

General Information

- Guinea pigs are domestic rodents who are often kept as pets. Wild guinea pigs are still found in South America. They were domesticated around 5,000 B.C.
- There are 13 different breeds, 20 different colors, and 13 different coat types.
- Average life span is 5-7 years.
- Most adult guinea pigs weigh between 2 and 2.6lbs.
- There are 6 types of guinea pig vocalizations: chutts, squeaks, whines, whistles, purrs, and chirps

Diet

Pellets - ~10% of diet OR 2 tbsp per day, should be a grass hay base pellet.

- **Pellet options:** Oxbow, Kaytee, Mazuri, ZuPreem, Science Selective
- **NO ALFALFA** – unless pregnant, lactating, or under 6 months of age
- Avoid pellet mixes that contain dried fruits, nuts, seeds, and grains as these are too high in fat and carbohydrates

Hay - ~80% of diet, free choice all the time.

- **Hay options:** Fescue, brome, orchard, rye, timothy, meadow, oat
- **NO ALFALFA** – unless pregnant, lactating, or under 6 months of age

Fresh veggies and fruits - ~10% of diet

- Red bell peppers, green bell peppers, broccoli, brussel sprouts, mustard greens, turnip greens, cauliflower, dandelion greens, cilantro, romaine lettuce, sweet potato, carrots, kiwi, strawberries, oranges, cantaloupe, apple, tomatoes
- **Greens that can be offered in SMALL amounts:** kale, parsley, beet greens, chicory, spinach
- No more than 1 tsp of fruits per day

Vitamin C Supplementation

- Avoid water additives as they can change the taste and guinea pigs are less likely to drink the water
- Vitamin C pellets added to the greens or pellets are best. Follow feeding recommendations on the bag. Oxbow Vitamin C treats are a good option.

****When offering new foods, please add them in gradually and start with small amounts. Once you find a few good options that your guinea pig likes, you can stick to those.****

Recommended Veterinary Care

- Once yearly annual exam is recommended
- Recommend an exam every 6 months for guinea pigs older than 4 years of age
- Spay and neuter are recommended on a case-by-case basis
- Nail trims as needed – ask your veterinarian about training to do at home
- Signs of a sick guinea pig
 - Not eating or drinking for 12 hours or more
 - Abnormal feces for 12 hours or more
 - Weight loss
 - Congestion or discharge from nostrils, coughing, sneezing
 - Abnormal discharge
 - Limping
 - Behavior changes

Housing Requirements

- Minimum cage size for a single guinea pig is 3ft x 2ft (12 square ft), but bigger is better
- Larger cages with are recommended for multiple guinea pigs, with separate food and water sources for each
- Solid bottom is preferred. Wire bottoms can lead to food problems
- Soft bedding/substrate that is cleaned regularly is recommended. Paper bedding or fleece (washed in unscented detergent) are good options. Avoid strong smelling wood shavings.
- Proper ventilation is necessary to avoid respiratory illness. Do not house pigs in aquariums or enclosures with solid sides
- Avoid temperature extremes, avoid direct sunlight, and air drafts. Ideal temperature range is 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit
- Guinea pigs are very social! Many tend to do well in pairs or groups. But not all pigs get along with others. Slow, supervised introductions in a neutral space is best for bringing in new pigs
- Enrichment is an important part of housing. Things like snuffle mats, cut toilet paper tubes stuffed with hay, paper bags with hay, and different chewable toys are great for enrichment activities