

## 💜 Guinea Pig Care 💜



*We're so excited that you are interested in adopting a guinea pig(s) from us!*

*This document will walk you through what you will need to know to prepare for and care for your new guinea pig(s).*

*Here is what you are committing to by adopting guinea pigs:*

- *A companion with an average lifespan of 5-8 years*
- *A prey animal who has the potential to bite or escape if mishandled or made to be afraid.*
  - *A pet deserving the absolute best, not to be thrown away when one becomes bored.*
  - *A social **herd animal** that must be properly bonded to their cagemates.*
- *Unneutered males are best bonded in pairs. Neutered males can pair with a female or live in a herd of females. Females can live happily in pairs, trios, or larger herds.*



*Here is what we will cover in this document:*

- [Appropriate cages](#)
- [The supplies you will need](#)
- [How to set up your cage](#)
- [What and how often to feed your guinea pig](#)
- [What to do when you first bring them home, and how to bond](#)
- [Warning signs that something is wrong with your guinea pig](#)



*There are a few exceptions to this, but they are rare.*

Guinea pigs will love having more space to romp, zoom, and popcorn around!

Common examples of cages that we recommend for guinea pigs include:

- Midwest Guinea Habitat (minimum size for 2 piggies) [Amazon Link](#)
  - 2x4 C&C Cage [Purchase](#) or [DIY](#) (for 2-3 piggies)
    - 2x5 C&C or larger for trios and herds

Please make sure your cage will be in a safe place where other pets can not access, and kept between the temperatures of 65-75 degrees. If temperatures exceed 80 degrees, guinea pigs may get heatstroke. If you don't have air conditioning, you may use frozen water bottles wrapped in a towel or sock.



Please see this website for more ideas: <https://www.guinealynx.info/housing.html>

## ♥ The Supplies You Will Need ♥

Here is a checklist of bare essentials you will need to prepare for your new companion.

- A cage (of course).
- A portable carrier for travel, emergency evacuation use and vet visits (small cat and dog carriers work great).
- A water bottle that is 12-26oz. Two or more guinea pigs should have 2 water bottles available.
  - A food bowl (optional – you can choose to scatter pellets in their hay for foraging).
  - Hay Feeder, Hay Bag, tray to hold hay or simply a place to pile it.
  - Food: Hay and Timothy Hay based Pellets ([see the feeding page](#)).
- Disposable Bedding Options: unscented paper bedding, pelletized bedding, or kiln-dried pine only. Popular brands include: Kaytee, EcoFlake, All Living Things, Carefresh, Uber and Oxbow.



- Washable Bedding Options: Fleece liners, tunnels, hideys, and accessories are popular. You can find them on Etsy, and some on Amazon. Bedding is usually washed once a week.
  - A hidey home for each guinea pig – wooden, plastic, or even a cardboard box.
  - Optional enrichment ideas: tunnels, bridges, wooden or cardboard chew toys, etc.



## 💜 How to Set Up Your Cage 💜

There is no “right” way to set up a cage; with guinea pigs, space is the most important, followed by their essential spaces (eating and sleeping!). Trying out new setups can help reduce boredom, especially in young piggies. Guinea pigs love to eat and sleep in big piles of hay, with water nearby.



## ♥ What and How to Feed Your Guinea Pig ♥

Over 80% of a guinea pig's diet should be unlimited quantities of fresh grass hay (Timothy and Orchard are most popular). Alfalfa hay may be used as a supplement for babies under 6 months of age, or when a mother is pregnant or nursing. Avoid feeding adult pigs more than an occasional bit of alfalfa hay as it can lead to bladder stones. If you have allergies to Timothy hay, try using Orchard as it has less dust and allergens.

You can find Oxbow hay bags at pet stores and online, order boxes from Small Pet Select, or purchase by the hay bale at local feed stores.

A high quality hay based pellet without seeds, or colorful treat pieces should be fed daily. Adult guinea pigs should be given ¼ cup of pellets each day. Babies under 6 months can have larger amounts (feed alfalfa based pellets to them). Senior guinea pigs (over 4 years old) may also require more pellets to maintain their weight. Recommended pellets include Oxbow and KMS Hayloft ([kms-hayloft.com](http://kms-hayloft.com)).

You may provide pellets in a bowl, or sprinkle them into the hay pile to encourage foraging.



Water must be provided at all times. Change the water daily and clean water bottles weekly.

Guinea pigs need Vitamin C in their daily diet. Providing daily vegetables like bell pepper or cilantro are the best ways to ensure their daily levels are healthy. However, if your guinea pig is ill or elderly, you can use a human grade

liquid supplement such as ChildLife Liquid Vitamin C and syringe feed 1ml per day as needed. Oxbow also makes a guinea pig chewable Vitamin C tablet that can be given.

Your guinea pig needs about 1 cup of fresh vegetables each day. This can be split into two servings. You can try feeding 2 servings of leafy greens, 1 serving of non-leafy vegetable, and 1/8 of a bell pepper. You can feed these veggies daily: cilantro, endive, red leaf/green leaf/romaine lettuce, radicchio, zucchini, baby carrots, tomatoes, and bell peppers of all colors.

Dark leafy greens like kale, parsley, and dandelion should be fed in moderation, no more than a few times a week. Gassy vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage should be avoided. You can refer to this handy chart for feeding fresh foods: <https://n.b5z.net/i/u/10116425/f/8-1-2014-Vegetables.pdf>

Treats for guinea pigs are best as a small amount of fruit once or twice a week. Refer to the chart above for safe fruits.

Be aware that your guinea pig will engage in a behavior called "coprophagia", meaning they consume of their own droppings. They do this by crouching down and taking a pellet directly from their anus. This is a normal behavior and provides them with important nutrients.



## What To Do When You First Bring Them Home & How to Bond



When you first bring home your guinea pig, expect that they may be a little nervous. It is completely normal to observe them hiding for the first day or so. It can take several weeks for them to get used to their new home! Offer them their food and fresh veggies. Shy guinea pigs may not eat food offered directly from your hand at first, but over time they will learn to trust you.

If your guinea pig does not appear to be drinking water from the water bottles, do not panic, as this is quite common for new environments. You can try offering a small bowl of water in the cage, but change it often if spilled or dirtied. The best thing you can do is daily offer water-filled veggies like romaine lettuce and cucumber which will keep their hydration up until they are comfortable drinking from the bottles.

After letting them get settled on their first day home, you can begin your bonding by being near the cage and talking to them without reaching your hands in. Let them get used to your presence, smell, and voice.

Gaining your guinea pig's trust takes time. Most piggies will enjoy being held on your lap, though they may feel more secure if wrapped in a blanket or in a cuddle cup.



Most guinea pigs enjoy a little head scratch, some like it behind the ears, and some like the chin. Some enjoy full pets, and others dislike their backside from being touched. You'll learn your piggie's preferences over time! It is always wise to use caution where you place your hands, especially if they smell like food. Some guinea pigs will nibble fingers if they smell food, some lick, and some will outright bite if they want to give a warning or want to go back into their cage.

Guinea pigs use the bathroom about every 15 minutes, so keeping them out of their cage for longer than that will undoubtedly lead to potty accidents on you, your floor, or your furniture. Holding them in a blanket or cuddle cup can reduce the discomfort, but especially if children are holding them, it's wise to keep snuggles short.

You can get a foldable playpen, lay down a blanket and let your piggies have some controlled free play time.

Offering food and treats during lap time or play time is a great way to increase trust and bonding. You can find more handling and taming methods on Youtube!





## Warning Signs That Something is Wrong with Your Guinea Pig



Guinea pigs are masters at hiding signs of illness, so it's wise to do "well checks" each time you hold your piggie.

You can use a kitchen scale to track their weight on a weekly basis (or daily if you suspect illness). The first sign of illness often is an abnormal drop in weight. If you notice they have lost more than 3 ounces, it's wise to make an appointment with an exotic veterinarian. The average weight for a guinea pig is 2.5-3.5 pounds.

Your regular "well checks" should consist of feeling their body for lumps or hair loss. Check the eyes for drainage (a white milky fluid is normal—it's how they wash their face). Frequent sneezing or any drainage around the nose can indicate a respiratory infection. Ears should be clean and not smell.

Guinea pigs nails need to be clipped every 4-8 weeks so that they do not curl and grow into the food pads. Use a toe nail clipper or animal clipper and cut the clear tips of the nails, avoiding the pink blood vessel. If your piggie has dark colored nails, shine a light underneath to see the outline of the blood vessel. If you accidentally cut too far and it bleeds, don't panic. Dab some styptic powder on the nail to stop the bleeding.

If you notice your piggie scratching excessively or losing hair in certain areas, you might be dealing with ringworm, lice, or mites. The vet can give them treatment and prevention, or for mild cases you may be able to treat at home. Guinea Lynx offers an extensive medical reference here:

<http://www.guinealynx.info/medical.html>

Older guinea pigs may experience impaction, where the feces are trapped and need to be cleaned out with a Q-tip and coconut oil over the area.

*Do your best to keep your home between 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit to avoid heat stroke. A guinea pig with heat stroke will stop eating, lay flat, and be difficult to revive without emergency medical care.*

*Always, always contact a vet if you observe anything unusual or you are unsure of. Better safe than sorry. Guinea pigs may be small, but they are deserving of all the care and love we can offer!*

*Lastly, if you find yourself in a position in which you can no longer care for your guinea pig, please bring them back to us so that we can ensure that they go to a great new home. Please reach out to us if you have any further questions!*

## 💜 Conclusion 💜

*Thank you so much for taking the time to read our document. We look forward to helping you find your perfect guinea pig companion. ❤️*



