Darkwing Cavies Quick Cavy Care guide

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Everyday

Your new pet needs four things every day to live a happy healthy lifestyle in your care; A warm dry place to sleep, access to water, grain and vegetables. Cavies have a four to six hour eat/sleep/play cycle so are not particularly nocturnal though they will be seen napping frequently during the day. If the cage gets wet by rain or water from the drinkbottle change it out for dry bedding. You need not clean the whole cage at once unless the bedding is generally old and soiled. The more space they have the less frequently a full cage clean will be needed. Your piggy will smell like their cage so if you think they are beginning to smell then a cage clean is the best remedie. You can bathe them if you like herbal essence shampoo or a generic pet shampoo is fine, you won’t need to use conditioner.

Cavies get most of their water from the foods they eat so if they aren’t drinking much don’t be too concerned. Water can be provided using a pet drinking bottle or a ceramic bowl. In summer when it is hot feeding watermelon and lettuce is good way to keep them hydrated. I don’t advice feeding lettuce in winter because there is very little nutrition in it and you don’t want them filling themselves up on water when it’s cold. I feed carrots and celery every day with another vegetable (depending on whats on special at the shops) for some variety. Capsicum is by far the best, broccoli/cauliflower, corn (husk and all) and pretty much anything that isn’t citrus or onion. Feed apples on occation if at all as the malic acid is bad for their teeth. Cavies need lots of greens everyday so keep them supplied with vitamin C.

Grain and hay will make up the baulk of their diet. As grazing animals they are usually eating if they are not asleep and need quite coarse feed to keep their ever-growing teeth in check. If your piggy is losing weight try feeding more hay. I mix by own grain blend but the jackrabbit brand of feed is one of the better ones. Your piggy will be used to getting both loose mix and pellet mix so get whichever you prefer (there is generally less waste from pellets).

Making your guinea pig your friend.

Like birds the more time you put into handling your cavy the friendlier and more affectionate they will become. The biggest problem you will have is that they have surprisingly big bladders for an animal their size and can leave a serious wet patch behind. My advice is to have one or two towels that are just for the piggies to soak up any accidents and to protect clothing, bedding and furniture. If you start with quick holds and slowly increase the duration as they age they will learn to hold for longer and longer. They are quite good at letting you know they need to toilet though, shuffling backwards or pulling on your clothes/lap mat are sure signs. If your guineapig ever nips you don’t take it personally- its them letting you know that they need to back to their cage- only they happen to catch skin not cloth.

Naughty pigs!

They are very curious animals and love to taste test the things around them. They particularly like cage covers and headphone leads so if you need to leave them unattended for a moment make sure there isn’t something they can easily reach that shouldn’t be chewn. As babies they may wonder off but generally they will quite happily sit on the lap mat. If in doubt cover their faces so they think they are hiding.

Be aware that they can squeeze into some pretty tight spaces so be aware that if they get dropped or fall they may be able to get in behind things like desks and book cases. I use old socks to plug various holes as a safety measure. Mechanical/ recliner chairs are notorious piggy killers if they get amongst the mechanics so please be careful.

My recommended local pet provider is CJ Pet mart in Hornsby

I recommend pet shavings ( a $25 bale will last for a very long time) as cage bedding, for the look and smell as well as how long it lasts between changes.

Oaten hay is most common but grass/ orchard or timothy hay is the guineapig favourite- if you get it don’t expect much to be left as actual bedding. Straight Lucerne hay isn’t so good because they’ll eat the soft bits and be sleeping on sticks.

Cavies don’t really need worming (if you suspect worms then give them watery red cordial for a few days). I’m not sure if they have issues with ticks ( I haven’t personally but apparently they can) occationally lice come in on the hay and a pet shop lice spray usually does the trick.