

Welcome guinea pigs



# Background to guinea pigs

- ▶ Guinea pigs, also known as 'cavies', are social animals with a compact, rounded body shape, short legs and no tail. They originate from the grasslands and lower slopes of the Andes Mountains in South America.
- ▶ Typically guinea pigs live for 5-6 years, but some may live longer.
- ▶ Guinea pigs are active up to 20 hours per day, and only sleep for short periods.
- ▶ Guinea pigs are highly social - in the wild they live in close family groups of 5-10 guinea pigs, though several groups may live in close proximity to form a colony.
- ▶ Guinea pigs get lonely and shouldn't be kept alone - they're happiest in pairs.
- ▶ Guinea pigs need a high fibre diet supplemented with vitamin C, as they lack the enzyme needed to synthesise vitamin C and can only store it for short periods

# How do we look after them?

- ▶ Water – they need fresh water everyday. They have a bottle and a bowl which need filling up.
- ▶ Food – Hay is the main thing guinea pigs eat; they need a constant supply of this. They should also have a spoonful of pellets every day and some fresh vegetables.
- ▶ A safe environment – they will live in their indoor enclosure which will need sweeping out twice a day. In the better weather they can also go outside on the grass. They need space to run around.
- ▶ Company – they like to live in pairs or small groups and are also happy to be stroked and brushed by humans.
- ▶ Health checks – the adults will routinely health check the guinea pigs and take them to the vets if needed. But if you spot anything you are not happy about then let an adult know.

# Health and safety

- ▶ We have asked your parents for permission for you to handle and care for the guinea pig. You cannot handle them unless we have permission, in case of allergies.
- ▶ Treat the guinea pigs gently and kindly. Be quiet and calm around them.
- ▶ You may visit them in their pen at break times and lunch times.
- ▶ You may only handle them if there is an adult to supervise.
- ▶ Sit down and put the guinea pig on your lap if you want to stroke it. It is advisable to put a mat on your lap, in case of any guinea pig accidents! Ask an adult to pick them up for you.
- ▶ Do not put your fingers near the guinea pigs mouth; they could bite you.
- ▶ Always wash your hands after handling the guinea pigs.



# Where will they live?

- ▶ In school, their pen is in the reception area.
  - ▶ In the summer they will go out on the grass.
  - ▶ When they are not in school, they will live at Mrs Marks house.
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# What do they eat?



- Guinea pigs mostly eat **hay**. They should have a constant supply of this.
- They also have a spoon of pellets a day.
- They should have a cup full of fresh, washed, leafy vegetables every day:

**Everyday** - They can have: peppers, rocket, romaine lettuce, courgettes, water cress and herbs like – basil, coriander, oregano, rosemary, dill, mint and sage

**2-3 times a week** they can have kale, broccoli, cabbage, spinach, cauliflower, green beans, beetroot, pea-shoots, cherry tomatoes.

**As an occasional treat** they can have tomatoes, brussels, cucumber, parsnips, carrots, apples, bananas, oranges.

**Other sorts of lettuce (apart from Romaine) are toxic for guinea pigs.**

**Please feel free to bring in any veggies from home and put them in the vegi-box in Nurture.**



- ▶ **Every day**

- ▶ Peppers
- ▶ Watercress
- ▶ Rocket
- ▶ Basil, Coriander, Rosemary, Mint, Dill, Sage
- ▶ Swiss Chard
- ▶ Carrot tops
- ▶ Romaine Lettuce
- ▶ Courgette
- ▶ Celery or artichoke leaves
- ▶ Beetroot leaves
- ▶ Chicory greens
- ▶ Dandelion leaves
- ▶ Cress

- ▶ **2-3 times a week**

- ▶ Kale
- ▶ Broccoli
- ▶ Parsley
- ▶ Cabbage
- ▶ Spinach
- ▶ Spring greens
- ▶ Cauliflower
- ▶ Green beans
- ▶ Red cabbage
- ▶ Pea shoots
- ▶ Asparagus
- ▶ Butternut squash
- ▶ Cherry tomatoes
- ▶ Fennel
- ▶ Thyme

- ▶ **Occasional treats**

- ▶ Tomato
- ▶ Brussel sprouts
- ▶ Acorn squash
- ▶ Cucumber
- ▶ Parsnips
- ▶ Carrots
- ▶ Radish
- ▶ Apple
- ▶ Orange
- ▶ Banana



# Class rotas

- ▶ You are always welcome to visit the guinea pigs at break times.
- ▶ Each class will be put on a rota and they will be responsible for caring for the guinea pigs. This means cleaning them out twice a day, feeding them twice a day, giving them clean water twice a day and giving them a stroke and a brush. The guinea pigs also like to be read to and they are very good at listening to your problems and worries.
- ▶ Your teacher will allocate everyone a day when it will be their responsibility to care for the guinea pigs. You can only do this if we have permission from your parents.



# Can I handle the guinea pigs?

- ▶ Yes you can ! As long as you and the guinea pigs are safe.
- ▶ Don't handle the guinea pigs if you are allergic or your parents have not given you permission to handle them.
- ▶ Don't pick them up yourselves – ask an adult to pick them up for you.
- ▶ Sit on a chair and put the guinea pig on your lap for a stroke or a brush.
- ▶ You can go and see them and read to them or chat to them, without having to pick them up. Sometimes they like a bit of privacy and peace and may hide away in their little house!



# What will we call them?

- ▶ Hmmmmm ?????
- ▶ Competition time – we need ideas for names.
- ▶ Use the box in the office to suggest names.
- ▶ Mrs Tomkins will choose the winning names and let you know on Monday in assembly.