**Characteristics:** 13 recognized types. Males larger than females. Tailless, endothermic rodents with small, compact bodies, petal shaped ears, laterally positioned eyes and 20 continuously growing grinding teeth, wear coats of 13 different textures and 20 different colors. Sounds include chatters, wheeks, purrs, chutts, squeaks, whines, whistles, and chirps. Subject to respiratory and other infections if housed with other rodents as gerbils and hamsters.

**Behavior:** Very gregarious. Often "huddle" for warmth and security. Prefer low population densities. Active at dusk and dawn (crepuscular) and, when not sleeping, spend a majority of their time grooming, feeding, or investigating the local environment. Individuals remain motionless when threatened whereas groups will scatter.

**Reproduction:** Male guinea pigs reach sexual maturity at 56 to 70 days; females at about 67 days. Depending on housing and heavily influenced by humans, mating occurs at night 3 or 4 times a year and can be monogamous or polygamous. Males aggressive when competing for mates. After 60-70 days gestation 1-8 pups are born and weaned in 2-3 weeks. Cohabiting females may assist in lactating duties. Female provides limited care and pups usually survive on their own.

**Diet:** Guinea Pig pellets and veggies

**Conservation:** No natural predation. Domesticated from cavys and now popular as pets and food. Globally distributed. Also used in biomedical research on diabetes, TB, scurvy and pregnancy complications.

**FYI:** Cavia Porcellus is Latin for “Little Pig.” Domesticated descendants of a cavy species were brought to Europe from Andes by way of Guinea -hence the name Guinea Pig. Hosts too many parasites including mites, ticks, sucking lice, chewing lice, nematodes, and flukes. Fur can cause severe allergic reactions.