

Guinea Pig Care Guide



Provided by:



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animal care
and control

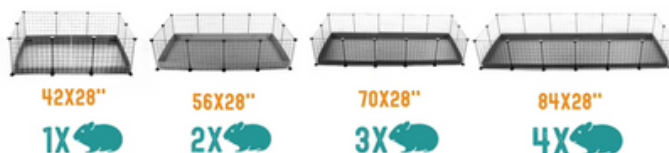


HOUSING

Housing is an important aspect of your guinea pig's life. Here are some tips to help your guinea pig live a happy and healthy life:

- Guinea pigs should always be kept indoors since they are prey animals with no defenses.
- The habitat dimensions can be found at the photo to the right. A GP needs plenty of floor space to run and explore since that is their natural instinct.
- They need a solid floor - not a wire floor. A wire floor can harm their feet and make it difficult to run.
- Bedding should be absorbable fleece (noodle mats work great) or recycled paper pellets. Please avoid cedar wood chips as bedding since it causes dangerous upper respiratory infections.
- They'll need spaces to hide, such as tunnels or hidey huts.
- They need wooden toys safe to chew on. Avoid toys with plastic or dyes.
- Hang water bottles and use heavy food dishes (one per pig) to avoid food from tipping over.
- They need a secure, safe exercise area in your house to help you spend time with them. This area will be away from wires and other pets. (Example shown to the right)
- **NEVER** include wheels or put your guinea pig in a ball. This causes an unnatural arch in their back that can injure their spine.

It's important to note that almost all cages for sale at pet stores are typically too small for guinea pigs. We recommend purchasing your cage from Chewy.com or kaveecage.net



C&C Cage Size	Dimensions	Number of guinea pigs
3x2	42x28"	1
4x2	56x28"	2
5x2	70x28"	3
6x2	84x28"	4

Source: kaveecage.net



Source: Instagram @that1girlspiggies

This photo demonstrates what a proper, safe exercise area looks like. If you have dogs or cats, this needs to be in a separate room with a closed door. This set-up could also be a great option for a cage if you have the space.

FOOD

Your guinea pig is an herbivore, so their diet consists entirely of pellets, hay, and vegetables. Their most important food source is grass hay, which makes up 70% of their diet. However, your guinea pig does not get all the nutrients it needs from just a hay diet, 20% of your guinea's diet needs to be fortified food (pellets) made specifically for guinea pigs. Make sure the pellets you purchase are free of nuts, fruits, seeds, or corn. The remaining 10% of your guinea pig's diet consists of fresh greens and treats. Any fresh greens or treats should be given to them after their basic foods have been eaten. If they have too many fruits and vegetables, they may refuse their pellets, resulting in missing out on important nutrition for their health. Fruits should also only be given as a treat once a week.



Fresh greens, **such as romaine, bib, and red leaf lettuce**, should make up 8% of your guinea pig's diet, with 2% being treats such as fruits and alfalfa. Fresh greens and treats are an important part of a healthy diet for your guinea pig, but should be given in moderation in order to prevent picky eating. You can learn more about vegetable intake under the vegetable section to the right. .

Guinea pigs do not produce their own vitamin C. It is crucial that you are providing a vitamin C tab for each piggy daily. Drops are not recommended because it can make their water taste undesirable and it is difficult to track how much was consumed.

GRASS HAY

Your piggy should have unlimited access to grass hay since it is necessary for proper digestion and helps keep their teeth from overgrowing. A great option of hay is Timothy or Orchard Hay. Only replace their hay when it becomes soiled. You can set a big pile of hay in your guinea pig's enclosure next to their food bowl because guinea pigs love to forage their food from the ground and even jump and burrow in the hay.

VEGETABLES

It is recommended to give each guinea pig 1 cup (roughly a handful) of vegetables per day. Vegetables should be given in moderation and with good variety. The only vegetable that is recommended to give daily is bell peppers of any color.

Watery veggies such as celery, lettuce, cucumber, etc. should be limited to a few times a week at most due to the risk of causing diarrhea and/or bloating. Vegetables high in calcium oxalate such as kale and spinach should be limited to once a week or else your piggy is at higher risk to develop bladder stones that will result in a visit to the veterinarian.

Rotated weekly options every 2-3 days:

- Swiss chard
- Cabbage
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Collard greens
- Turnip greens
- Radish
- Parsnip
- Mustard greens
- Radicchio
- Bok choy
- Carrots
- Green beans
- Brussel sprouts
- Tomato
- Escarole
- Cilantro
- Watercress
- Eggplant
- Summer squash
- Romaine lettuce
- Fennel
- Basil
- Dill



HEALTH

Your guinea pig will require annual check-ups from a qualified exotics veterinarian. The veterinarian will want to check your pet's diet, behavior, and health.

Be sure to ask your veterinarian to recommend an appropriate age to have your guinea pig spayed or neutered if you own both sexes. It is usually recommended that the boars (male guinea pigs) get neutered because it is less risky and invasive than a spay surgery. Your vet can give you further information on the best choice for your piggy!

A guinea pig's nails do not stop growing. As a result, guinea pigs require regular nail trims to avoid pain while walking. In addition, their teeth do not stop growing either, which is why it is important they always have grass hay and wooden toys to chew on.

Guinea pigs are very social creatures, so it is best that your guinea pig has a friend. Go to **page 4** to read on how to safely introduce two guinea pigs.

As a reminder, guinea pigs can live to be 8 years old, so it is important you are ready to commit to giving your piggy a healthy, happy life.

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



SUPPLIES CHECKLIST

- Fortified age-specific food for Guinea Pigs
- Timothy or Orchard Grass Hay
- Treats for healthy bonding & enrichment
- Leafy greens & veggies
- Water bottle with holder & heavy food dish
- Large habitat with solid, non-slip flooring
- Large play area inside for safe exercise out of their habitat
- Hiding spaces in habitat
- Safe wooden toys for chewing
- Bedding material (fleece or recycled paper)
- Nail clippers (clip every 6 weeks) & soft brush
- Daily Vitamin C tab



NEARBY SUPPLY STORES

PetSmart

1760 Apple Glen Blvd, Fort Wayne, IN 46804

10035 Lima Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46818

10260 Maysville Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46835

Pet Supplies Plus

6326 W Jefferson Blvd, Fort Wayne, IN 46804

4714 Coldwater Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46825

6101 Stellhorn Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46815

Petco

315 E Coliseum Blvd, Fort Wayne, IN 46805

For more information regarding guinea pig care, visit oxbowanimalhealth.com

THANK YOU FOR ADOPTING!

Give our adoption staff a call at (260) 427-5502 if you have any further questions about your adopted guinea pig(s).



How to properly bond two guinea pigs



It's important to note that you should never put two unaltered male and female guinea pigs together. All guinea pigs living together should be the same sex or at least all of one gender should be fixed. If you adopted two guinea pigs that are already bonded, you do not need to go through this process.

WHERE TO BEGIN

First quarantine your new guinea pig in their own cage for 2 weeks to make sure they are healthy. After that time is up, begin by rubbing both guinea pigs with a hand towel then rubbing them with the opposite towel so they smell like each other before the introduction. If both pigs smell the same, it can aid in them accepting one another.

A PROPER SET-UP

With guinea pig introductions you must introduce them in a neutral space first. The neutral space should be large like a bathroom or closet (min space 84x28"), and have plenty of hay and veggies in it for the guinea pigs to enjoy. This way, they aren't entering anyone's territory and the treats create a positive association. Make sure to lay down towels or blankets to create a more comfortable environment. Be sure to bring oven mitts and extra towels to pick the guinea pigs up with just in case a disagreement involving hair pulling and biting that draws blood happens.

THE BONDING PROCESS

It's important to monitor the guinea pigs in the neutral space for 2-3 hours and you must be there the whole time to observe. There is a hierarchy with guinea pig groups, so it will need to be worked out to see who will be the leader. If they are separated as soon as a small scuffle happens, the next time they are put together they will have to start the process all over. Only separate them if you continuously view the behaviors in red below. **Here are behaviors that you could witness during the bonding process:**

Normal interactions:

- Mounting/humping
- Following for 5-10 seconds
- Butt sniffing
- Chin/nose lifting at one another
- Rumble strutting - slow, side-to-side walking with a low rumbling sound
- High pitched squeaking
- Nipping

Aggressive behavior - stop the bonding process if you see:

- Prolonged chasing/targeting (longer than 20 seconds)
- Hard biting that draws blood/hair pulling
- Piggy tornado - really quick circles around each other and hair flying
- Lunging



THE BONDING PROCESS...CONTINUED

If you have only witnessed the behaviors in green after three hours is up, it is likely your guinea pigs get along and can live together as a bonded pair. If you witnessed behaviors in the red color, it is not safe to keep them in the same cage. You can try the bonding process again a few days later, but after two attempts, it is not going to work out and that is okay. Some guinea pigs are selective with who they choose to be friends with. If you witnessed both green and red behaviors, it is recommended to try the bonding process again after waiting a few days.

MOVING IN PROCESS

When you are moving your pigs in the same cage together, make sure the cage is cleaned first with half white vinegar and water to get rid of any past guinea pig scent. Ensure that all items such as bowls are washed. Fabric items also need to be freshly washed with non-scented detergent. Provide at least two of everything to prevent territorial behavior: water bottles, food dishes, hidey huts, beds, and toys. If your guinea pigs are males, keep in mind you may need a larger cage than recommended because they are more territorial than females. Once your pigs are put in their cage together, it is recommended to have someone present for the rest of the day to monitor and watch their behaviors to make sure they are okay together.

Sometimes the bonding process goes well until you put them in their cage and they begin showing some red behavior from page 4. This could be your guinea pigs telling you they'd like more space. For example, if you have a 56 x 28 inch cage, you could get a cage that is at least 65-70 x 28 inches.

Congratulations on your new guinea pig!

To continue learning about guinea pig care, we recommend joining an international group on Facebook called [Guinea Pig Advice and Support](#) and a local group called [Guinea Pig Friends](#) where you can share updates or ask for advice.

You can also gain more knowledge by visiting Oxbow Animal Health's website.

