

Guinea Pig Care Guide



Oxbow has provided this basic care guide to help you keep your pet guinea pig healthy and happy. Read below to learn what to feed your guinea pig, as well as other important facts that will make you a confident pet owner.



Feeding Your Guinea Pig

Your guinea pig is a herbivore, which means he eats only plant material. Herbivores need to have food moving constantly through their digestive systems. A diet of mostly grass hay provides the fiber necessary to accomplish this. Add fortified pellets daily to round out your guinea pig's healthy diet. Your guinea pig must have the right mix of hay, pellets, and treats to avoid health problems.



Hay

Grass hay is absolutely vital to the digestive health of your guinea pig. It helps prevent obesity, dental disease, diarrhea and boredom. Unless the hay in your pet's habitat is soiled, do not replace it. Replacing it could encourage picky eating! Your guinea pig should eat a pile of hay twice the size of his body every day.

Guinea Pigs less than 6 months old can be fed alfalfa hay in addition to grass hay. After 6 months, alfalfa hay should only be fed as a treat. Pregnant and nursing animals or guinea pigs recovering from illness have higher nutritional requirements and may benefit from alfalfa in their diets.

Hay Selection

- Grass hay should make up the majority of your pet's daily diet.
- Resist offering the same type of hay. Offer a variety of hay for optimum health.
- Hay is a product of nature, so it's normal for each bag to look and feel different.

Use the Oxbow Hay Variety Guide found on every bag to help determine your pet's taste and texture preferences. Mix and match amongst the following, all-natural, farm-fresh grass hays: Western Timothy, Orchard Grass, Oat Hay, Botanical Hay and Organic Meadow Hay.

Fortified Food

A complete fortified pellet helps you make sure your pet is getting all the vitamins and minerals required for a healthy diet. A high-fiber pellet made from hay and fortified with stabilized vitamin C, such as Oxbow Essentials Adult Guinea Pig Food or Essentials Young Guinea Pig Food is best for your guinea pig.



Pellet Selection

- Choose a pellet containing stabilized vitamin C and designed especially for guinea pigs.
- Pick an age-appropriate pellet for your pet. Oxbow designed Adult Guinea Pig Food specifically for guinea pigs over 6 months and Young Guinea Pig Food specifically for guinea pigs under 6 months.
- Avoid mixes with nuts, corn, seeds and fruit. Guinea Pigs have a habit of selecting these tempting morsels and leaving the healthy pellets.

Vitamin C supplementation is vital to the health of your guinea pig. Just like you, they cannot produce their own vitamin C, so it must be supplemented in their diet. A lack of vitamin C can result in many health issues.

Treats and Veggies

Treats are a great way to bond with your guinea pig. You love giving treats and he loves eating them! However, the main purpose of a treat should be to encourage interaction between you and your guinea pig. Offering too many treats can encourage your pet to refuse basic foods and rob him of nutrition. Offer all-natural treats only after your guinea pig eats basic foods.



Greens and vegetables are also beneficial for guinea pigs, because they are a good source of water and offer a variety of textures. Avoid iceberg lettuce. Greens such as romaine, bib, and red leaf lettuces are good choices for your guinea pig. As with any new food, be sure to introduce new vegetables slowly to avoid upsetting your pet's stomach and causing diarrhea.

A guinea pig's teeth are always growing. Grass hay will help keep their teeth trimmed and healthy.



All About Guinea Pigs

Guinea Pig Behaviors

Guinea pigs are curious by nature. They make entertaining noises. For example, you might hear a sound called “wheeking” when he is looking for a treat, or he might purr when you hold him. To strengthen the bond with your guinea pig, interact with him tenderly on his level—the floor.

Guinea pigs are creatures of habit, so changes in things like feeding and routine may cause distress. For this reason, it’s important to introduce changes slowly. Your guinea pig is most active at dawn and twilight. He looks forward to finding a quiet corner for a nap during midday.

Some of your pet’s behaviors can seem strange. You might notice your guinea pig eating his own poop, for example. This is a natural behavior essential to good health, because it provides extra vitamins and nutrients.

Housing Your Guinea Pig



Your guinea pig needs a well-ventilated cage with plenty of room to jump, play, rest, eat and explore.

Provide a layer of bedding, such as Oxbow’s all-natural Eco-Straw™, pelleted

wheat straw litter. Incorporating a hide box such as Oxbow’s Timothy Club Tunnel or Bungalow provides quality environmental enrichment. Grass hay and 2 sources of clean water should always be available. It’s also important to provide exercise and playtime to promote good health and good behavior.

Choose a safe environment that encourages your guinea pig’s natural playing behaviors. Guinea pigs like to hide and chew, so be sure to supervise exercise and playtime when he is outside of his cage. Cover all electrical cords and move plants out of his reach. Be prepared for your pet to chew on just about anything, including carpets and furniture.

Make sure you have these supplies for your guinea pig:

- Fortified age-specific food:
Oxbow Essentials Young Guinea Pig (for guinea pigs under 6 months of age)
Oxbow Essentials Adult Guinea Pig (for guinea pigs over 6 months of age)
- Two or more varieties of Oxbow’s farm-fresh hay
- Oxbow’s Daily C stabilized vitamin C supplement
- Oxbow treats for healthy bonding and enrichment
- Water bottle and heavy water dish
- Heavy food bowl
- Large cage with solid flooring
- Hay habitat such as Oxbow’s Timothy Club Bungalow or Tunnel
- Guinea pig-safe toys
- Oxbow’s Eco-Straw™ litter

Your Guinea Pig’s Health

Many guinea pig health problems are a result of nutrition and digestive issues, dental issues or obesity. Contact your veterinarian if you notice the following symptoms:

- Loose or soft stools
- Sneezing or trouble breathing
- Hunched in corner
- Blood in the urine
- Small, dry or infrequent stools
- Overgrown front teeth
- Bald patches in the fur
- Sores on the feet
- Abnormal eating or drinking



A lack of vitamin C (ascorbic acid) is the most common nutritional deficiency in guinea pigs. Oxbow’s Daily C tablets provide a reliable way to prevent disease and lengthen the life of your pet.



Regular veterinarian visits are a crucial part of keeping your pet healthy and happy. At each visit, your pet will be weighed and examined. Be prepared to answer basic questions about the animal’s diet, behavior and health. If you have questions or concerns, make a list ahead of time so you will remember what to ask.

Your veterinarian might recommend that you have your guinea pig spayed or neutered at a certain age. Spaying or neutering may help your pet live a longer, healthier life.

For more information about guinea pigs, read Oxbow’s Small Paw Prints newsletter at www.oxbowanimalhealth.com.

Your guinea pig might show his happiness by performing a “popcorn” — bouncing and moving quickly and repeatedly.



© 2013 Oxbow Animal Health. All rights reserved. v0313

Trust those who know. Trust Oxbow.