



Long-Haired Guineas: Your Questions Answered

I've created a few sample questions based on a number of different messages I have received over the years, along with my responses. If you have got/are thinking about/are adopting/are rehoming or selling ANY long haired breeds, please ensure this document accompanies them for reference! It will save you time having to research or to explain it all. Basically, by sharing my experiences as both an owner and a groomer, I've done the legwork for you.

"I'VE JUST ADOPTED/BOUGHT LONG- HAIED PIGGIES. WHAT GROOMING DO I NEED TO DO OR KNOW ABOUT? ONE HAS STRAIGHT LONG HAIR. THE OTHER HAS CURLY HAIR."

Any pig with long curly coats will be particularly prone to matting, so maintaining the coat is truly essential. Brushing curly or rexoid breeds is, from my experience, nigh on impossible, because they typically have notably coarser and/or denser coats than smooth haired breeds and tend to collect grease and dirt like no other. There's just little point trying to pull a brush or comb through a lunkarya or alpaca for example, it'd be like trying to brush a sheep (pretty much is like that, even with less tightly curled breeds).

The best thing by far you can do for your curly long haired pig is to maintain the length of the coat - keep it short at the back end where it's most likely to matt and soil, and be sure to thin out the top and sides so the layers aren't so heavy and don't clump together quite so thickly.

It's easier to keep on top of smooth long haired breeds - even though they too suffer from matts - as brushing/combing is easier carry out: but only if you start routine brushing after a trim and when they're freshly cleaned, and only if you do it every day - otherwise, the brush will inevitably end up pulling and causing discomfort due to natural grease and debris buildup along the length of the hair shafts.

"MY GUINEA PIGS HATE BEING GROOMED, ISN'T IT CRUEL TO STRESS THEM OUT?"

In my experience (yes, I say this A LOT, not because I'm egotistical, but to stress that it is merely what I have learned, observed and noted) almost all long haired pigs hate being groomed. **That does not mean you should not do it.** Yes you might need to amend your handling or your pace if you're dealing with a genuinely petrified pig, a pig who has been traumatised, or a pig with health conditions that are exacerbated by stress, but you will be doing more harm by not maintaining the coat than you will be by dealing with the situation with care.

Truth told, because of this and the stress on owner and pig that is associated with daily brushing attempts, I've never recommended or performed daily brushing of any of my long haired pigs, be they my own pigs or clients. I just believe that maintaining the length is the quickest, least stressful and most efficient way to keep on top of



their hair. However, if your pig enjoys being brushed there is no reason not to continue to do so - you're just in the minority, one of the lucky few!

It is worth remembering that, even though many pigs will make a great drama out of being groomed, I've found with all my clients (110+ to date) that over time they come to know the procedure, the tools, and the environment along with the sounds and sensations of haircuts, nail trims, baths, ear cleans, boys bits checks..

The sooner and younger you start them, the faster they get used to it.

Most of my clients are now relaxed, no they don't all enjoy baths and trims, I might still get kicked or nibbled or peed on during a groom but because I see them regularly, they know me and my voice and they trust me. Not only that, but I know, understand and can read them for the individuals they are.

So they can and will get used to grooming - be it brushing, nail clipping, haircuts, baths - as long as you keep it regular and start them young (3 months plus as a general rule).

"HOW OFTEN DO THEY NEED HAIRCUTS?"

In terms of frequency you are looking at an absolute minimum of every 2 months for long haired breeds. This is for both haircuts and bathing. It is especially important in summer due to the increased flystrike threat, but it is also applicable in winter - even for outdoor pigs - to prevent knotting, soiling, and matting.

"WHAT BENEFIT IS THERE TO USING A GROOMER RATHER THAN DOING IT MYSELF?"

It's down to personal choice and how confident you are handling your pigs and performing the necessary tasks. I'm not offended if you don't use me or a groomer I recommend, but I do still want to know your pig is being groomed regularly - at the very least, my expectations of owners are that nails are maintained, long hair is maintained, and the skin is healthy and free of fungus, parasites and injury.

Whether that's done by a groomer or the owner is not my place to decide. There are multiple benefits however to using a guinea pig groomer - there are several of us around now, as well as the many rescues who'll happily help for a donation - including:

- we have experience with every grooming task required, we do nail clipping/bathing/haircuts almost every day, we've clipped tens of thousands of nails, spent hundreds of hours cutting hair, and bathed countless pigs of all breeds, sizes, ages, behavioural and health backgrounds;
- we use professional equipment designed to make the job as stress-free as possible;
- we have the ability to read and understand the most subtle idiosyncratic behaviours and adapt and apply ourselves instantly to any scenarios that come up (e.g. we change how we're handling them in the bath *before* they



make the move to jump out the bath, as we can see them looking around and plotting their escape!);

- we can recognise and address minor "issues" like foot spurs, blocked grease glands, dirty penises, anal impaction, and dry feet;
- we can recognise potential or established skin problems and use the appropriate products to relieve them or advise you to consult your vet if grooming cannot help;
- we have hands-on experience with many different pigs, but because we are intimately familiar with your pigs - we get to know them and we love them as if they were our own - we can identify and help track any changes to your guinea pig that you may or may not have noticed, physical or behavioural;
- many of us are familiar with common complaints such as lumps and bumps, skin and parasitic issues, eye and ear problems, mouth sores, foot problems, and some of us are even knowledgeable on symptoms of systemic disease that present with external symptoms. While we are not vets, we are very experienced, and most common complaints can be spotted by an experienced eye as we spend time with and examine your pigs during grooming or simple observation;
- you have the free time to go home and clean their cage, as you don't want to put clean pigs into a dirty cage - and you don't have to do the stinky or difficult jobs!

"DO YOU DO CUSTOM HAIRSTYLES? WILL YOU DO WHATEVER THE OWNER WANTS?"

Yes and no. The pig is my priority, and any other guinea pig groomer worth their salt should have a similar attitude. I'm not going to style in a mohawk or shave in a pattern if that's what you're thinking, because it's unnecessary. Not to mention very tricky. However...

I myself do give seasonal cuts according to whether the piggies live indoors or out - so I'll never clip an outdoor pig short in winter, for example. In that case I would only clip the hair of the groin and underside close for hygiene, and simply give the rest a tidy, but not a thinning out or all-over cut.

A typical summer cut for a pig leaves the hair approximately 2 inches in length, with a close cut underside and groin area of 2mm. **I don't give any pig a buzz-cut unless the owner has requested it with a valid reason, or unless I can prove to the owner there is a medical reason for it that cannot be dealt with any other way: if it is needed for a specific purpose, or if we have exhausted all other options without success.** I also never cut a pig very short without consulting the owner first and getting their permission in writing!

Typically I stick to giving what I call **"functional haircuts with aesthetic touches"**. Practicality and hygiene is my priority for your pigs. How a haircut looks on the pig is less important - but it's still worth noting I do go to great efforts to try to ensure the pigs look good as well as feel good. It works - and I've had no complaints yet.

I also clip hair from areas that are traditionally very difficult to get to, including near - but not on - the face, close to the ears (where static lice can gather), under the front



armpits, and on the chest (between the front legs) - provided the pig is happy to let me get to these areas without getting upset.

"HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO HAVE A LONG-HAIRED GUINEA PIG GROOMED?"

Every groomer charges differently and offers different services, but the thing to remember is that you essentially get what you pay for. You might pay £5 to one groomer and £10 to another for essentially the same service. You won't know the difference until you try them; you need to meet them and talk with them so you can work with your instinct. It's essential that a groomer has a genuine and positive bond with your piggy from the very first visit, and that you feel positive about leaving your guinea pig in their (hopefully!) capable expert hands.

ADDITIONAL INFO SPECIFIC TO TINY PAWS CAMBS:

I have at time of writing a 100% 5-star approval rating across all reviewing platforms along with (or thanks to) vast experience over many years volunteering and working exclusively in the piggy sector, so with my level of expertise and how much attention, skill and love I give each and every pig, along with using professional tools and products, I feel my rates are justified. They correlate with the end result - and I do offer gratitude for your loyalty if you do choose me as a groomer.

Information on my grooming services can be found here:

<https://www.guineapiggroomer.co.uk/guinea-pig-grooming/>

And my price list is here: <https://www.guineapiggroomer.co.uk/pricing/>

Members of Tiny Paws receive a 30% discount on all grooming and on daily boarding rates too, as well as a few more benefits you can find by following the links to the membership page.

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