

HABITAT The more space a guinea pig has the happier they will be. Most cages marketed for guinea pigs are far too small to accommodate even one fully-grown guinea pig, let alone two. Guinea pigs should *never* be kept in cages with wire bottoms, aquariums, or rabbit hutches. We require the following **minimum** cage requirements for our guinea pigs:

- **One** guinea pig requires **8 square feet** of floor space
- **Two** guinea pigs require **10 square feet** of floor space
- **Three** guinea pigs require **13 square feet** of floor space*

*Only female guinea pigs can be kept in groups larger than 2 animals.

With a large cage you also won't have to change the bedding as often. A great option is a Cubes & Coroplast cage, which can be bought or made at home (very cost effective). They can be customized for your space, and are simple to create and clean. Google "Cubes and Coroplast cage" to see examples, or visit www.guineapigcages.com. You can also purchase C & C cage kits online. A Midwest Guinea Pig Cage is another good option that can be found on Amazon; they can also be easily joined together to meet larger habitat requirements.

BEDDING Recycled paper bedding (Carefresh, Kaytee, etc.) is a great option, because it has less dust than wood-shavings. Wood shavings like pine and aspen can be used as long as they are *kiln-dried*. **Cedar and non-kiln dried shavings should never be used** as they contain harmful oils that can be deadly to small animals.

A layer of newspaper, potty pads, or reusable cage pads underneath the bedding allows for easier cleanup, and will avoid urine buildup on the cage bottom. As an alternative to traditional bedding, fleece is often used because it can be washed and reused. Be sure to only use *non-scented, dye-free* laundry detergent when machine washing fleece bedding.

FOOD Adult Guinea Pigs (6 months +) need raw Timothy Hay and pellets made from Timothy Hay. Look for pellets with no added color, dried fruit, nuts or seeds (high in sugar and fat content). Timothy hay should account for 80% of your guinea pig's diet and should always be readily available to them. Young guinea pigs (under 6 months) should be offered Alfalfa-based pellets and hay, because it has calcium that is good for growing piggies (but it's too much for adults). We recommend Kaytee, KMS Hayloft, Mazuri, Oxbow, Sherwood Pet Heath and Small Pet Select brands.

In addition to hay and pellets, veggies should make up ~15% of a guinea pig's diet. Generally, you should offer **1 cup of veggies for every 2 pounds of body weight per day**. Below, you will find a list of veggies that are safe, unsafe, and some that are safe when offered sparingly. Additionally, fruits can be offered as a snack 1-2 times per week:

SAFE Veggies

- Carrots
- Lettuce (NOT romaine)
- Cucumbers
- Bell peppers (any color)
- Zucchini
- Cabbage
- Bok Choy
- Green & snap peas
- Kale *
- Spinach *

SAFE Fruits & Veggies (in moderation)

- Apples
- Tomatoes
- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- Cantaloupe
- Bananas
- Cherries
- Apricots
- Dill
- Brussels Sprouts
- Celery (1" sections)
- Cilantro
- Turnips

UNSAFE Foods/Veggies

- Avocados
- Hot peppers
- Potatoes
- Leeks
- Onions (all varieties)
- Garlic
- Dairy products (yogurt drops)
- Nuts & seeds
- Mushrooms
- Meat (piggies are strict herbivores)

*safe for young guinea pigs because they are high in calcium

VTIAMIN C Unlike humans and other animals, guinea pigs cannot synthesize vitamin C on their own and need it supplemented in their diet. It is important to give them pellets specifically formulated for guinea pigs because it is fortified with vitamin C. Feeding them veggies high in vitamin C daily also ensures they meet their daily nutritional requirements of 10-30 mg/kg per day. As long as they are given a balanced diet, they do not need vitamin C supplements (unless directed to by your exotic vet).

GUINEA PIG CARE TIPS

HEALTH Given a proper diet and clean environment, guinea pigs can live long, healthy lives (5-8 years on average). They are prone to some health issues, so having a trusted exotic vet is a necessity for guinea pigs. If you are in need of a vet recommendation, please contact us. Here are some common health issues guinea pigs can experience:

Upper respiratory infections: URIs are one of the most common health issues guinea pigs experience. They can be very dangerous and potentially fatal if not treated by an exotic vet. Symptoms include sneezing, nasal/ocular discharge, wheezing, "hooting", labored breathing, loss of appetite, and lethargy.

Scurvy (Vitamin C Deficiency): caused by a lack of vitamin C in their diet. Symptoms include skin issues, swollen feet, lethargy, loss of appetite, and ulcers on the gums or skin

Pododermatitis ("Bumblefoot"): pressure sores that develop on the feet. This is typically caused by unsanitary environments, but can be exacerbated by obesity, arthritis, and old age. This is a very difficult condition to treat and requires the guidance of an exotic vet. The best way to avoid bumblefoot is by providing a large, clean, and dry habitat.

Ear Infections: guinea pigs are very prone to ear infections. The most notable symptoms can be a head tilt, head shaking, loss of appetite, and lethargy.

This is by no means a complete list. To view more health conditions common to guinea pigs, view this comprehensive article by VCA Vet Hospitals: <https://www.vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/guinea-pigs-problems>

SOCIAL NEEDS Guinea pigs thrive socially and most like a companion. If you plan to add another pig to the mix, please remember APR guinea pigs (and most others) **are NOT fixed** and are capable of reproducing. The contract you sign states **you will not place opposite sex guinea pigs together**, but feel free to place females with other females and males with other males.

Before introducing two guinea pigs, it is wise to wait for a quarantine period (2 weeks) to ensure neither is sick. When you start introductions, begin with small, 15-20 minute sessions outside of a cage in a neutral space (away from their habitats). Provide veggies to help build positive associations with each other. It can take a few sessions for them to feel totally comfortable with each other, so don't feel discouraged if they are a bit standoffish towards each other at first! Gradually increase their time together until you are confident they'll get along and avoid leaving them alone until you're certain they're friendly to one another.

For more tips on introductions, visit: <https://www.guineadad.com/blogs/news/6-tips-to-introducing-new-guinea-pigs>