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What do you feed to Guinea pigs?

Guinea pigs are strict vegetarians. In the wild they feed on grasses, and seasonal wild fruits and vegetables. Domesticated guinea pigs need a similar diet. For optimum health, grass hay should be the mainstay of your guinea pig's diet. Timothy hay is the best hay to feed, although other grass hays are acceptable. The high fiber content of hay will help keep your guinea pig's digestive system normal, and provide an outlet for his/her chewing instinct. Fresh hay should be available to your guinea pig at all times. Most pet stores carry pre-packaged dried timothy hay or fresh grass hay may be available through a feed store in your area.

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Where do you find quality hay?

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The most important part of a good hay is one that your Guinea pig will eat. If you find a huge bale of timothy for \$4 and Guinea pigs loves it, great! But if bunny won't eat it, it just won't do her any good. Picky Guinea pigs often love Oxbow Hay brand www.oxbowanimalhealth.com and Small Pet Select brand. Oxbow hay can be found in some pet and feed stores and online pet suppliers. If you can't find it locally, ask your pet supply store to order it for you or to start carrying it! Small Pet Select hay can be found at www.smallpetselect.com.

What about alfalfa hay?

A word of caution, alfalfa hay is an “okay” hay to feed if grass hays are totally unavailable, however, it is not recommended for long-term usage. The main reason for this is that alfalfa hay is high in both protein and calcium. The high protein amounts can lead to obesity, and the high calcium amounts can contribute to urolith (bladder stones) formation in some guinea pigs.

But what about pellets?

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Unlike many other mammals, guinea pigs are unable to manufacture or store Vitamin C, so they must obtain it from their diet on a daily basis. One drawback to pellets is that they tend to lose Vitamin C as they sit on the shelf, therefore it is important to buy pellets in small quantities and to be sure that the pellets are freshly milled. Older pellets DO NOT contain adequate amounts of Vitamin C to prevent illness, and there is some debate about whether the fresh pellets contain enough

What about Water

Water: All guinea pigs need water to survive. A fresh clean water source should always be available. The water should preferably be provided to your guinea pig through a water bottle. The water in the bottle should be changed daily and the bottle should be thoroughly cleaned periodically. Many guinea pigs like to “play” with the sipper tubes and will either let out large amounts of water into the cage or accidentally force food debris into the water – causing the water to become contaminated with bacteria, so the bottle’s water level should be checked more than once a day.

Vitamin C supplement: Some owners choose to supplement their guinea pig’s Vitamin C by adding crushed Vitamin C to the water. If you decide to do this, please read the following:

1. Add the appropriate amount of supplement to the amount of water that the guinea pig will drink in a day and then if this does not fill the bottle halfway (most water bottles work best at half full or more) you will have to prepare more water to fill the bottle.
2. Vitamin C breaks down in sunlight and water, therefore, we recommend that you cover the water bottle with foil, AND prepare the Vitamin C/Water mixture on a daily basis.
3. The chlorine in tap water can actually inactivate ascorbic acid. Use bottled water or water that has been standing for at least 24 hours