



The Skinny on the Guinea

The Guinea Pigs from Disney's latest animated movie, G-Force, are feisty, action heroes, but in real life Guinea Pigs are docile and require lots of love and care.

Here are 8 things to consider before adding this wonderful pet to your family.

1. Guinea Pigs are a long term commitment

- ♦ On average Guinea Pigs live 5-7 years

2. They love company

- ♦ To thrive Guinea Pigs need lots of daily social interaction with humans and if possible other Guinea Pigs
- ♦ If you plan on having two Guinea Pigs keep in mind that they must be a same sex pair and must have enough space
- ♦ To ensure your Guinea Pigs get along it's best to bring home both pets at the same time

3. They need to be handled with care

- ♦ Always pick up your guinea pig with two hands: one hand under his hind end and the other around its chest
- ♦ Don't let your guinea pig wander on tabletops or anywhere they can fall off
- ♦ When holding your guinea pig, be gentle: don't squeeze or grab it
- ♦ Guinea pigs can be scared of humans until they get used to being held

4. They are vocal

- ♦ Guinea pigs make a distinctive whistling or 'wheeking' sound and sometimes even purr when they are being petted or want your attention.

5. They need a diet rich in Vitamin C

- ♦ Guinea pigs cannot make their own vitamin C so they need to get adequate vitamin C from their diet
- ♦ Choosing a good quality pellet food that is enriched with vitamin C is important
- ♦ Provide fresh vitamin C rich foods like peppers, parsley, spinach, kiwi and papaya at least twice a week.
- ♦ Provide unlimited amounts of timothy or alfalfa hay to your pet

6. They need exercise

- ♦ Guinea pigs need daily exercise outside their crate in a safe enclosed area

7. They can get long in the tooth – literally

- ♦ Guinea Pigs teeth never stop growing, which is why it's important to provide them with branches and twigs to gnaw

8. Housing

- ♦ The bigger the living space the happier the Guinea Pig
- ♦ They need a sleeping den inside their cage for rest and privacy
- ♦ The bottom of their cage should be lined with aspen or hardwood shavings
- ♦ Their cage will need to be cleaned once a week and shavings changed

History of the Guinea Pig – *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

- ♦ No natural population of this species exists in the wild
- ♦ Guinea pigs were domesticated more than 3,000 years ago in Peru, coinciding with humans' transition from a nomadic to an agricultural lifestyle
- ♦ The Incas kept guinea pigs, and the animals were bred during the same period by tribes along the Andes Mountains from North-Western Venezuela to central Chile
- ♦ Guinea pigs were taken to Europe in the 16th century, and since the 1800s they have been popular as pets