

CARING FOR YOUR GUINEA PIG

FOOD & WATER

FOOD

Chow down

Being herbivores, guinea pigs only eat plants. Feed yours a staple diet of pelleted food. Pellets are a complete, balanced diet and should be available to them all the time. Be sure to feed pellets specific to guinea pigs because they have added vitamin C, which is important for guinea pig health.



Provide a handful of greens and vegetables every day, too.

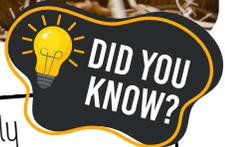
Hey, don't forget hay!

Let your guinea pigs munch away on Timothy hay to their heart's content! Hay helps with digestion. Avoid alfalfa, though – it's too rich for most guinea pigs.



WHAT ABOUT MIXES?

Some diets sold for guinea pigs contain a mix of foods like seeds, dried fruits and corn. The problem with these diets is that guinea pigs can pick and choose what they like, which means they won't get all the nutrients they need, even if the diet is advertised as "complete." Plus, some of the ingredients are simply unsuitable for guinea pigs.



Guinea pigs have continuously growing teeth. Because of this, they must gnaw on abrasive foods and materials to help them wear their teeth down. It's really important to follow a proper diet and give them things to chew!

RECOMMENDED GREENS

Introduce new food gradually to avoid upsetting your guinea pigs' digestive system.

	<i>Parsley</i>		<i>Red or green leaf lettuce</i>		<i>Watercress</i>
	<i>Spinach</i>		<i>Romaine lettuce</i>		<i>Cilantro</i>
	<i>Arugula</i>		<i>Turnip greens</i>		<i>Radicchio</i>
	<i>Carrot tops</i>		<i>Dandelion greens</i>		<i>Bok choy</i>
	<i>Kale</i>		<i>Mint</i>		<i>Basil</i>

!!! DON'T FEED iceberg lettuce, onions, rhubarb, leeks, garlic, potatoes, corn or corn husks, tomato leaves or human food.



WATER

Guinea pigs need water available to them all the time. Fill your guinea pigs' sipper bottle or heavy ceramic dish with clean, fresh water every day. Use soap and water to clean them out – once a week for bottles and daily for dishes. Rinse well before refilling.

CARING FOR YOUR GUINEA PIG HOME ENVIRONMENT



Guinea pigs are active animals requiring a large habitat. The more space, the better!

Your guinea pigs' living space should include:

- A variety of places to rest and hang out
- Areas for your guinea pigs to hide
- Opportunities to chew and explore

HABITAT OPTIONS

Guinea pigs need a living area that is at least 70 cm by 70 cm per guinea pig, with walls about 30 cm high. They don't climb or jump very well, so the enclosure can be open on top – unless you also happen to have a cat or a dog at home. The cage can be made out of metal or plastic. The bottom should be flat and solid, not mesh or wire, which can hurt their feet.

Generally, cages available at pet stores aren't big enough, but you can get creative with exercise pens and wire storage cubes. Online stores like Amazon sell lots of do-it-yourself small animal playpens that are more affordable than a pet store cage.

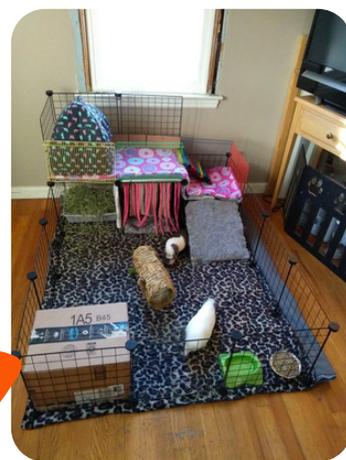
Cover the cage floor with aspen wood shavings, recycled paper bedding or a thick, clean blanket. Don't use cedar or pine shavings because they can cause health problems. Scoop soiled shavings daily. Clean the entire cage at least once a week. A clean, dry cage will help keep your guinea pigs healthy.

Within the cage, add small wooden or plastic houses, as well as cardboard or plastic tubes large enough for your guinea pigs to run through. These will help prevent boredom and make them feel secure.

For a litter box, a low-sided cat or small animal litter pan works well, as long as your guinea pigs can fit completely inside. Fill the bottom with a few inches of guinea pig-safe litter such as paper- or wood-based pellets, and make sure there's a ton of Timothy hay to munch on while they're in their litter box.

WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO PUT YOUR GUINEA PIGS' HOME?

Keep the cage in an area protected from cold drafts and direct sunlight, but near to where people hang out.



Visit [spca.bc.ca/habitats](https://www.sPCA.bc.ca/habitats) for a step-by-step guide to building a large, inexpensive habitat from a sheet of corrugated plastic and some wire storage cubes.

CARING FOR YOUR GUINEA PIG

EXERCISE & PLAY

TOYS & GAMES

Guinea pigs require exercise and will happily romp around a room that has been cleared of hazards such as electrical cords, cats or dogs, and poisonous plants. They love to run along walls and hide under furniture. You should let your guinea pigs have time out of their habitat every day in a safe, enclosed area. Always supervise playtime.

Play with your food!

Combine your guinea pigs' love of food with playtime. They'll quickly learn to roll a treat-dispensing ball around and gobble up the pellets that fall out. Or you can sprinkle some pellets in a "snuffle mat" made from fleece or dried Timothy hay for them to find. This keeps their minds and bodies active.



Staying close to the floor and having your guinea pigs on your lap is a safe handling option.

HANDLING

Handle with care

Many guinea pigs don't mind being held, but they must be handled gently and carefully. Always pick up your guinea pigs with two hands: one hand under their hind end and the other around their chest.



BUDDY UP!

Guinea pigs love company. Two can live together as long as they are the same sex and have a large enough living space.



FIRST ADOPTION OPTION

Interested in adding guinea pigs to your family? *Make adoption your first option!* BC SPCA Community Animal Centres often have guinea pigs available for adoption.

Benefits of adoption from the BC SPCA:

- In-Centre physical exam performed by staff
- Medical treatment by a veterinarian, if required, while in care



BCSPCA

CARING FOR YOUR GUINEA PIG HEALTH

A HEALTHY GUINEA PIG

- ✓ Eyes are clean and bright
- ✓ Ears are clean with no discharge or unpleasant odour
- ✓ Coat is smooth and shiny with no bald patches
- ✓ Nose is clean with no discharge
- ✓ Not too fat or too thin



MEDICAL CARE



Guinea pigs are a prey species. This means they tend to hide their symptoms when they're not feeling well. Watch out for changes to your guinea pigs' eating habits and other changes in their behaviour and routines. If you notice something different, contact a veterinarian. Guinea pigs usually live for five to six years.

DENTAL CARE



To help wear down their ever-growing teeth, provide your guinea pigs with chewing items such as cardboard, Timothy hay, wooden toys, and willow and apple sticks. Make sure the branches come from trees that haven't been treated with any chemicals.



GROOMING

Guinea pigs need to have their nails trimmed every four to six weeks. Just be careful: if you cut their nails too short, they can bleed and be painful.

Long-haired guinea pigs need to have their hair brushed regularly. And though guinea pigs groom themselves, you can give your guinea pigs a bath once in a while if they're smelly or greasy. Use warm water and a mild pet shampoo. Make sure you rinse out all of the shampoo. Dry him off with a towel.



TOO MANY GUINEA PIGS!

Guinea pigs in shelters and rescues across B.C. are in need of new homes. *Try to make adoption your first option if you love guinea pigs!*



PREVENT UNWANTED LITTERS

Never keep males and females together, even for a short period (unless they are neutered or spayed). Female guinea pigs can have up to five litters in just one year, with anywhere from one to eight young per litter. Baby guinea pigs need to be separated by sex at four weeks of age before they begin breeding.