

Guinea Pigs



Diet

Hay

Timothy Hay should be 90-95% of an adult guinea pig's diet. Oxbow Timothy Hay is highly recommended for the quality and the freshness of the product. Multivitamin supplements are not recommended. Alfalfa hay is rich in calories and calcium. It should be fed to babies (less than 4 months old) and nursing or pregnant mothers. It should not be fed to adults because it can lead to obesity and urinary tract issues. Guinea Pigs are at an increased risk of developing bladder stones when fed food high in calcium. Other hays, such as Orchard Grass, Oat Hay and Botanical Hay can be offered if your guinea pig will not eat timothy hay. The quality of hay varies more than you might think. Make sure your hay is green and smells fresh before buying.

Pellets

Timothy based pellets are recommended for adults. 1/8 to 1/4 of a cup of pellets per day should be offered. Alfalfa based pellets are recommended for babies and nursing and pregnant mothers. Most pellets

purchased at pet stores are alfalfa-hay based. Make sure you check the ingredients before buying.

Vitamin C Supplement

Guinea pigs cannot produce vitamin C on their own and require 10 – 30mg daily to prevent disease. Some vegetables, Vitamin C supplements, or Liquid Vitamin C drops can provide the daily amount needed. We do not advise adding vitamins or medications to Cavies water as it may cause them to not drink as much.

Fresh Produce

Vegetables (such as red and green peppers, parsley, carrots, red and green leaf lettuces, dandelion greens, and cilantro) and fresh produce (apple slices, banana slices, and strawberries in very small amounts) can also be fed to guinea pigs. However, sick animals should not be fed fruit or anything else high in sugar.

Housing

The home cage of a guinea pig should be a minimum of seven square feet for one cavy, adding two to four square feet per additional cavy. The home cage should contain a large smooth bottom (with no cage bottom, ramps or shelves made from wire which can injure their feet). The larger the cavies cage, the cleaner the cage will remain. Also a larger cage provides space for play, toys, and exercise necessary for physical/mental wellbeing. A minimum of at least 1-2 hours of exercise outside of the home cage in a secure environment is needed for overall health.

Cage Accessories

The home cage should include a water bottle, a crock for pellets, a place to hide, toys and bedding. Toys can include cardboard boxes (tape removed), paper bags, crumple up paper, ping pong ball, baby stuffed animals and large bird toys. For bedding, the cage floor should be covered with one to two inches of Care Fresh or similar paper-based bedding. Aspen bedding is another acceptable choice. A thick towel topped with a fleece blanket is also great alternative to traditional bedding. Cedar and pine contain harmful phenols and oils therefore these products should be avoided.

Companion

Guinea Pigs thrive in groups of two or more. The best combinations are groups of sows (female) or groups of one or more sows and a neutered boar (male). Guinea Pigs should not be housed with other rodents or rabbits. These animals may harbor diseases and their different dietary needs make cohabitation dangerous and impractical. Guinea pigs who lose a companion should be closely monitored. It is not unusual for them to become depressed which can lead to poor appetite and death. It is recommended that a new partner be found.

Cleaning

A complete cleaning of the bedding every 3 to 4 days is crucial to a cavies overall health. For general

cleaning use a diluted bleach solution (1 part bleach to 20 parts water). Use a few tablespoons of vinegar to clean urine build up, allowing the vinegar to sit for ten minutes.

Common Medical Concerns

Respiratory Infections

Sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge (maybe present on feet), and abnormal breathing.

Lice, Mites and Fungus

Hair loss, scratching, aggressive behavior when touched (due to pain), and in some severe cases seizures.

Decreased Appetite/Stool Production

Decreased eating or stool production is a serious medical concern that can quickly become an emergency. Please contact your veterinarian for an appointment right away.