



A Guide to Keeping RABBITS & GUINEA PIGS

KEEPING RABBITS AND GUINEA PIGS

CAGE SIZE

This depends on the number of animals but in general, bigger is better. Cages need to be secure so that your pet cannot escape and no cats or dogs can get in.

Cages need to be well ventilated and easy to clean.

Rabbits are great at reproducing so unless you are planning to have babies it is wise

to get your rabbit neutered if living with the opposite sex. A guinea pig and a rabbit



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can share the same cage and provide company for each other. Rabbits can also be house trained and live inside.

BEDDING AND LITTER

You can use un-treated wood shavings, shredded paper, straw or hay in the bottom of the cage. Treated wood is toxic for animals and both rabbits and guinea pigs like to chew.

An important accessory is a comfy house or nesting box. These should be warm and can be filled with shredded



paper, straw or hay. Wooded houses are likely to get chewed on and may need to be replaced occasionally, but chewing ensures normal wear and tear of teeth and prevents overgrown incisors.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

Rabbits and guinea pigs are very playful animals and love variety in their cage. Putting different stories in the cage provides more room to play and climb and you can connect

different pens together to give more room for running around.

Large cardboard tubes and

cartons provide hours of fun and chewing and are used for hiding in.



Edible toys made of wood or rope are also available. Rabbits can be trained to harness and taken for walks. Both animals like cuddles and attention and should to be handled frequently yet carefully.

CLEANING THE CAGE

The cage will need cleaning every few days to avoid build-up of faeces and urine soaked litter. Replace bedding and litter as needed and provide fresh hay and toys often.



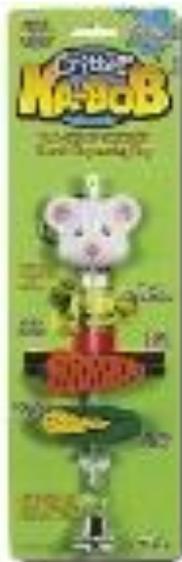
Outdoor runs need to be moved to fresh grass daily to keep the run clean.

GROOMING

Grooming rabbits on a regular basis is done to prevent matting of hair and development of hairballs. Rabbits are fastidious groomers and keep themselves very clean & neat. They lick themselves like a cat does and grooming can prevent them getting hairballs.

FEEDING YOUR RABBIT OR GUINEA PIG

Pelleted food provides good, basic nutrition and is available from most pet suppliers. Your pet will also need a constant source of fibre (fresh hay, grass and clover) and may also enjoy small amounts of fresh vegetables such as carrots, carrot tops, parsley and broccoli. Beans, cauliflower, cabbage, and potatoes may cause problems and should be avoided. Iceberg lettuce has almost no nutritional value so should be avoided. Rhubarb is toxic. To avoid a mess in the cage put fruit and veges on a Ka-Bob stick. A range of cage accessories, treats and toys are



available and can be ordered in for you by our friendly staff.

Fresh water should be available at all times, either in a solid heavy bowl that can't be pushed over, or a drinking bottle attached to side of the cage.

HEALTH PROBLEMS IN RABBITS AND GUINEA PIGS

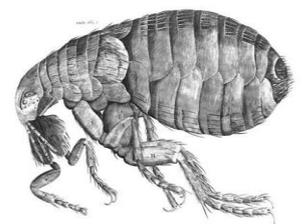
Common signs of ill health are sneezing, snuffling, weight loss, in-appetence and a runny nose. These can be a sign of pneumonia and require veterinary attention.

As incisors continue to grow throughout life, malocclusion can occur causing your pet to be unable to eat properly and to drool. Providing wooden items to chew on can help prevent this.



Wounds can occur if two rabbits are kept together. A head tilt, head shaking, or scratching at ears could indicate an ear infection.

Fleas, mites and lice are also found on rabbits and guinea pigs. These can cause chewing, scratching with scabs and hair loss. They are treatable but any drugs need to be used with extreme caution as overdose can cause illness or death. Fleas can also be a carrier for disease.



Rabbits left to sit constantly on a wire floor can develop a condition called sore hocks. Rabbits most

susceptible to this condition are those having either thin fur on their feet or large rabbits that because of their weight put a lot of stress on their feet.

Fly-strike is a common problem in warm weather. Rabbits or guinea pigs in dirty environments are more at risk as are sick or debilitated animals. Diarrhoea can be due to gut problems or may be from an inappropriate diet.

Weight loss, diarrhoea, lethargy and loss of appetite can all be a sign of illness as can drink excessive amounts of water or developing abnormal behaviours.

**Rabbits have an average
life span of 6-9 years
while guinea pigs have a
shorter life span of 4-6.**



Rabbits and Guinea Pigs are very playful and benefit from an enriched environment.