



Patagonian Cavy

The Patagonian Cavy is a large, diurnal (awake during the day) South American rodent which feeds on grasses and other vegetative matter which in the wild will live in small groups of 10-15 individuals.

Adult animals may reach 15-30lbs in weight. They do not have a noticeable odor (except for their urine which smells like rabbit urine), are very gentle and can be paper trained (I said that this was going to be a very simple article).

Patagonian Cavy may be housed indoors (yes, they can be paper trained) or in an outside dog kennel (10ft x 10ft) that has been set up to prevent these animals from burrowing free by laying a concrete slab or by burying wire under the soil.

All animals should be equipped with a sturdy insulated dog house with a wind break and plastic pad heater (take proper precautions to ensure that the wire is chew protected) for use in cool climates. During extreme weather (sub zero) it may be advisable to bring said animals into some sort of enclosure such as a garage or shed to wait out the extreme weather.

Adequate sized housing should be provided at all times. Patagonian Cavy's are swift runners, making leaps as high as 4-6.5 feet (the exact height can be disputed although I have seen my females leap over 4ft high) at times thus it is important to have tall kennel walls that are a bare minimum of 4ft high but preferably 6ft in height. It may also be wise to set up a perimeter fence to help contain said animals in case of an escape.

Animals may be fed a high quality Guinea Pig food such as the Mazuri brand, along with an Alfalfa blend hay or Timothy Hay. Both pellets and hay are offered free fed to said animals. It is advisable to offer assorted fruits and veggies as well such as Romaine Lettuce, Cabbage, Sweet Potatoes, Apple (although very low in nutrients), Squash, Dandelion Greens, etc. Please feed these in moderation for some will be too rich for the Patagonian Cavy to stomach in large quantities.

Animals should be placed in homes while as young as possible to allow them to properly bond to their owners. These are not only wild animals, they are prey animals... it is essential that they are properly socialized at a young age so that they are as calm and tame as possible. As soon as you bring your baby cavy home get him used to his H style dog/cat harness. At first he may not be leashed trained... after a time on the leash he will begin to appreciate it.

Patagonian Cavy's will enjoy the company of humans. They do not bite, even when under great stress under most situations if not all situations. They usually enjoy their chins/mouths stroked and ears scratched. Almost all of them will frequently roll over on their backs to get a good long tummy rub.

A bottle fed Patagonian Cavy can make a truly special pet. They are one of the best natured animals that you will come across. They are not aggressive, they don't have much of an odor to them (maybe none if kept indoors) which is no stronger than "dog smell". They can be very cuddly when they want to be, without being overly clingy or dependent. Their personalities are really hard to compare to other animals... somewhere between a cat and dog I guess with maybe a little of the ferret playfulness thrown in for good measure. My girls will hop into my lap before I even get seated all of the way! Most Cavy love to be scratched, kissed and petted and if taught at a young age can even enjoy being carried around..

It is critical that you spend more than just a few minutes of time with your new Patagonian Cavy baby daily, plan on dedicating as much of your spare time as you can with the petting, holding, feeding and walking of your new baby. Remember, these first few weeks of it's life is a critical period in your pets life... what you do today will shape the personality of him for the next 10-15 years of his life.

If you never spend time with your Cavy except for once in a blue moon, then you are not going to have a happy animal and you may risk having an animal that does not seek out human contact. These animals are highly social, they live in small groups in the wild which means that they thrive on attentive care. Sit with them daily from day one and you will reap the rewards for many years to come.

Can my new Patagonian Cavy be Potty Trained?

Yes, when kept indoors your Cavy can be taught to potty on a litter tray/newspaper. Place it near his food dish since Patagonian Cavy exhibit a natural tendency to potty near their food dishes and no where else. I would purchase a large tray with no sides (cut the sides off) and cover it with newspaper or bedding (not pine or cedar, both are toxic to all rodents) and place the food dishes along one edge of the tray that butts up against the wall. They will potty in front of the food bowls.

You can then move the food bowls and leave the tray and you should have potty trained cavy's. You can try to gradually move the liter tray, but I have found that it is easier to just leave the tray in one spot once they are used to a particular spot to potty. Clean/disinfect tray daily to ensure a clean, healthy living environment for your cavy.

Can Patagonian Cavy's be trained like a dog?

I have talked to people that have trained their Cavy's to sit on command, mine will come when called. Remember that you are never teaching an animal anything by hitting or smacking it when it does something undesirable... except to fear you. Only use love and positive reinforcement to train your pets! Never hit, swat or slap ANY animal!