

# ADOPTING A GUINEA PIG

## SUPPLIES

**Cage** - Look for single level long habitats with solid bottoms. Guinea pigs are roamers, not climbers, so they require a lot of space to wander.

Cage Size Standards				
# of Pigs	Minimum	Preferred	in cm	in grids
	.7 sq m	More is better	76x91	2x3 grids
	.7 sq m	1 sq m	76x127	2x4 grids
	1 sq m	1.2 sq m	76x157	2x4 grids
	1.2 sq m	More is better	76x193	2x5 grids

See chart sizing, generally 2'x3' is the minimum size for 1 guinea pig.

No wire grate bottoms, open top is OK if no other animals in the home.

**Bedding and cage liner** - Fleece liner, aspen, kiln-dried pine

DO NOT USE: paper-based, newspaper, cedar wood chips, pine shavings, or kitty litter.

**Hiding spot** - Guinea pigs need to have a safe place to hide out. Try a "fleece forest" or a wood log bridge.

**Water bottle** - attach to the side of cage

**Food bowl** - heavy enough to not tip

**Playpen** - must have top cover if used outdoors

**Hay** - orchard or timothy

**Toy** - Guinea pigs are playful! Try some tunnels, stuffed tubes with hay and more.

## FOOD AND DIET

**Vitamin C-rich** vegetables or supplements

**Timothy hay** - the most important food for guinea pigs and should be available at all times.



**Guinea pig pellets** - must be pellets specifically made for guinea pigs (soy-free, no seeds). Do not use rabbit or hamster food.

**Fresh vegetables**

### SAFE

Romaine Lettuce  
Green Leaf Lettuce  
Red Leaf Lettuce  
Bell Peppers (all colors)  
Celery  
Cilantro  
Parsley  
Carrots  
Kale

Tomatoes  
Cucumber  
Dandelion leaves  
Chard  
Apples  
Banana  
Watermelon  
Berries  
Cantaloupe  
Grapes

### UNSAFE

Nuts  
Seeds  
Iceberg lettuce  
Cabbage  
Bok choy  
Corn  
Avocados  
Rhubarb  
Potatoes  
Peanut butter

Chocolate (or anything else containing caffeine)  
Onions  
Garlic  
Mushrooms  
Dairy products  
Bread  
Meat

\*\*No outside plants or grass, they contain fertilizer chemicals \*\*



# HANDLING

## 1. One hand should cup the hind end, while the other hand cradles the mid-section.

Two hands are always recommended when picking up. Picking up by armpits can cause spine injury. Guinea pigs are very social and enjoy lap-time. Hold close to your body to avoid accidents.

## 2. Approach calmly and from the front until you get to know one another.

## 3. Chirping and hopping also known as "popcorning" are signs of happiness!

**SAFETY:** Never let a guinea pig's body bend backward.

Their spines have no backward flexion. Improper handling can cause spinal damage.

**NO COMMINGLING SPECIES:** Other animals, even rabbits, are much stronger than guinea pigs and if startled can harm your guinea pig, even if unintentionally.



# DANGEROUS ITEMS

Even though some of these products are marketed for guinea pigs, they are not safe to use.

**1. Hamster Wheels or Balls** - will cause spine damage and/or death.

**2. Leashes or Harnesses** - will cause injury. Walking guinea pigs is always a bad idea.

**3. Metal Hay Balls** - guinea pigs can become stuck or suffocate.

**4. Pine/Cedar wood chips and shaving** - lung irritant and sharp pieces can cause wounds.



**5. Rabbit Food (or food for other small pets)** - ingredients in other animal foods are toxic to guinea pigs

**6. Edible "Snak Shacks"** - fake wooden logs are unhealthy and harbor bacteria.

**7. Salt Licks / Mineral stones**

**8. Clay or clumping cat litter**

# CARE & MEDICAL

**Cages should be completely cleaned and bedding replaced once a week (twice a week for 4+ guinea pigs).** Spot clean daily. It's possible for Guinea Pigs to be potty trained!

**Trimming Nails:** Overgrown nails will curl into their footpads. Use nail clippers to trim, every 2-3 months. *[Tip: if you accidentally cut into the quick, apply styptic powder, cornstarch or flour]*

**Cleaning Ears:** Clean the outer area using a cotton swab dipped in olive oil. Do not push swab into the ear canal as this can cause serious harm. Regularly check for buildup, bacterial infections, and ear mites indicated by a foul smell or reddish crust.

**Cleaning the Grease Gland:** For longer hair Guinea Pigs, you may find ear wax-like residue. This is the grease gland. To clean, trim hair around the gland, wipe with coconut oil, lather with mild dish detergent, rinse and wipe dry.

**Bathing:** Bath as needed or spot clean with baby wipes



# SOCIALIZING



**Guinea pigs are social animals.** If alone, a guinea pig can become depressed, stressed and sick. It is highly recommended to keep in pairs or herds.

**Do not mix males and females unless spayed or neutered.**

**Guinea Pig Introductions:** Place separate cages side by

side and introduce on neutral territory after several days. Mounting and chasing may be displayed during first intro's, however, separate if behavior like teeth baring, wrestling, charging is shown.

**Like people, not all Guinea Pigs are a match! Always supervise meets.** Once bonded guinea pigs should never be housed apart. (There are many videos online that demonstrate guinea pig bonding).