



Caring for Your GUINEA PIG

This care guide from Oxbow Animal Health will teach you everything you need to know about keeping your pet guinea pig healthy and happy.



FEEDING YOUR GUINEA PIG

Your guinea pig is a herbivore, which means he eats only plant material.

Grass hay should be the high-fiber cornerstone of every guinea pig's diet. The fiber in hay helps meet the important digestive health needs of herbivores such as guinea pigs. A daily recommended amount of a uniform, fortified food provides essential vitamins and minerals not found in hay. Fresh greens are also an important component of a guinea pig's diet, and healthy treats can be beneficial when given in moderation.



HAY

Your guinea pig should have unlimited access to a variety of quality grass hays. Among many benefits, hay helps prevent obesity, boredom, and dental and gastrointestinal disease. Since replacing the hay in your guinea pig's habitat can encourage picky eating, we recommend changing it only when soiled.

Young (less than six months old), pregnant, nursing, or ill animals can benefit from eating alfalfa hay in addition to grass hay because of the higher nutritional elements. Otherwise, alfalfa should only be given occasionally as a treat.

Generally, your guinea pig should be eating a pile of hay twice the size of their body daily.

Hay Selection

Keep in mind: Grass hay should make up the majority of your pet's daily diet. Offer a variety of hay to your guinea pig to promote optimum health. Since hay is a natural product, each bag will look and feel different. Use our Taste & Texture Guide located on every hay package to determine your pet's taste and texture preferences.

We have many all-natural farm-fresh hays to choose from including Western Timothy, Orchard Grass, Oat Hay, Botanical Hay, Organic Meadow Hay, and Hay Blends – Western Timothy & Orchard. Also, check out our Harvest Stacks line of compressed hays for extra enrichment.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your guinea pig's teeth never stop growing. Hay is essential because it stimulates normal chewing and dental wear patterns, helping decrease the risk of dental disease.



FORTIFIED FOOD

Providing a daily recommended amount of a high-fiber, age-appropriate fortified food with stabilized vitamin C will help ensure that your pet receives essential vitamins and minerals not found in hay.



Pellet Selection

Always choose an age-appropriate pellet specifically formulated for guinea pigs. Our Essentials Young Guinea Pig Food or Garden Select Young Guinea Pig Food are ideal for guinea pigs under six months of age. For guinea pigs over six months, choose one of our three adult formulas.



AVOID:

Mixes with nuts, corn, seeds, and fruit because guinea pigs have a tendency to select those tempting morsels over the healthy pellets



GREENS

Fresh greens are a vital part of your pet's daily diet. Greens contribute to hydration and provide necessary vitamins and minerals, as well as enrichment. Check with your qualified exotics veterinarian for a full list of appropriate greens. A good starter list of varieties to offer and avoid includes:

OFFER:

Romaine, bib, and red leaf lettuce

AVOID:

Leeks, chives, and onions



TREATS

Treats (including fruits and veggies) are great for encouraging interaction between you and your pet, but they should only be given after daily foods have been eaten. Offering too many treats can cause your guinea pig to refuse his healthy, essential foods. It's important to remember that not all treats are created equal! All Oxbow treat varieties are designed to be as wholesome as they are delicious.



HOUSING YOUR GUINEA PIG

Guinea pigs need a safe place that allows enough room to climb, jump, and explore, as well as to escape potential environmental stressors.

Choose a well-constructed habitat with a solid floor and set up near household activities, but away from drafts. Your guinea pig's habitat should be outfitted with environmental essentials such as a space to hide (*Timothy CLUB Bungalow* or *Tunnel*), a litter box lined with litter and bedding (*Pure Comfort* bedding layered on top of *Eco-Straw* litter), some toys, grass hay, a food bowl, and two sources of fresh, clean water.

The confines of a habitat do not allow enough space for a pet's exercise needs. All animals benefit from activity and love to move and explore; a play yard allows you to create a safe, secure exercise area for your pet.

SUPPLIES FOR YOUR GUINEA PIG

- ☐ **Fortified age-specific food:** one of Oxbow's two premium formulas for guinea pigs under six months of age. For guinea pigs over six months of age, choose one of Oxbow's three adult formulas.
- ☐ Two or more varieties of **Oxbow's farm-fresh hay**
- ☐ **Oxbow treats** for healthy bonding and enrichment
- ☐ **Water bottle** and heavy **water dish**
- ☐ Heavy **food bowl**
- ☐ **Large habitat** with solid, non-slip flooring
- ☐ **Large play yard** for safe exercise outside the habitat
- ☐ **Hiding space** such as Oxbow's *Timothy CLUB Bungalow* or *Tunnel*
- ☐ **Litter and bedding material** such as Oxbow's *Eco-Straw* and *Pure Comfort Bedding*
- ☐ **Natural Science Vitamin C supplement**, as needed*

**In times of stress, a guinea pig's need for vitamin C can fluctuate. Supplement with Natural Science Vitamin C to ensure your guinea pig is getting what he needs.*

GUINEA PIG BEHAVIOR

Guinea pigs are most active at dawn and twilight, taking naps throughout the day.

Guinea pigs often show their affection through vocalizations. For example, you may hear a sound called "wheeking" when your pet is looking for a treat, or purring when being held. Also, your guinea pig may "popcorn" – bounce excitedly and repeatedly to express happiness. The best way to interact with your guinea pig is to play with him on the floor. As creatures of habit, guinea pigs need to be introduced to changes slowly in regards to feedings and routines.

Some guinea pig behaviors can seem rather strange.

For example, you may see your guinea pig eat its own poop. This is a normal, healthy behavior that provides essential vitamins and nutrients.

Guinea pigs are INQUISITIVE & CURIOUS by nature.



YOUR GUINEA PIG'S HEALTH

You should visit a qualified exotics veterinarian at least once a year for check-ups on your guinea pig's diet, behavior, and health.

Be prepared for your pet's visits by making a list of any questions or concerns you may have ahead of time. Ask your veterinarian to recommend an appropriate age to have your guinea pig spayed or neutered; this will increase the chances of a longer, healthier life for your pet. Many guinea pig health problems are preventable with proper diet and care. To locate a qualified exotics veterinarian near you, visit aemv.org.

REASONS TO CONTACT YOUR VET:

- Loose, soft, or lack of stool
- Small, dry, or infrequent stools
- Blood in the urine
- Sneezing or trouble breathing
- Hunching in a corner or lack of activity (lethargy)
- Overgrown front teeth
- Observed difficulty with chewing
- Bald patches in the fur
- Sores on the feet
- Abnormal eating or drinking



For more information about your guinea pig's nutrition and behaviors, visit www.oxbowanimalhealth.com.



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