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Guinea Pigs

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Ryan with pet Guinea pig

Guinea Pigs

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Guinea Pigs are not related to pigs in any way. They are rodents whose native home is South America. How then did they get the name Guinea Pig? Most animals are named for the region where they live. A country with a name similar to this animal is found in Africa, not South America. Some scientists believe that traders from the west coast of Africa traveled to South America. These people, called Guineamen, are believed to have carried the animals they found to England. Others believe that because these animals can be found in Dutch Guiana (an area in South America) this name may have been mispronounced as guinea.

Guinea Pigs grow to about four or five inches long and can weight up to about two or three pounds. They have color combinations and fur types named after the various countries of their original origin. The most common is the short, coarse-haired Bolivian Breed. Dutch Guinea Pigs have red, black or brown hair, while the Himalayan Guinea Pig is white with dark patches on the nose, ears and feet. The Peruvian breed has very long hair while the Abyssinian breed has short curly hair.

These animals are easily and inexpensive to maintain, they are very clean animals. With proper cage cleaning routines and regular feedings you can have a happy and healthy pet. It is recommended to give at least two square feet of space to move about in. This animal should not be cramped in its cage. They

need space between where they leave their droppings and where they eat their food. Ten gallon aquariums or stainless steel cages work well as housing. A feeding dish, hanging water bottle and a can or hollow piece of wood to hide or sleep in are necessary for a comfortable and healthy pet. If you want to get a cage, get one with a sliding bottom tray for easier removal of the droppings. Temperature should be kept at a comfortable 65 to 85° F. Leaves, grass or hay makes good bedding. Do not use material cloth, guinea pigs may try to eat it.

Guinea pigs are vegetarians, eating fruits, vegetables and guinea pig pellets. They are hardy and healthy, and do not get sick easily and cannot pass any disease to people. A person can, however, pass a cold onto a Guinea Pig.

Given a balanced diet and clean housing, you will have fun raising your pet. *

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