



Practice Limited to Birds, Reptiles and Exotics

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## **THE CARE OF GUINEA PIGS**

**Guinea pigs** belong to the rodent family and originate from South America. They are unique amongst the rodent family in that they require Vitamin C to be added to their diet, like Primates. Like other members of the rodent family though, they have open rooted teeth. This means their teeth grow throughout their entire life. As long as their bite surfaces remain normal this will not cause a problem. Yearly dental exams should be performed to assess dental health.

The life span of a Guinea Pig is 5-6 years under optimal conditions.

**HOUSING:** Guinea Pigs have delicate feet, so proper cage substrate is important. Flat bottom cages with newspaper, aspen bedding, or recycled newspaper lining the bottom is recommended. Wire mesh bottoms will require a portion to be flat to prevent sores from developing on their footpads. Plastic tubs, sweater boxes or aquariums are suitable for cages. The sides should be 10-15 inches higher than the bedding. Providing small boxes for hiding is advisable for the comfort of your Guinea Pig. They love to chew, so make sure cage toys or hide boxes are made of non-toxic materials. The cage should be cleaned out 2-3 times per week to avoid bacterial over-growth that may cause serious skin or respiratory system diseases.

**DIET:** Guinea Pigs are herbivores (meaning they are plant eaters). They have a very complex digestive system. Fiber is extremely important for motility of the intestinal loops and in maintaining adequate levels of beneficial bacteria in the intestinal tract (**Oxbow** or **ZUPREEM Timothy Hay** or Orchard Grass are recommended) Protein levels in the diet should be between 20-22%. As mentioned earlier, Guinea Pigs require Vitamin C to be added to their diet, so adding vegetables high in Vitamin C is helpful (i.e., bell pepper, cabbage, kale, carrots). **Oxbow chewable** tablets are highly recommended. Fruits, such as cantaloupe, strawberries and apples, may be added as treats. Vitamin C is not stable when stored for long periods, so be sure to get high quality pellets (preferably with an expiration date) and do not store Guinea Pig food for over 90 days. We recommend the following Guinea Pig diets: **Oxbow Cavy Cuisine** and **ZUPREEM** Guinea Pig Pellets.

**Common medical problems:** Scurvy (A Vitamin C deficiency), overgrown teeth (Malocclusion), lice and bacterial abscesses.

***We recommend male Guinea Pigs to be neutered and females to be spayed!***

***We strongly recommend annual health examinations on all exotics!***

