**Guinea Pig Care Sheet**

**Housing**
A wooden hutch with a removable tray is a great home for your guinea pig when it is outdoors. It is important for your guinea pig’s health and well-being that they are not left in the sun or in drafts. Your guinea pig only needs 15 minutes of filtered sunlight a day and could very easily become dehydrated if left in the sun for too long. When keeping your guinea pig indoors there are a variety of plastic hutches available to make cleaning easy. Your hutch should be at least three times the length of the full-grown size and your guinea pig and twice as wide. Guinea Pigs love space so the bigger, the better, as their hutch is where they will spend most of their time. You will also need to provide a 'hide-away', which is an area where your guinea pig can hide and feel safe.

The bottom of the cage can be lined with a thick layer of newspaper with a thin layer of hay on top. Sawdust and shavings should be avoided as it causes respiratory issues and could make your guinea pig sick if they eat too much of it. Your guinea pig’s hutch should be cleaned regularly and cleaning it twice a week is a good routine to get into.

**Summer Time**
Guinea pigs hate the heat, so having an indoor hutch for summer will help keep them happy and cool. If the weather is warmer than 30°C, bring your guinea pig inside if possible during the day. If you are unable to bring your guinea pig inside, place a 1lt frozen water bottle in the hutch each day. Your guinea pig will lie next to the bottle to cool off and the condensation on the bottle will provide cool drinking water. It is a good idea to have a few bottles in the freezer and rotate them as they thaw. Remember guinea pigs cannot sweat and heat stroke is deadly.

**Food**
There are numerous brands of guinea pig food available and the choices can be daunting. The ‘Guinea Pig Mix’ and ‘Guinea Pig Pellets’ Pet Magic offers are nutritionally balanced, with the mix providing more variety. We recommend having both types available to provide your guinea pig with a complete diet. Guinea pigs love to eat and they need food available all the time. It is also completely normal for your rabbit to eat their first droppings of the morning, these look wet and unlike the normal "pellet" droppings. While this is often surprising the first time you see it, it is essential that your guinea pig be allowed to do this as it aids their nutritional intake. It is also important to provide a source of vitamin C for the health of your guinea pig.

Fresh water is essential at all times, and should be provided in a bottle to help it stay clean.

Guinea pigs love treats but you should be careful which ones you allow your guinea pig to eat. Here are a list of treats that are safe to feed to your pet guinea pig, along with ones to avoid. Remember that they are treats and should be provided in small quantities along with their complete food.

**Safe:** apple, pear, strawberry, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, capsicum, carrot, orange, Chinese greens, sprouts, watermelon

**Avoid:** lettuce, beetroot, rhubarb, oxalis, potato, cabbage, tomato, cucumber, eggplant, beans, onion, cherries

Guinea pigs are rodents and have teeth that grow all the time. Mineral stones and wood chews are good entertainment for your guinea pig and keep their teeth filed down while aiding in nutrition.

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**Enrichment**
Guinea pigs are fine when kept alone, particularly males, but you need to spend time with them everyday as guinea pigs are very social. Purchasing a younger guinea pig will allow you to make a strong bond with them and provide you with a life-long friend. When purchasing two guinea pigs, it is best to buy them at the same time, as guinea pigs will often fight when introduced at differing times. Females are social and like to be in small groups, any fight is usually quick and harmless. Males on the other hand will kill rivals, so never house two unrelated males together. For your guinea pig's safety, do not leave them out of their hutch unsupervised.

Males and females should not be kept together unless you want them to breed. Your Small Animal Veterinary specialist is able to sterilise your male guinea pig.

It is important that young children are taught to handle guinea pigs gently. An uncomfortable guinea pig will bite if needed. When holding your guinea pig ALWAYS support the back legs, if you don't your guinea pig may 'kick-out' and this can cause it pain and sometime paralysis. You can take your guinea pig for walks using one of the many leashes and harnesses available at Pet Magic.

**Grooming**
Guinea pigs need little grooming as a healthy guinea pig will groom themselves regularly. If you find that your guinea pig needs a little tidy-up try wiping them over with a damp cloth (no soap!) along with an occasional brush to help keep their fur healthy. If your guinea pig gets really dirty you can bathe them in a good quality Small Animal Shampoo. Just remember not to bathe your guinea pig more than once a month as it may lead to skin irritations.

Just like their teeth, your guinea pig's nails also grow and may need trimming occasionally. Small animal nail clippers are available, but should be used very carefully.

**Breeding**

| Male: Boar | Female: Sow |
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A female guinea pig can fall pregnant at two months of age with gestation usually just over two months. Usually two babies are born and the female guinea pig may fall pregnant again within twelve hours. The father can become stressed around the babies and may kill them as a result so it is best to remove him from the mother and babies.

Baby guinea pigs are born with fur and can walk within minutes of being born. Weaning occurs at around 5 weeks of age. The babies can go to new homes once they turn 6 weeks old. NO YOUNGER

During and after pregnancy make sure you give the mother and babies plenty of fruit, vegetables, and extra vitamin supplements. Pregnant or lactating females need extra Vitamin C, which they get from vitamin drops and offering oranges and capsicum daily.

If your female guinea pig is over seven months old and she has never had young before, DO NOT breed her. By this time her hips have fused and she will have serious birthing complications.

Note: Female guinea pigs can have up to four litters a year if not controlled!

**Health - "Prevention is the Best Cure"**
Guinea Pigs need to be wormed every 3 months. Pet magic uses and recommends Aristopet® Small Animal Wormer as they have a pleasant taste and are an easy oral treatment.

Guinea pigs need to be treated against mite and lice every 6 weeks using Aristopet® Small Animal Mite and Lice Spray. A small spray on each guinea pig in the cage is necessary and at the same time spray the cage and any hide-aways you may have as well. However, don't spray food or water bowls. If your guinea pig is not treated regularly they can become infected with mange, which is painful and needs veterinary attention.