



the group at the time of birth. After giving birth, the female will be able to mate immediately so do not return to the male if you do not want further litters. The delivery of young is quick and rarely presents difficulties. Two or three young are born and they will very quickly become active. Young guinea pigs may not suckle for up to 12-24hours, do not interfere, as this is normal behaviour. They will begin to eat solid food in the first two to three days of life and are, therefore, easy to wean. In the first few days of life, dry food may be softened with water.

### **Neutering**

If you wish to keep groups of guinea pigs together without breeding, then we would recommend the castration of males in the group. Castration will prevent unwanted pregnancy and encourage the group to live happily together without fighting. At the Vale Veterinary Centre, we use the most up to date anaesthetics and all our patients are carefully monitored by qualified veterinary nurses during surgery, this ensure that the anaesthetic is as safe as possible.

[www.valeveterinarygroup.co.uk](http://www.valeveterinarygroup.co.uk)



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*Serving the Mid Devon Community since 1918.*

## **GUINEA PIGS**



*Where your animal's health is our top priority.*

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Guinea pigs make good children's pets. If kept well, they are clean, docile and friendly. Guinea pigs live for four to six years on average. They should be kept in groups, not alone, as they are very sociable

### **Where should your Guinea Pig live?**

Guinea pigs may live in hutches, large pens on the floor or in sheds. They should have plenty of deep bedding of wood shavings, shredded paper or straw. The positioning of the enclosure is important – it should not be placed in direct sunlight, or in windy/draughty areas. Their enclosure should be well ventilated but kept at a stable temperature of 18-26°C. It is critical that guinea pigs have access to grass and daylight every day. They should be provided with a pen to be placed on the lawn so that they can graze and exercise. In this run, there should be a waterproof, sheltered area with a supply of drinking water and hay or straw at one end to provide cover and refuge.



### **What should your guinea pig eat?**

Guinea pigs are herbivores i.e. they are vegetarians. Food intake is controlled by bulk of food eaten, rather than calorie intake. We would recommend that you feed your pet on a variety of foods, with the main source of food being hay and grass.

Dry food is important, but should be fed in very small amounts so that your pet eats ALL of the diet. One way to avoid this selective feeding is to feed a complete pelleted food such as 'Excel Supa Guinea' food. Guinea pigs require specific amounts of certain vitamins and minerals, the levels of these substances is critical; therefore it is vital to feed a mix designed specifically for guinea pigs.

It is critical that guinea pigs obtain a daily supply of vitamin C. In order to supplement a guinea pig's diet you can add a small amount of certain foods each day; these include kale, broccoli, parsley, kiwi fruit, orange or cabbage. You can also supplement the diet with human preparations of soluble vitamin C requirement is 5mg/animal/day in the water.



### **Handling and playing with your guinea pig.**

Guinea pigs make excellent children's pets if handled gently and frequently. They will respond to people and rarely bite or scratch unless very frightened. They will 'speak' in a number of ways, squealing with anticipation as food arrives, chattering quietly when handled and of course squealing when very frightened. Guinea pigs are creatures of habit, they thrive on routine! Changes in environment, water, food etc must be very slow and care must be taken to ensure your pets do not suffer.

### **Reproduction**

If keeping guinea pigs for breeding then special considerations must be taken concerning environment, social interactions and feeding. Guinea pigs are able to breed as early as 6-10 weeks old. Mating should be avoided until the female (sow) reaches a weight of 400g and is at least 3 months old. Pregnancy will last for approx 63days. The sow should be separated from the rest of