Guinea Pigs are social companion animals that require daily interaction. They communicate by making various sounds that have different meanings and jump in the air when happy.

Average Adult Size 8 to 11 inches
Average Life Span up to 8 years with proper care
Diet herbivore

**Feeding**
Fresh food and water should always be available. Guinea pigs cannot manufacture their own Vitamin C so it is important to feed properly. Vitamin C supplements can be given up to 30 mg per day but it is preferable to obtain from citrus fruit, tomatoes etc.

* Feed high quality guinea pig food, fruits and vegetables. Timothy hay should be continuously available.
* Clean, fresh, chlorine free water.

**DO NOT FEED** chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions. Avoid sugar and high-fat treats.
**DO NOT USE SPRAYS OF ANY KIND AROUND GUINEA PIGS including insecticides and air fresheners.**

**Housing**
* Guinea pigs acclimate well to average household temperatures not to exceed 80 F degrees; be cautious of extreme temperature changes. The habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.
* A minimum 30"Lx15"Wx15"H, escape-proof habitat with a solid surface area and plenty of room for exercise and play makes a good home for one guinea pig; it is best to provide the largest habitat possible and make sure to provide a place to hide!
* One to two inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat and should consist of high-quality paper bedding, crumbled paper bedding or hardwood shavings.
  Cedar-based products are not to be used.
* Exercise wheels and plastic balls may cause injury to guinea pigs and should be not be used.
* Guinea pigs may be kept in same-sex pairs if they are raised together, otherwise, house adult guinea pigs separately.
* If housing male and female for the purpose of breeding be sure that the female is not more than 6 months of age by the first breeding otherwise the pelvic bones may become 'fused' and stiffen in which case a C-section will have to be performed or death of the mother will occur during delivery.
* Guinea pigs can be neutered or spayed.

**Normal behavior and interaction**
* Easy to handle and prefer a routine and similar times for playing, feeding and resting each day.
* Chew on objects to maintain incisor teeth, which grow continuously so ensure they have plenty of chew sticks and/or mineral chews.
* Hides in objects but will come out when people are near the habitat.

**Habitat maintenance**
* Remove wet urine spots daily. Change bedding weekly or more often, if necessary. Clean the habitat and its contents once a week with mild soap and water; rinse and allow to dry completely before placing guinea pig back into the habitat. Make sure to remove and secure your guinea pig when cleaning the habitat; a good safe, escape-proof place is a dry bath tub!

**Grooming and hygiene**
* Guinea pigs stay clean and do not need baths; they can be spot cleaned with a damp washcloth or unscented baby wipes if needed. Fur may be brushed with a soft brush.
* Consult with a veterinarian if a guinea pig's teeth or nails seem too long.
* Because all guinea pigs are potential carriers of infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.
* Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a guinea pig and should consider not having a guinea pig as a pet.

**Signs of a healthy animal**
* Eats and drinks regularly
* Active, alert and responsive
* Healthy, clean fur and clear eyes
* Breathes clearly and walks normally
* Communicates by squeaking
* Walks normally

**Red Flags**
If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian:
* Weight loss
* Abnormal hair loss
* Diarrhea or dirty bottom
* Distressed breathing
* Lethargy
* Eye or nasal discharge
* Skin lesions
* Overgrown teeth and/or nails

**Common Health Issues - symptoms or causes requiring an exotic animal veterinarian**
* Diarrhea - loose stools caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing or other illness
* Malocclusion - overgrown teeth
* Mites - external parasite that causes guinea pigs to lose patches of hair
* Ringworm - skin infection caused by fungi
* Scurvy - a disease caused by vitamin C deficiency resulting in poor appetite, sore joints and chest and bleeding from the gums.