

THE MONTHLY GAZETTE

*“Holly and mistletoe,
candles and bells,
I know the message that each of you tells.”*

~ Leland B. Jacobs



Animal of the Month – Guinea Pig

The adorable guinea pig, also known as the domestic cavy, is a species of rodent—not a pig. These cuddly, friendly, social animals are originally from South America and have been popular pets for centuries.



In the wild, guinea pigs live in small herds and eat grass and other vegetation. They sleep in found burrows or other shelters and tend to be most active at night. Full-grown guinea pigs weigh roughly two pounds and are about nine inches in length. These furry critters are adept problem solvers, can learn tricks, and when happy, will

jump in the air in a show of excitement called “popcorning.”

Guinea pigs were first domesticated over 7,000 years ago. In some cultures, guinea pigs are prized for their meat. Guinea pigs also have a long history of being used in scientific research, which is the reason people call human test subjects *guinea pigs*.

Special Days

Hanukkah

December 1–6

Winter Solstice

December 21

Christmas Day

December 25

Boxing Day (UK and Canada)

December 26

Kwanzaa Begins

December 26

New Year's Eve

December 31

Flower – Holly



December's flower is the hearty holly plant. Its bright red berries and glossy, deep green leaves have come to symbolize the winter holiday season, particularly Christmas.

Holly also symbolizes truth and protection. It grows in temperate and subtropical climates. Holly berries, which can be red, brown, black, green, or yellow, are slightly toxic to humans but can be eaten by birds. Some types of holly leaves are used to make tea.

Birthstone – Turquoise



December's birthstone has long been prized for its beauty. For centuries, people have incorporated turquoise into jewelry, art, masks, and architecture. Though found

all over the world, the stone gets its name from its prevalence in ancient Turkish culture. In North America, the Aztecs mined turquoise in the area now known as New Mexico, and a significant amount of modern turquoise comes from Arizona, Nevada, and California. The stone is most commonly pale blue with veins of brown or black.

The Animal in You: Birthday Critters

Dec. 1–16: Dog

You are a very loyal person who values having a small but close-knit group of friends over having many varied acquaintances. You're a hard worker whose humble and down-to-earth attitude makes you easy to get along with. Your friends seek your advice in times of trouble. They also treasure your honesty and sincerity.

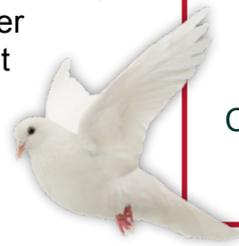
Dec. 17–25: Monkey

Always the center of attention, you love to keep the people around you entertained. Though at heart you want

things done the right way, you hate to be kept waiting and can be impatient sometimes. Some say you have a "sixth sense" that often saves you from falling into traps or making the wrong choice.

Dec. 26–31: Dove

You are happy-go-lucky. No matter what life brings, your upbeat attitude never wavers. Though you lead your friends into fun and new adventures, you are no fair-weather friend. You are a great listener in bad times, lifting and soothing the spirits of those near you.



Holiday Fruitcake

December is National Fruitcake Month. Though sometimes derided as a dense dud of a dessert, there are many fans of this fruit-and-nut-packed, liquor-spiked confection that harkens back to Roman times.

December Zodiac

Sagittarius (The Archer)
December 1–21

Capricorn (The Sea Goat)
December 22–31

December is the month with the fewest daylight hours in the northern hemisphere and the most daylight hours in the southern hemisphere. The month's name comes from the Latin word *decem*, which means "ten." That's because, in antiquity, the Roman year began in March, making December the tenth month of the Roman year. When January and February were added to the calendar, December kept its name but became the twelfth month of the year.

Recipes and Disaster

December 14, 1503, is the birthday of Nostradamus, the French astrologist, doctor, "seer," and author of *Les Prophéties* who predicted that the world will end in the year 3797. But did you know that he also wrote a recipe book for preserves and cosmetics? *Treatise on Make-Up and Jam* includes everything from face cream and toothpaste to quince jelly and a love potion jam.

What's Lucky in December?

Lucky Color: Silver

Lucky Animal: Reindeer

Lucky Letter: *H*

Lucky Day: Wednesday

Lucky Plant: Narcissus



December Birthdays

Richard Pryor (comedian) – December 1, 1940

Walt Disney (animator) – December 5, 1901

Ira Gershwin (lyricist) – December 6, 1896

Kirk Douglas (actor) – December 9, 1916

Emily Dickinson (writer) – December 10, 1830

Dick Van Dyke (actor) – December 13, 1925

Patty Duke (entertainer) – December 14, 1946

Jane Austen (novelist) – December 16, 1775

Diane Sawyer (journalist) – December 22, 1945

Ava Gardner (actress) – December 24, 1922

Denzel Washington (actor) – December 28, 1954