

# GUINEA PIGS

By Jessica Byerly, DVM

## HOUSING

I would recommend using a C&C style cage for your guinea pig. You can build your own (google C&C cage guinea pig) or you can order one from a website like [guineapigcagestore.com](http://guineapigcagestore.com). They need a large open cage to get sufficient activity and airflow.

For bedding, I would recommend Carefresh (or generic recycled paper bedding) or a fleece liner. You can learn how to make your own (google guinea pig fleece bedding pattern) or buy some on Etsy or [guineapigcagestore.com](http://guineapigcagestore.com)'s sister website. Fleece liners should have towels, pee pads, or other absorbent material beneath them. Whatever type of bedding or liner you use, the cage needs to be spot cleaned daily to avoid build-up of feces and ammonia. Pine bedding can aggravate the respiratory tract of your guinea pig and should be avoided.

## WATER

Guinea pigs should drink out of a water bottle that should be changed daily as they can backwash into their water, contaminating it.



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## FEEDING

Guinea pigs need daily vitamin C. I usually use Oxbow Vitamin C tablets. 1 tablet/guinea pig/day is sufficient for vitamin C. Guinea pigs who do not have vitamin C can develop scurvy and have problems with their skin, coat, teeth, and blood vessels due to its importance in appropriate collagen development. If your guinea pigs will not take these tablets, please let me know and we can start them on liquid Vitamin C. You can buy the Oxbow Vitamin C at Arbor View and select pet stores.

Besides vitamin C, the most important part of a guinea pig's diet is hay. Your guinea pig should get unlimited grass hay every day. He should never run out and eat piles of hay/day. You want to buy grass hay like Western Timothy Hay or Orchard Grass hay. Avoid alfalfa unless you have a pregnant or nursing sow or a guinea pig under 6 months of age. I recommend Oxbow brand hay that you can find at select pet stores. -Guinea pigs should also get well-washed daily greens (about 1/2 cup-1 cup/day). You want greens that are not super high in calcium and oxalates. I recommend romaine lettuce, boston butter lettuce, Italian parsley (not curly), green leaf lettuce, and escarole. I also offer red or green pepper occasionally. Avoid spinach, kale, and curly parsley due to their high oxalate content. Avoid celery, iceberg lettuce, cucumbers as they are high in water, low in nutrients, and can cause diarrhea. Avoid fruit or carrots except as occasional treats due to high sugar content.

## FEEDING (CONT.)

Guinea pig pellets are the least important part of your guinea pigs' diet. A normal sized guinea pig should get about 2 tablespoons of adult guinea pig pellets/day. An overweight guinea pig should be getting less than that depending on a vet's recommendation. Make sure the pellet you select is grass hay based and does not contain seeds, nuts, fruit, vegetables, colorful bits, etc. I recommend Oxbow Adult Guinea Pig Cavy Cuisine, which is available at Arbor View and select pet stores.

If you want to give your guinea pig an occasional treat, do not give them a treat made of yogurt, seeds, nuts, etc. as these can really upset their stomachs and cause GI problems. My guinea pigs like the Oxbow timothy treats and Oxbow's other hay-based treats. Treats should be given only in moderation (less than 10% of diet daily).

