?

Guinea pigs originate from the woods and grasslands of South America.

In the 16th century the Spanish conquerors brought them back to Europe with them, where they became popular pets. Different colour and coat varieties have come into being over the years.



WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE FOR ME TO LIVE?

Guinea pigs are very active and need the most space that is available. Therefore, the cage should be as big as possible. Our Maxi zoo team will gladly give you some advice! Smooth wood sha-



HEALTH CHECKLIST

My guinea pig is healthy if:

- it is lively and has a healthy appetite,
- its eyes are not weepy or inflamed,
- there are no visible bite anomalies (e.g. the incisors are too long),
- it has a dry little nose,
- its coat is shiny and smells of fresh hay or straw,
- the soles of its feet are not encrusted, swollen or heavily stained by urine,
- its claws are not too long,
- no lumps or swellings can be felt,
- its rear is clean and free of encrustations,



vings or straw pellets are ideal for covering the floor of the cage. Cat litter must not be used. A nest box and, if possible, a raised surface for lying on (e.g. a little house with a flat roof) as well as a heavy food bowl are very important. A drip feed bottle is the best way to dispense water. The cage should also be expanded upon with a few ramps and different levels so the guinea pigs have lots of room to run around.

However, it is also important to let them run around the house every day, to prevent them from becoming fat and unwell. But care should be taken to ensure that they don't have the opportunity to nibble on electric cables, poisonous plants or anything else unsuitable.

If they are being kept outside, the guinea pigs must be provided with adequate protection from the sun and rain. An important point about keeping guinea pigs outside through the winter: only fully grown and healthy animals should spend the winter outside. Since more and more guinea pigs are dying from hypothermia every winter at our latitude, this time must be

spent in a weather-proof hutch, which also remains totally dry during the heaviest downpours and is sheltered from the wind. A nest box, insulated on all sides with sufficient bedding, is essential. There must always be at least two animals together in the hutch so that they can draw warmth from one another. It goes without saying that the cage should always be kept clean, since droppings, urine and stale food don't just smell unpleasant to human beings, but can also damage the animal's delicate lungs and cause the guinea pig to become extremely ill. A triangular toilet makes the removal of daily droppings and urine much easier

KEEP ME FIT AND HEALTHY

You can tell a healthy guinea pig by its clear eyes, dry nostrils and clean, shiny coat. The length of the claws and teeth should be monitored regularly.

Itchiness (leapfrogging and squealing can also be symptomatic in guinea pigs) should always be treated by a vet.

If you notice that your guinea pig looks unwell you should take it to a vet as quickly as possible.

DO I LIKE COMPANY?

Guinea pigs are very social creatures and a minimum of two should always be kept together.

It is easiest to group animals that have been together from a very young age. However, serious fighting can break out if several grown males are kept with or close to females. Male guinea pigs can live happily with other males if there aren't any females around. If the males are castrated before they reach sexual maturity every combination of communal living works without any problems at all.

Because rabbits and guinea pigs behave differently they do not make ideal companions.

