

# Clark's Pet Emporium

## Guinea Pig Care Sheet



*Species - Texel Cavy*

Clark's Pet Emporium has taken pride in sharing quality pets with our community for over 40 years. Now you can give your pet the very best care, from our home to yours, with Clark's Care Sheets.

The Guinea Pig care sheet will provide you with basic knowledge to begin your new life with a guinea pig, ranging from diet to habitat and cavy husbandry. For further details regarding specific care, please contact Clark's with your questions and concerns.

### Shopping Check-List:

#### Is a Cavy the right pet for you?

Please take a moment to consider the following points before purchasing:

- Are you allergic to animal fur dander or claws? Small animals like guinea pigs have heavy dander that many people are allergic to! Be sure to handle the animal in store before purchasing to ensure allergies won't be a problem.
- Are you the type of person that will avidly clean a pet's habitat every day / week?
- Are you willing to make fundamental changes to your lifestyle to ensure your pet's safety if necessary?
- Other predatory pets could pose a threat to a small animal, or even yourself if the situation escalates. Be sure your home is compatible with a small animal.

- Guinea pig book / reading material
- Appropriate sized enclosure with heavy gauge wire and solid locking doors
- Heavy glass, ceramic, or steel bowls
- Aspen-shaving or Clean and Cozy bedding (avoid cedar chips)
- Litter pan and guinea pig litter
- Diet supplies - Hay variety, vitamin-C fortified pellets, treats
- Proclivity supplies - Hide box/igloo, chew toys for tooth hygiene
- Water bottle and clip
- Animal-safe cleaning supplies

Once you have contemplated these fundamental concerns, read through the rest of this care sheet and visit your favorite Clark's location to inquire about adopting a Guinea Pig / Cavy.



*Cavy Handling*

## Dietary Needs:

- Hay diet - Alfalfa hay for younger cavy (higher protein) and Timothy hay for cavy over 5 months
- Guinea Pig pellets - These pellets are vitamin C fortified, feed only Guinea Pig pellets!
- Fresh vegetables - Collard greens, Parsley, Kale, Carrot, mustard greens, radish greens, dandelion greens and flowers, celery, clover, parsley, wheat grass, green peppers

## Feeding Practice:

- Fresh hay is required at all times! Cavy are always eating - if hay is unavailable, it can cause serious stomach health issues! Use a hay rack or leave a large pile of hay for foraging
- Have constant access to guinea pig pellets in a sturdy bowl
- Provide a variety of fresh vegetables from the list above daily - remove any leftovers at night
- Provide hanging water bottle - you can supplement with vitamins



## Housing:

- Cavy can grow up to 10" nose to tail. They will need an enclosure 36"x24"x24"
- Provide soft bedding like aspen chip or clean n' cozy for the cavy to dig, burro, and forage
- The housing should be placed in a well-lit room so the animal can detect day and night cycles
- Cavy are prey animals in the wild, so they feel secure and happy with readily available hide boxes. Provide igloos, boxes, or plastic hides for the guinea pig to hide and sleep in
- Place toys, chews, and bowls in the cage, but do not over clutter the living space
- It is healthy for the housing to be adjacent to human activity so that the animal grows used to people, but be sure the animal is not stressed by larger animals, loud noise/music, and bombardment

## Cleaning and Maintenance:

- Routinely remove soiled food and water every day, replacing with fresh food in clean bowls
- Hides, toys, and cage will need to be cleaned routinely based on the animal, generally every day to once per week
- Use hot water and a suitable small animal cleaning agent (do not use hazardous household chemicals) to clean cage and hides
- Some guinea pigs can stress out! If so, you may need to clean around the cage with a dust pan instead of a vacuum
- Once the substrate is soiled, replace with fresh product to avoid possible health complications like bacterial or respiratory infections

## Safety Tips:

Avoid animal toys with twined string. These strings can fray and pose a hazard to your animal's claws and toes, as well as being a choke hazard. Stick to wood and wicker items that can be safely chewed.

Do not feed your small animal lettuce! Lettuce is not nutritious and can damage the delicate bacteria in a small animal stomach. This can lead to diarrhea, dehydration, infection, and death.

Under no circumstances should there be contact between a small animal and larger predatory pets. There are friendly, lovable dogs and cats that show no interest in small animals, but the spastic behavior of a small prey item can easily trigger a hidden kill instinct. In other words, ANY LARGE ANIMAL can instantly switch into predator-mode and harm or kill a small animal.

## Let's Have Some Fun:

- Your guinea pig will benefit greatly from positive interaction outside of his or her enclosure. Try to establish a routine play time in a safe place dedicated to a small animal. Provide tunnels, hammocks, hay, and chew toys available at Clark's
- Guinea pigs are rodents. Although they are becoming fairly domesticated, they are still prey in the wild. As such, a large part of your initial play time will involve trust building exercises aimed at reducing the animal's fear of you. Try picking up and holding your guinea pig steadily until you feel his or her body relax from adrenaline mode. A gentle petting can also help
- Try to identify your guinea pig's favorite food items. You can separate some of these items as treats which can later be used to reinforce positive behaviors and build trust. Once a small animal realizes you take him or her out and offer delicious treats, he or she may lose the fear-factor and even greet you as you approach!



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