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Keeping Your Cavy Healthy

It is much easier to maintain the health of a guinea pig than rehabilitate a sick one. Therefore, it is vital to start with healthy stock. Don't be afraid to ask questions of the breeder from whom you are considering purchasing cavy. If you don't see the caviary, ask them about what conditions their pigs are kept in, what they feed, and if they have encountered any health problems lately. Almost every breeder experiences health-related difficulties with their cavy, so an honest breeder who tells you they've had problems should not be an immediate turn-off. The main thing to consider is the way they handled the situation.

Cavy Health Information

Body temperature is 99 - 103°F

Heart rate is 240-350 beats per minute

Respiratory rate is 40-150 breaths per minute

Once you get your new guinea pigs home, you must provide them with a clean, safe environment. Cavies must be kept on solid floors to avoid damage to their tender feet. The bedding must be changed frequently to prevent ammonia build-up, and the whole cage sanitized with soap and water often. Keep the water bottle free of algae and the

feed crock free of old, softened pellets. Cavies thrive in temperatures between 55 and 75 degrees. Their environment should be well-ventilated, but shielded from direct drafts. It's also important to keep dogs, cats, and other pets out of the caviary to keep the noise and stress level down. Guinea pigs that are scared or stressed may not eat or drink, which can quickly develop into a serious problem. If your cavy seems to have lost its appetite, try to entice it with its favorite treat—ideally one high in vitamin C. This is also a good time to consider adding vitamin C drops to the water, even if you don't usually supplement vitamin C in this way. Sometimes a cavy will drink but not eat and they cannot combat illness without an ample supply of this vitamin. Gatorade or vitamin C water can be given with a syringe if you think your cavy is not drinking. A sick guinea pig should get at least 50mg a day of this vitamin.

If your cavy goes 18 to 24 hours without eating much, you might want to consider force feeding. A mixture of baby food vegetables and pellet fines with a drop of honey can be fed with a syringe. Feed as much as the cavy will eat, at least four times a day.

Observation is one of the most important elements of keeping healthy cavy. Know how each of your animals usually behaves so that you can spot illness quickly. Routine observation also includes taking your pigs out to handle them and turn them over to check their teeth, feet, and undersides. Never expand your caviary to the point where you cannot regularly spend time with every animal.

Learning More

The following sites have excellent practical information on cavy care and illness.

www.GuineaLynx.info

www.ACBAonline.com