

# Guinea Pigs: Breeds and Colors

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There are 13 recognized breeds of guinea pigs (cavies) in the United States. The breed standards are developed by the American Rabbit Breeders Association.

## Abyssinian

The Abyssinian (Aby, or Abby) is one of the oldest breeds of guinea pigs. It is recognized by the symmetrical rosette (hair radiating symmetrically from a center) and erect ridge patterns on its body and head. The number of rosettes can vary, but to be shown, an Abby must have at least eight (10 are preferred), and they must be clearly defined. The Abyssinian also has a mustache of raised fur around its nose. The fur is coarse and is found in a multiple of colors and color combinations.

## Abyssinian Satin

The Abyssinian Satin has the same appearance as an Abyssinian, but with a satin sheen to the fur. Like the Abyssinian, it must have a pattern of rosettes and ridges, and possess a minimum of 8 rosettes in order to be shown.

## American

The American, sometimes referred to as the "English" cavy, is the most common breed of guinea pig, as well as one of the oldest. The hair is short, smooth, straight, and sleek. It is found in a wide variety of colors and color combinations and has a Roman nose (wide and curving). Its body is medium length, and of about the same circumference from the shoulder back to the hip.

## American Satin

The American Satin has the same appearance as the American, but the coat is fine, dense, and soft, with a glossy sheen, and feels like satin to the touch.

## Coronet

The Coronet is a longhaired breed with a single rosette on the top of the head. The hair from the rosette to the rump is long, without a part. It has a Roman nose.

## Peruvian

The Peruvian was the first recognized longhaired breed. It is noted for the long, dense, soft "sweeps" of hair that can grow to over a foot in length. The hair on the head grows forward, covering the head, and giving the animal an even, circular appearance when viewed from above. Show Peruvians need regular grooming and the hair is often wrapped to keep it from becoming soiled or tangled. Because of the amount of time and effort needed to groom a Peruvian, this breed is not recommended for a pet, although some owners may trim the hair for easier care.

## Peruvian Satin

The Peruvian Satin has the same appearance as the Peruvian, but the coat has a glossy sheen, and feels like satin to the touch.

## Silkie

The Silkie, called the "Sheltie" in England, was originally called the "Angora." It is a longhaired breed, but unlike the Peruvian, there is no long, frontal sweep of hair that covers the face. Instead, the hair sweeps back from the head forming a mane, and there is no part down the back. When viewed from above, the Silkie appears tear-shaped. The hair is softer, finer, and tends to be shinier than the Peruvian. As with the Peruvian, the coat needs daily grooming and the hair is wrapped to keep it clean and tangle free.

## Silkie Satin

The Silkie Satin has the same general appearance as the Silkie, but the coat has a glossy sheen, and feels like satin to the touch.

## Teddy

The Teddy has a short, wiry, dense coat. The hairs, and even the whiskers, are kinked. The coat is resilient, meaning it returns to its original position after being disturbed. The body of the Teddy is similar to the American in length, and it has a Roman nose.

## Teddy Satin

The Teddy Satin has the same general appearance as the Teddy, but the coat has a glossy sheen.

## Texel

The Texel has long, thick, soft hair that forms ringlets or curls over the entire body, even the belly. The body is short and compact, and the head is broad and well-rounded. Because the hair is both long and curly, this breed is one of the most

difficult to keep well groomed.

#### White Crested

The White Crested has a short, smooth coat with a distinctive white, circular rosette on the top of its forehead. Except for the crest, there should be no other white spots on the animal. There are many color varieties, but cannot include Dalmatian, Himalayan, Dutch, Roan, or Tortoiseshell and White, or other varieties which have white hair elsewhere on the body.

#### Other color varieties

In addition to breeds, there are many color varieties of guinea pigs. The recognized colors include:

- Self: Solid color; colors include black, white, red, beige, chocolate, cream, lilac, and blue
  
- Dutch: Colored head with white blaze; front half of the body white and rear half of the body same color as the head
- Brindle: Intermingling of two colors; one dark and one light color, appearing consistently over the body
- Tortoiseshell: Well-defined rectangular patches of black and red, similar in size and distributed evenly and uniformly over the body without running together
- Tortoiseshell & white: Well-defined rectangular patches of black, red, and white, similar in size; the dividing line between the patches should run down the middle of the back and across the middle of the belly with colors alternating on each side of the division
- Roan: Darker hairs (e.g., black or red) intermixed evenly with white hairs
  
- Agouti: Alternate dark and light bands of color on each hair; colors include silver and golden
- Albino: Pure white with pink eyes
- Dalmatian: White body with dark spots
- Himalayan: White body with brown or black nose, ears, and feet; red eyes

In addition, there are various other combinations of two or more colors. For instance, a collared variety exists, which has a different color of hair around the neck.

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