



# GUINEA PIG SIZE-O-METER

- Your pet is a healthy weight
- Seek advice about your pet's weight
- Seek advice as your pet could be at risk

### PLEASE NOTE

Getting hands on is the key to this simple system. Whilst the pictures in Guinea pig Size-O-Meter will help, it may be difficult to judge your pet's body condition purely by sight alone. Some guinea pigs have long coats that can disguise ribs, hip bones and spine, while a short coat may highlight these areas. You will need to gently feel your pet which can be a pleasurable bonding experience for both you and your guinea pig.

Size-O-Meter Score:				Characteristics:
<b>1</b>	<b>VERY THIN</b> More than 20% below ideal body weight			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each individual rib can be felt easily, hips and spine are prominent and extremely visible and can be felt with the slightest touch.</li> <li>Under abdominal curve can be seen. Spine appears hunched.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>THIN</b> Between 10-20% below ideal body weight			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each rib is easily felt but not prominent.</li> <li>Hips and spine are easily felt with no pressure.</li> <li>Less of an abdominal curve can be seen.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>IDEAL</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ribs are not prominent and cannot be felt individually.</li> <li>Hips and spine are not visible but can be felt.</li> <li>No abdominal curve.</li> <li>Chest narrower than hind end.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>OVERWEIGHT</b> 10-15% above ideal body weight			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ribs are harder to distinguish.</li> <li>Hips and spine difficult to feel.</li> <li>Feet not always visible.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>OBESE</b> More than 15% above ideal body weight			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ribs, hips and spine cannot be felt or can with mild pressure.</li> <li>No body shape can be distinguished.</li> <li>Underbelly touching floor when Guinea-pig is in standing position, feet cannot be seen.</li> </ul>



## GUINEA PIG SIZE-O-METER

### GUINEA PIG SCORE: RESULTS:

#### VERY THIN

**1**

Your pet is very likely to be underweight. We recommend you speak to your local vet to rule out any underlying medical reasons such as dental or kidney disease. If your pet is healthy but otherwise underweight, your vet is likely to advise some dietary and lifestyle changes.

#### THIN

**2**

Your pet is thin and potentially underweight. Your pet may have a naturally lean physique but we recommend you speak to your local vet for a health check up. If your pet is healthy but otherwise underweight, your vet may advise some dietary and lifestyle changes.

#### IDEAL

**3**

Congratulations your pet is in ideal body condition! This is great news, as being at its ideal weight increases the chances of your pet living a long and healthy life. To keep your guinea pig in tip top shape, monitor its weight and body condition on a regular basis (e.g. once a month) and be careful what you and everyone else in the family feeds it. Remember any changes in lifestyle (e.g. reduced exercise, recent surgery, extra treats, or even factors such as stress) can result in weight change.

#### OVERWEIGHT

**4**

Your pet is potentially overweight. Being overweight is unhealthy for pets as it can lead to a shortened lifespan, high blood pressure, heart disease, arthritis, cystitis and other health complications. Speak to your local vet for advice and a thorough health check-up. The vet will look for any underlying medical reasons as to why your pet may be too heavy. If there are no underlying health issues, a change of diet and lifestyle is likely to be suggested. Many vet practices run free weight management consultations, ask about these services when you ring to book an appointment.

#### OBESE

**5**

Your pet is likely to be obese and this can have serious medical implications. Being overweight is unhealthy for pets as it can lead to a shortened life-span, high blood pressure, heart disease, arthritis, cystitis and other health complications. Speak to your local vet for advice and a thorough health check-up. The vet will look for any underlying medical reasons as to why your pet may be too heavy. If there are no underlying health issues, a weight loss programme will probably be individually developed for your pet and should include diet and lifestyle changes.

- Always buy specialist guinea pig food (and not rabbit food) – ask your vet or pet shop for advice. Do not overfeed as guinea pigs tend to control feed intake through volume rather than calories and over use of nutrient dense feeds will tend towards obesity.
- Ensure your guinea pig has an unlimited supply of good quality hay or fresh grass which are an essential form of fibre for guinea pigs. Hay and grass are necessary for their teeth, digestive system and to keep them occupied. Lawnmower (grass) clippings should never be fed due to potentially fatal conditions they may cause.
- Always provide access to fresh water from a bowl or metal tipped feeding bottle and check the bottle regularly to make sure it is working properly. If vitamin C (ascorbic acid) is being provided through this route, it will require refreshing every day. Vitamin C degrades rapidly in water in daylight and may affect the amount of water taken in. Instead, a suitable food should be fed, and over-supplementation should be avoided.
- Guinea pigs must have a daily supply of vitamin C. They need approximately 10mg/kg/day, either via suitable commercial feed, supplemented water, adequate fresh vegetables (not fruit) or in combination. Such vegetables as kale, dandelion greens and parsley are good sources of vitamin C. Guinea pigs' vitamin C requirements increase during times of stress or illness.
- Guinea pigs can get fat quickly if they don't eat the right food or don't take enough exercise. Use our body condition score chart (Pet Size-O-Meter) every four weeks or so to check your guinea pig's body condition score.

