

# Guinea Pig Care and Diseases

## *Lifespan and housing*

Guinea pigs live an average of 5 to 7 years.

Acceptable cages will be made of wire, durable plastic, or stainless steel. Do not use an aquarium for a cage, as these are easy for guinea pigs to escape from. The floor should be solid (not made of wire.) 100 square inches of floor area per adult guinea pig is recommended.

Bedding material should be dust free and non-toxic. **Carefresh bedding (can be purchased at most pet stores) or shredded paper is best.** *Wood shavings are not recommended*, as these can lead to certain respiratory diseases.

Guinea pigs are very social creatures, so more than one can be housed together. However, it is not recommended to keep intact males housed together as they tend to fight.

## *Diet*

Guinea pig **pellets** should make up about 40% of the diet. Do not feed rabbit pellets!

**Hay** such as timothy hay should make up 50% of the diet.

**A handful of dark green leafy vegetables and fruits** should make up the remaining 10% of the diet.

## *Vitamin C*

*Guinea pigs do not manufacture their own vitamin C, so they need to have it supplemented in their diet.* Guinea pig pellets are supplemented with vitamin C, but the pellets lose about 50% of the vitamin C content due to degradation within 6 weeks of manufacturing. Because of this, guinea pigs need to be fed a handful of dark green leafy vegetables daily. Some fruits also contain vitamin C and can be fed to guinea pigs in small amounts.

Examples of foods that are rich in vitamin C and would be good to add to a guinea pig diet include: kale, broccoli florets and leaves, parsley, red peppers, brussel sprouts, mustard greens, green pepper, kiwi fruit, and strawberries.

Adding a **vitamin C supplement to the drinking water** can make the water taste bad, which will lead to the guinea pig not drinking enough water and also not getting enough vitamin C in the diet. Therefore, **adding a vitamin C supplement to the drinking water is not recommended.**

## *Common diseases*

Pneumonia

Footpad infections

Scurvy (vitamin C deficiency)

Dental disease

Heat stroke