

Guinea Pig Care Sheet



Difficulty of Care:

Beginner

Average Lifespan:

Up to 8 years with proper care

Average Adult Size:

8-10 inches in length

Diet:

Herbivore

Minimum Habitat Size:

36" L x 30" W x 18" H

Scan the QR code to shop for guinea pig products on Chewy.

Supply checklist

- Appropriately sized habitat (36" L x 30" W x 18" H)
- High-quality pelleted guinea pig food
- Timothy or other grass hay
- Treats
- Bedding
- Food bowl/water bottle
- Hideaway place
- Toys
- Hay rack
- Wood chews
- Mineral chews
- Vitamin C supplement
- Soft brush and nail clippers
- Cardboard chew tubes

Species Overview

Guinea pigs are typically easy to handle. Pick them up using two hands—one supporting their rump and the other scooped under their front half.

Environment

- Guinea pigs are prey animals and highly sensitive to sounds, lights, and smells.
- Keep them in quiet, peaceful areas like a bedroom or home office.
- Never put their enclosure in direct sunlight, in a spot with large temperature changes, or directly in front of an A/C unit or heating vent.
- They prefer to live and interact only with other guinea pigs.

Living with your family

- Guinea pigs are family-friendly pets.
- When excited, they'll give a cute [“wheeking” sound](#).
- Young children should interact with them in their enclosure, but older children can take them out to play.
- Always teach your kids best practices when handling a guinea pig.



Habitat

Environment

A guinea pig enclosure should be approximately:

- 100 square inches of floor area per adult guinea pig
- Wire sides for topless cages need to be at least 10 inches high
- Solid floor base (do not use wire floors as this may injure a GP)
- Bars spaced about one inch apart
- Offer good ventilation

Bedding

The solid floor of your guinea pig enclosure must have bedding or liners. For pigs that aren't litter box trained, you can use:

- Wood shavings
- Shredded paper
- Processed ground corn cob
- Commercial pellets

Bedding materials to avoid include:

- Cedar shavings
- Sawdust
- Any dusty bedding

For pigs that are litter trained (and they can be!) you can use cloth cage liners across the floor.

Feeding dishes

- Food bowls—ceramic or attached to cage
- Water bowls—ceramic or hanging sipper bottle



Diet

Main food

80% of a [guinea pig's diet](#) is made of grasses/hays, and food must always be available to them. Almost any grass hay is safe to offer. Avoid alfalfa hay, as regular consumption can lead to health complications. Guinea pigs also need:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Commercially produced guinea pig pellets formulated with extra vitamin C

Water

Provide a guinea pig with fresh, clean water every day. You can put the water in a bowl or sipper bottle.

Treats

Guinea pigs may be offered treats sparingly. Vitamin C-rich fruit or veggie-based treats are recommended.

Supplements

[Guinea pigs don't produce their own vitamin C](#) and may become sick with scurvy if not provided enough in their diet. Vitamin C supplement treats can be given daily or through common fruits and vegetables.

Foods to avoid

- High-starch foods such as peas, beans, corn, nuts, cakes, cookies, cereal, grains, etc.
- Lilies
- Avocado
- Onions
- Raw potato
- Mushrooms
- Daffodils
- Chocolate
- Buttercups

General Care

Feeding

Grasses/hays should always be available to your guinea pigs. You can offer a portion of fresh fruits and veggies at any point in the day. Remove any leftover fruit and veggies after a couple hours to avoid spoilage. Pellets can be offered at the beginning of the day for them to graze on as desired.

Grooming

Guinea pigs have low [grooming needs](#). They should be checked daily for fecal matter or anything else stuck on their feet or bellies and spot cleaned as necessary.

Long-haired guinea pigs require a quick brush, but otherwise they do a good job of keeping themselves cleaned.

Nail care

Trim your guinea pig's nails at least once a month. If you accidentally clip into the quick and their nail starts to bleed, use a [styptic powder](#) or cornstarch to stop the bleeding quickly.

Enrichment

Guinea pigs are natural foragers. Encourage exercise of both mind and body by providing foraging boxes and toys.

Dental care

A guinea pig's teeth never stop growing, so daily chewing and grinding on hay, treats, and toys help keep their teeth at a manageable length. Consult a veterinarian if their teeth get too long, if they're drooling excessively, or if they're dropping food when they eat.

Exercise

Guinea pigs should be allowed time to explore outside their enclosures for at least one hour every day.

Disinfecting/Cleaning

- Bedding or liners should be replaced weekly or up to daily as needed.
- Food and water bowls should be cleaned daily, as should litter boxes.
- Clean surfaces of the enclosures with a pet friendly all-purpose cleaner or diluted vinegar.
- Guinea pigs can be trained to use a litter box, which significantly lowers the cleaning effort required to keep them healthy.

Veterinary Care

Guinea pigs should be seen once annually by a veterinarian who has experience with the species for a general wellness exam. A healthy guinea pig has:

- Clear eyes
- Clean nose
- Clean ears
- Shiny hair coats with no bald patches
- Formed fecal droppings that are yellow brown to dark brown and never soft

Contact your veterinarian if you notice any of the following:

- Teeth grinding
- Sitting hunched
- Lethargy
- Nasal discharge
- Drooling
- Losing weight
- [Diarrhea](#)
- Wounds
- Lameness
- Bleeding
- Seizures
- Squinting eyes or discharge from the eyes
- Breathing rapidly
- Squeaking in pain
- Abdomen bloats
- Unable to urinate, defecate, move, eat, or drink
- Penis won't retract
- Losing hair
- Sneezing
- [Lumps/tumors](#)
- Redness or sores on the feet

Common illnesses of guinea pigs are:

- [Pneumonia](#)
- [Bumblefoot](#)
- [Lice](#)
- [Mites](#)
- [Ear infections](#)
- [Pink eye](#)
- [Ringworm](#)
- Heat stroke
- Bacterial enteritis
- [Scurvy \(vitamin C deficiency\)](#)
- Dental issues



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