

It's a giant guinea pig! And it is!

What is a Cuy?

A Cuy is a large breed of guinea pig from South America. They are B-I-G, growing a large as 8 lbs (*about four times the size of regular piggy*), though more commonly 4 to 5 lbs. Their noses are long and pointy and they are usually red and white, with extremely large feet. Cuys make a unique sort of "huffing" or grunting noise and many screech loudly when picked up. They are so skittish and persistent in their attempts to escape that they may slam themselves against the sides of their habitat. Many Cuys appear to be aggressive to other guinea pigs and may have cohabitation problems.



Cuys like Titan are usually red and white and are abnormally large and skittish.

Why are there such large guinea pigs?

Did you know that guinea pigs are still an important food source in some parts of the world? Native folks of South America have been farming guinea pigs for literally thousands of years. Because these guinea pigs are raised as food, only the largest and most hardy Cuys were allowed to breed, so over millions of generations today's gigantic Cuys are the end result.

Didn't All Guinea Pigs Come from Peru?

Well, yes...but not all in the same way! In the 1500's merchants and traders started bringing guinea pigs back to Europe where they quickly became favorite pets of the rich and noble. Once the Cuy arrived in Europe, they were bred by for size, temperament, color and hair quality. This process over the last 500 years is how the 13 ACBA recognized breeds of Guinea Pig came about. Now enters our lovely pet guinea, sweet, small, vocal, outgoing and playful, and still very popular in Europe today! The wild-mined Cuys on the other hand, are coming directly from the "source"...South America.



Fenella holds Trooper, a Cuy who was abandoned near a dumpster.

Are Cuys good pets?

Not really. Cuys are much different than the guinea pigs we know here in American. Because they are treated more like a farm animal than a pet, they are not socialized and are flighty, strong and hard to hold. This feral mindset makes them very unpredictable. When you least expect it....they jump! Most Cuys can't be completely "tamed" and will always be on the lookout for the quickest way out of your arms. Also, consider their size and nature. They eat twice as much as a domestic guinea pig, so they can be quite costly to feed and because of their super strong flight instinct, their habitats must be kept on the ground and well protected from dogs and toddlers.

Why are Cuys in American?

Piggie Poo believes that Cuys are being imported and bred for the pet trade because of their very large size. Why? Money is our guess. You can make more money mill breeding a guinea pig that makes "pet store weight" in 7 or 8 days as opposed to a domestic guinea pig that requires 22 to 26 days to grow. Pet stores think they are being humane conscious by requiring breeders to "make weight", but sadly many store owners honestly don't know they are getting Cuys in their stores.

Why is it bad to sell Cuys in Pet Stores?

Cuy babies may be large, but they are still babies. They need a mother and a litter mate to thrive physically, socially and emotionally. It's a dangerous thing to take an already Schizophrenic guinea pig away from his mother before he's even weaned, ship him across country and plop him in an aquarium for sale. Then comes Mom and Dad, looking for a "starter pet" to teach their 9 year old responsibility. This unsuspecting couple is almost always completely uneducated in cavy husbandry, and they're sold a monstrous baby with the flight instincts of a gazelle by a teenager on his first summer job. So....***In they flood to Rescue!*** When the parents realize they have a problem on their hands, the damage is done. Not only to the baby guinea pig, but to the family too and ultimately...this poor Cuy just gave guinea pigs the worst wrap EVER.

