



# POCKET PET CARE



## Guinea Pig Care

### Handling & Socialisation

Guinea pigs are social animals and enjoy living in groups of two or more. Guinea Pigs are generally very timid and should be approached quietly and handled gently.

It's crucial that you get your new Guinea Pig used to you—and used to being handled. Start by feeding them small treats. When they're comfortable with that, you can carefully pick up one pig at a time, one hand supporting the bottom, the other over the back. Regular handling will help reduce fear, although not all Guinea Pigs enjoy being picked up.

### Exercise and enrichment

Once you have hand-tamed your piggies, you should let them run around in a small room or enclosed area to get some additional exercise every day. You will need to carefully check the room for any openings from which the guinea pigs can escape, get lost and possibly end up hurt. These animals must be supervised when they are loose because they will chew on anything in their paths—including electrical wires.



Guinea pigs like to hide and climb when playing. Cardboard tubes, PVC piping and/or flower pots are fun additions to their cage and exercise area.

Most guinea pigs require very little grooming. They can be brushed with a soft bristled baby brush every other week. There are a few breeds that have very long hair and can require more intensive grooming. Occasionally, a guinea pig will need a bath. You can bathe them with a mild pet shampoo and rinse with lots of warm water. Ask your vet to identify shampoo options that are safe for guinea

pigs. Prevent chilling after the bath by keeping your guinea pig in warm towels until his/her fur is completely dry.

Guinea pigs will also need to have their nails trimmed. Typically trimming 1-2 times a month with a small cat nail trimmer will keep the nails at a good length.



## When to visit the vet

When Guinea Pigs get sick, they get sick fast. We recommend annual health checks for your guinea pig. At this time your guinea pig will receive a thorough examination to help identify any problems that are occurring.

Keep an eye out for a ruffled coat, itching or rashes, discharge from the nose or eyes, swelling of the eyes, ears or genitalia. A depressed looking Guinea Pig that is not eating as much as usual could also be unwell.

There are no vaccinations available for guinea pigs in Australia, and as such, guinea pigs do not require annual vaccination. Your vet is there not only to heal your guinea pig when they are ill, but also to help keep them healthy and strong! Your vet can help ensure that your guinea pig's teeth are wearing evenly, that his or her weight is appropriate, and that they are not showing any signs of disease or nutritional deficiencies.



## Desexing

Guinea Pigs breed easily and from a young age and so it is a good idea to get their sex checked by a vet from 4 weeks of age and keep them separate. Male Guinea Pigs are easily desexed and this is highly recommended. Female Guinea Pigs should also be desexed but this is a more difficult procedure. Desexed male Guinea Pigs can live happily with entire female Guinea Pigs.

Guinea Pigs adopted from Animal Aid are all desexed before they go to their new homes. The benefits of desexing include:

- Reducing the risk of fights occurring if you have more than one guinea pig.
- Decreasing aggression between boars.
- Prevents unwanted pregnancies.
- Prevents development of ovarian cysts in females – a common reproductive disease in female guinea pigs.