

KNOW YOUR GUINEA PIG

Did you know the correct name for a Guinea Pig is a Cavy (pronounced kayvee)?

They are best kept in pairs as they like company and so two sows (females) can be kept together, but unless boars (males) are kept together from a young age they are likely to fight if introduced later on as adults.

If kept outside then choose a sheltered position for the hutch so that the rain does not beat in. Cover the hutch so that it is water and draught proof. Also see that it is strong enough to protect your cavy from cats and dogs. When kept outside the hutch will need a sleeping compartment for the cavy to shelter in, but if you keep the cavies in a shed or garage then just a wooden hutch measuring about 80 cm by 40 cm by 40 cm high will be sufficient for two cavies with no sleeping compartment.

Cavies do not smell naturally, so keep their hutch cleaned out regularly, at least once a week and there will be no complaints. You will find the best method is to line the hutch with paper, and then add a layer of wood shavings or Back-2-Nature small animal paper pellet bedding (very absorbent). Finally add a good handful of quality grass hay daily as this is a natural food and most important for the cavy's health, it also provides additional warmth in winter months.

Cavies do drink water, and guinea pig drinking bottles are readily available and are preferred to a bowl which can be knocked over. A cavy (like humans) MUST have vitamin C daily and therefore must have some fresh vegetables/green leaves each day.

FOOD: The following foods are listed, as suitable but do not forget a varied diet is preferable and enjoyed by most animals.

FRESH GRASS, MILK THISTLE, DANDELION, CARROTS and CARROT TOPS, SILVERBEET, CAULIFLOWER LEAVES, KALE, any of the ASIAN LEAF Vegetables, CABBAGE LEAVES (not too many of the latter as they have a slimming effect) RAW BEETROOT, CORN, MELONS, CELERY and FRUIT especially APPLES. LETTUCE can be fed but too much may cause diarrhea. Make sure any vegetable leaves are washed before feeding in case they have been sprayed with chemicals. Make sure any food is clean and fresh before feeding. Take away any stale food from the previous meal.

A dish, every day, of high protein (minimum 18%) GUINEA PIG PELLETS or GUINEA PIG MIX available from produce stores/pet shops should be given. Alternatively you can mix your own dry food but make sure you include BRAN, CRUSHED GRAINS and LUCERNE CHAFF as a minimum. As already mentioned do not forget to feed good quality HAY daily as well. Please ensure any dry foods are free of mould. HAY must also be free from mould and excess dust, it should have a sweet smell. Do not feed your cavy potatoes, onions or rhubarb leaves, as these are poisonous. If you have a cage that can be placed out on the lawn make sure there are no leaves from shrubs such as OLEANDER and do check that the clover in your lawn is not OXALIS, which can have yellow or white flowers.

Handling your cavy every day will soon have them very tame, it won't take long before they recognise your voice and will make a whistling sound when they hear you coming. Cavies do not bite if handled correctly - always supervise where young children are concerned. Cavies are a wonderful pet and can provide hours of enjoyment for Adults and Children (of all ages) as well as teaching them the responsibilities of animal ownership. If well looked after cavies can live on an average between 5 to 7 years. If you do get tired of looking after your cavy (and we hope you won't) please do everything possible to find them a new home.

Make an effort to find out everything about caring for your cavy, and a good way to do this is to join a **CAVY CLUB**. If you would like to know more about caring for your cavy from experienced registered breeders or would like to talk to other people with the same interests in cavies then come along to a show.

PET cavies have their own classes where they are judged on their health, condition and cleanliness. In the pure breed classes over 30 different recognized breeds can be seen. From the long haired varieties with hair over 40 cm in length, Self's with coats of all the same colour (Black, White, Lilac, Golden, Chocolate etc.), Marked with various colour patterns (Dutch, Himalayan, Tortoiseshell and White etc.), Agouties with ticked coats, Satins with a coat which sparkles in the sun, Rex which look like Teddy Bears and Abyssinians with rosettes covering their body. There is sure to be a variety to appeal to everyone.

CAVY COUNCIL of VICTORIA – Usually meets the first Sunday of the month at **Menzies Hall; 41 Menzies Avenue, Dandenong North**. Parking can be accessed from Latham Crescent. **Doors open at 9.30am, show starts at 10.00am**

Facebook address : <http://www.facebook.com/CavyCouncilofVictoria>

Web Page address <http://cavycouncilofvictoria.com>

Club Contact: Mr. Robert Brown (03) 9842 5952. Or email rb.dunvegan@bigpond.com

NB/ There are no club shows held in January or February. Nor are shows held if the temperature on the 6.00pm news the night before is expected to be 34°C or over on the day of the show. The Clubs show dates and venues are subject to change without notice so please confirm the date of a show via our social media platforms or with our club representative listed above if you have further questions.