

CONGRATULATIONS!

Thank You for Choosing
to Adopt a Guinea Pig!



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What to Feed Your New Guinea Pig

Commercial food: About 1/8 cup of pellets once a day, supplemented by hay and fresh vegetables as described below, will be enough.

Timothy hay: Provide an unlimited quantity of fresh timothy hay every day. Guinea pigs need continuous access to hay to aid their digestion and limit the growth of their teeth.

Vegetables and fruits: Fresh vegetables can be offered once a day and should be equivalent to about one cup total per guinea pig per day. Leafy greens like romaine lettuce, spinach, kale or parsley should comprise the bulk of your pig's fresh produce. Add carrots, zucchini and sweet potato once or twice a week.

Fruit works well as an occasional treat that is offered once a day or several times a week. Keep the portion size small since fruit is high in sugar; a small wedge of orange or apple, several blueberries, or a thin slice of banana is perfectly adequate. Introduce new fruits and veggies gradually to avoid diarrhea. If your guinea pig develops loose stool, reduce the amount of fresh produce for several days, then reintroduce it in very small portions.

Time for treats

There are a variety of commercial treats marketed for guinea pigs and other small animals. Loaded with artificial sweeteners such as high fructose corn syrup, fructose or sucrose, they provide little nutritional value and lots of empty calories.

Commercial treats are unnecessary and a waste of money. Your pig will be perfectly happy with high quality pellets and hay and treats of fruits and vegetables. For a special snack, try mixing some rolled oats into your guinea pig's pellets or stuff a small cardboard tube with fresh hay.

Multivitamins and mineral wheels

Multivitamins and mineral or salt wheels are marketed as supplements to your guinea pig's diet, and the wheels are also advertised as outlets for gnawing. But if you're feeding your guinea pig a varied and well-balanced diet, these products shouldn't be necessary.

The glues and adhesives that hold mineral and salt wheels together may be harmful. Furthermore, the bleaching process for salt wheels introduces unnecessary chemicals into your pig's diet. Although there isn't consensus on these products, they should be considered a low priority when considering how best to spend your pet supply budget.

Are you being served?

Opt for a ceramic food dish rather than a plastic one. Ceramic dishes are sturdy, chew-resistant, and difficult to overturn. They're also durable and shouldn't need to be replaced unless they become cracked or chipped. Guinea Pig Bowls on Amazon.com »

Look for a wide, shallow bowl. Many guinea pigs like to place their front feet on the rim of their food bowl when they eat, and this design will lessen the chances that the bowl (and your pig!) could be upended.



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Place the food bowl in an area of the cage that's far away from your guinea pig's bathroom area.

Spot-clean your guinea pig's food bowl as needed throughout the week if he kicks bedding or droppings into it. Wash the bowl with soapy water and rinse and dry thoroughly during the weekly cage cleaning.

Keeping it fresh

The steady amount of produce in your guinea pig's diet means that you need to be conscientious about removing uneaten fruits, veggies, and other perishable foods before they spoil.

Check for untouched or unfinished treats an hour or so after they've been offered to your guinea pig.

Replace pellets on a daily basis. Guinea pigs often kick bedding material or droppings into their food bowls, and stale pellets will have little, if any, Vitamin C.

If there are many pellets left in the food bowl every day, you're probably giving your pig too much. An eighth of a cup is all that's needed.

WATER BOTTLES- Clean, fresh water is essential to your guinea pig's health.

When you're setting up your guinea pig's watering hole, keep in mind that a water bottle is better than a dish.

Water bottles offer several advantages: They can't be easily spilled or clogged with bedding material, food, or other particles. Guinea pigs prefer clean, dry bedding, and even though they may mastermind the mess created by overturned water bowls, they won't appreciate the result. You probably won't either, since sodden bedding means additional cage cleaning.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR- Water bottles are available in different sizes and styles.

Size: 32-oz. water bottle

Material: Glass is preferable, but plastic works well, too, and is more commonly sold in pet supply stores.

Features: Angled stainless steel sipper tube with a ball bearing in the spout.

Cage placement: The water bottle should hang off the side of the cage at a height that's easily accessible for your guinea pig.

Care and maintenance: Change your guinea pig's water every day, and wash the water bottle thoroughly during the weekly cage cleaning. A bottle brush can help remove any stubborn particles. When re-hanging the water bottle, check to make sure the sipper tube isn't clogged by gently tapping the ball bearing.

HOUSING

Why size matters

Guinea pigs are one of the largest rodents kept as pets and yet their typical cage is only marginally roomier than housing for much smaller relatives like hamsters and gerbils.

While small animal cages often utilize vertical space to increase living area and encourage climbing, digging and burrowing, guinea pigs rely on floor space. Ramps and platforms at low heights provide variety, but guinea pigs need room to exercise, even with daily playtime outside of the cage.

The following guidelines are useful to determine the space needed for guinea pigs.

One guinea pig: 7.5 square feet cage (minimum), but more is better; generally 30" x 36" is a good size.

Two guinea pigs: 7.5 square feet (minimum), but 10.5 square feet is preferred; generally 30" x 50" is a good size.

Three guinea pigs: 10.5 square feet (minimum), but 13 square feet is preferred; generally 30" x 62" is a good size.

Four guinea pigs: 13 square feet (minimum), but more is better; generally 30" x 76" is a good size.



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Benefits to your guinea pig- Roomier cages offer many advantages that will be enjoyed by both you and your pig:

Larger enclosures are one of the most basic types of enrichment you can provide. Guinea pigs can live 5-7 years and can become bored and depressed without adequate stimulation. Imagine spending your whole life in a walk-in closet. Even with occasional breaks, life would be pretty dreary.

Adequate room to exercise means that your guinea pigs are less likely to develop medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, bumblefoot, and anal impaction.

With a roomier enclosure, guinea pigs can exercise on their schedule, not yours. Guinea pigs tend to be most active in the morning and evening when it may not be convenient to take them out for playtime.

Larger digs increase the likelihood of peaceful co-existence among multiple guinea pigs (and since guinea pigs are social animals, they do best when housed together). Larger spaces are actually easier to clean because they prevent the build-up of waste and allow guinea pigs to separate their bathroom area from other activities.

With the opportunity to express a wider range of natural behaviors, your guinea pigs will be happier and it will be easier to get to know their personalities.

BEDDING

For bedding, cedar and pine shavings are NOT recommended due to chemicals they both contain. Use bedding made from paper. Provide 2-3 inches of bedding so absorption is maximized.

Location is key- Once you've selected the right housing for your guinea pigs, you'll need to determine where in your home they will live. Here are some factors to consider:

Temperature: The ideal temperature range for guinea pigs is approximately 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit. Guinea pig housing should be located away from strong heat sources such as direct sun, wood stoves, fireplaces and heating vents. Guinea pigs cannot sweat when they become too warm and are particularly susceptible to heat stroke.

Don't put your guinea pig's cage in an unheated room, breezeway, garage or other chilly location. Place the cages in a draft-free area (e.g. away from doors and windows and on an elevated surface).

Guinea pigs don't do well under humid conditions. Dampness promotes the growth of mold in their hay and bedding and can make guinea pigs more prone to sickness.

Activity level: Guinea pigs enjoy being near family activity and benefit from more attention when they're easy to see and hear. A family room or living room works well, but make sure your pigs have a place to retreat if they need some quiet time.

Noise: Guinea pigs have very sensitive hearing and their cages should not be placed next to stereos, televisions or other loud noises.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

For sanitary reasons, don't keep your guinea pig's cage in your kitchen or other area where food is prepared. **Make sure your guinea pig's cage is safe from other pets who may see them as prey.**

If you have young children, put the cage in an area where you can control access and supervise child-guinea pig interactions.

Reasons to avoid the great outdoors

An outdoor hutch was once considered acceptable housing for guinea pigs. But keeping a pet outside robs them of regular interaction with the family. Outdoor exercise for guinea pigs should be supervised to reduce risks and for short periods of time in good weather.

Courtesy of the HSUS



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