

Some common signs of illness:

- ☹ Loss of appetite
 - ☹ Hiding at feeding time
 - ☹ Excessive scratching or hair loss
 - ☹ Discharge from the eyes or nose
 - ☹ Coughing or sneezing
 - ☹ A change in stool appearance or lack of stools
- ☺ An annual checkup can help detect illness early and help prolong the life of your guinea pig.



Guinea pigs have an average lifespan of 5 to 7 years.

Spaying/Neutering and reproduction:

We recommend that all female guinea pigs (sows) be spayed and that all males be neutered.

Un-spayed female guinea pigs have a high risk of ovarian cysts, which can cause hair loss, endocrine problems and discomfort. They also have a higher incidence of mammary and uterine cancer. Spaying your female guinea pig at 4-5 months of age can help decrease these risks.

Female guinea pigs intended for breeding must be bred before 6 months of age or the pelvic bones will fuse and cause serious problems during delivery. Sows bred before 6 months still have flexibility in the pelvis and will usually allow babies to pass through the birth canal. Sows bred for the first time after 6 months often have dystocia (difficulty during birth) due to the large size of their babies and the narrowed birth canal.



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BASIC CARE OF THE GUINEA PIG



A proper diet is essential:

- ☺ Guinea pigs should have fresh water and high quality timothy grass hay available at all times. We carry Oxbow® timothy hay.
- ☺ Young, growing guinea pigs can have alfalfa hay, but older guinea pigs should only have timothy hay to prevent them from becoming overweight.
- ☺ Offer a small salad of mixed greens twice daily.
- ☺ Pellets can be given to supplement their diet. We carry high quality timothy hay based Oxbow® pellets.
- ☺ Check and change the water bottle daily, as they like to play with them and this can often cause them to leak or clog.

What kind of mixed greens, fruits, veggies can be fed?

A general rule is to choose dark, leafy greens and vegetables.

Fruits should be offered as small treats. Suggestions:



Broccoli	Kale	Mustard greens
Dandelion greens	Parsley	Endive
Escarole	Romaine	Apples
Carrots	Collards	Bok choy
Spinach	Green beans	Turnip greens
Basil		



Vitamin C:

Guinea pigs, like primates, can not make their own vitamin C and must obtain it through their diet. Oranges are an excellent source of vitamin C and 1 slice of orange daily is adequate for most guinea pigs. An alternative is Oxbow GNC® vitamin C tablets. These are apple flavored and well accepted by most guinea pigs. Guinea pigs not provided sufficient vitamin C are more prone to medical problems. Vitamin C remains stable in pellets for only a few months and pellets alone are an inadequate source of this nutrient. Liquid vitamin C added to the drinking water will dissipate almost immediately and is not recommended.

Other good sources of vitamin C:

Food/Vit. C in a 1 cup portion:

Turnip greens/260 mg	Parsley/140 mg	Cauliflower/100 mg
Mustard greens/252 mg	Collards/140 mg	Kohlrabi/100 mg
Dandelion greens/200 mg	Guavas/125 mg	Strawberry/100 mg
Kale/192 mg	Broccoli Leaf/120 mg	Honeydew/90 mg
Brussel Sprouts/173 mg	Beet greens/100 mg	Broccoli/87/mg
Spinach/60 mg	Raspberries/60 mg	Rutabaga/52 mg
Orange/50 mg	Cabbage (all leaves and Chinese cabbage)/50 mg	

The proper environment can affect health and well being:

Cages with wire tops and solid bottom flooring with bedding are recommended. Guinea pigs should not be kept on wire bottom cages as their feet can get caught in the wire and sores can develop on the bottom of their feet. A wire top cage will provide ventilation and help prevent respiratory problems. Aspen and cedar shavings are not recommended due the harsh fragrance that can irritate a guinea pig's airways. A good alternative is a soft non-fragrant bedding such as Carefresh® or shredded paper.

Guinea pigs are easily scared and need a place to hide within their cage. A Pigloo® or a cardboard box will allow them a place to feel safe. Choose a box large enough for the guinea pig to fit into and be able to turn around.



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Toys provide enrichment and prevent boredom:

Guinea pigs like to chew and enjoy toys they can eat. Cardboard tubes filled with hay, boxes and toys made of untreated wood are excellent choices.

(empty rolls)



(untreated)



(boxes)



Grooming is important for guinea pigs with especially thick fur or long hair:

Healthy guinea pigs are generally clean animals and most short-haired breeds do not require a lot of grooming. Some actually enjoy being brushed with a soft bristled brush. Baths can be given when necessary using a gentle shampoo meant for puppies or kittens, such as DVM Tearless®. Always be sure to thoroughly towel dry a guinea pig after a bath, because they are very susceptible to chills and colds.



Always dry completely!