

to approach you and move away as she pleases. Use treats to lure her onto your lap. As her trust in you grows, you can try petting her on the top of the head, then on her neck and shoulders.

These steps may take a few days or a few weeks. Let her set the pace. When you need to carry your guinea pig, you can do so by putting one hand under the belly and one hand on top, making a firm, safe pocket. Or you can hold her with both hands against your chest in a "heart-to-heart" position.

Never let a young child hold a guinea pig unless closely supervised. *When squeezed too hard, the guinea pig may bite or become very still. A child can literally squeeze a guinea pig to death without realizing it. This is a tragedy for both. Guinea pigs jump when startled, which puts them at risk from being dropped by humans or grabbed by a dog or cat whose hunting instincts are aroused. Secure housing, a safe place to hide, supervision, and careful handling will prevent injuries caused by nervous jumping.*

Many people are unaware that animal shelters have wonderful, healthy guinea pigs available for adoption. Save a life - adopt from your local shelters and animal rescue groups!



Getting Started

Housing

Roomy cage
Litterbox
Food bowl
Water bottle
Toys to chew
Running space
Pig-proofed room(s)
Toys (chew & hide)

Diet

g. pig pellets, no added treats/ seeds
Fresh water
Hay/ straw
Fresh vegetables & fruit (add gradually)

Grooming

Comb
Brush
Toenail clippers

Supplies

Litter (CareFresh or towels for bedding)
Pooper scooper
Whiskbroom/ dustpan
White vinegar
Hand vacuum
Newspapers

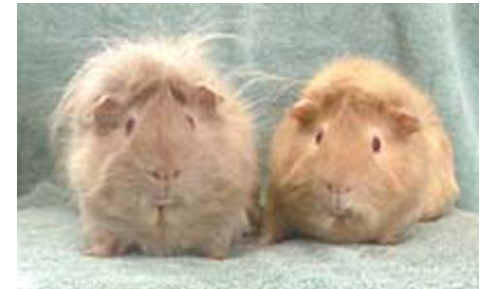
Thanks to Amy Espie for this brochure

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LIVING WITH A GUINEA PIG

Guinea pigs are intelligent, sensitive, social creatures. They can be wonderful companion animals if given a chance to interact with their human families.

The Benefits of Spay and Neuter



Neutering ensures a longer, happier life for your guinea pig & allows them to live together. Males become sexually mature at 2 months and females at 2 to 3 months. Most can be neutered at the age of 3 months or older. Male pigs who have not been neutered may develop a strong odor and impacted anal area as they mature.

Housetraining

Some guinea pigs can be trained to use a litterbox. Those who are spayed/ neutered are much easier to housetrain because they are not driven by hormones to mark territory with feces and urine. Even a neutered pig may never become fully housetrained, however, so be prepared to clean up the occasional dropping or puddle. White vinegar cleans and deodorizes and is safe on most surfaces.

Use a shallow pan or litterbox. Place Carefresh bedding, pelleted paper or grass litter, or shredded newspaper in the tray. There is evidence that softwood shavings such as pine or cedar cause liver damage in small mammals and should not be used

in litterbox or as bedding. Provide one tray in the cage, and several others around the room or play area. A layer of grass hay or timothy hay on top will entice the pig and reward her for using the box.

Replace hay daily. Dump litter and clean pan as needed, usually twice a week for one or two pigs.

Cages

The cage should be at least 30x30x17 inches, but keep in mind, the bigger, the better. Line the floor with several layers of newspaper. Wire floors are dangerous for the delicate feet and legs of a guinea pig. Aquariums are not recommended because ventilation is inadequate. In addition to a litter pan, the cage should contain a food bowl and water bottle and climbing and hiding areas, such as cardboard boxes or large mailing tubes. A child's playpen makes an excellent cage for one or more pigs, as long as no cats or predators have access. Cover the floor with straw or sea-grass matting, available at import stores. This is inexpensive, fun and safe for the pig to gnaw on, and easily replaced. To prevent death by violence or pneumonia, guinea pigs should not be housed outdoors.

Playtime

Your guinea pig should have at least a few hours of playtime outside her cage every day. Guinea pigs are extremely inquisitive, and they love to investigate new toys and games. The best toys provide physical and mental exercise. With a little imagination you can create a safe fun playground from simple materials such as cardboard boxes, baskets and mats made of untreated straw or wicker, paper bags, plant pots, and children's building blocks. Pig-proof the playroom by putting all electric cords out of reach.

Guinea Pigs and Friends

Guinea pigs are herd animals, highly social by nature. They crave the companionship of their own kind. Please consider adopting two pigs, especially if the animals will be home alone much of the time. Your pigs will thank you, and you will enjoy watching the pair snuggle and groom each other.

A female and male will get along very well - if at least one is spayed or neutered - as will two females. Two males may become friends if both are neutered. Guinea pigs and rabbits can also be a good match.

Health

The most common cause of illness and early death in guinea pigs are lack of exercise and incorrect nutrition. A pig who is kept in a cage 24 hours a day will become obese and withdrawn.

**Give your pig at least a few hours each day of free run in a properly "pig-proofed" room.*

**Give a high quality, fresh chow formulated specifically for guinea pigs.*

**Do not give feed that contains high-calorie treats such as nuts or seeds.*

**Give her small amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables, which may be increased day by day.*

**Your guinea pig needs a fresh source of vitamin C. Give citrus fruit, bell pepper, kale at least twice a week. But also plan on providing an additional chewable source of vitamin C.*

**Fresh water and fresh hay should be available at all times.*

**Find a veterinarian who has experience with pigs. Don't wait till your pig is ill to do this.*

**Ideally keep the temperature between 60-80oF. Avoid drafts and sudden temperature changes.*

**Bathing is unnecessary unless she has become dirty from a particular experience.*

**Check toenails and teeth regularly. Your vet can show you how to do this, and how to trim them if needed.*

And, most importantly,

***learn what's normal for your pig, in terms of appetite, body position, daily routine, droppings, and energy level. The more familiar you are with her habits, the quicker you will be able to note any changes, which could be early signs of illness. This is one main reason why it is important to have an adult involved in daily care of the pig.*

Learning the Language

Guinea pigs produce a wide variety of sounds and have a highly developed sophisticated language. They murmur, gurgle, grunt, and coo to express

contentment and comfort. They growl, grunt, and clack their teeth as signs of aggression. They also communicate using body language. They show aggression by swaggering from side to side and raising the chin. When they feel very happy and calm, they stretch out and yawn. They give a very loud high-pitched squeak, which sounds almost like a whistle, to summon their pig-friend or trusted human caretaker.

Handling

Give your pig time to adjust to her new home. When she feels confident enough to explore her cage, groom herself, and nap while you are with her, you can try offering her a small piece of apple or carrot from your hand. The best way to gain her trust and friendship is to sit or lie on the floor in a small, pig-proofed room or area. Allow her