

# GUINEA PIG - DIET

## FOOD AND WATER

Good quality food and fresh, clean water must be readily available at all times. Commercially available pelleted chows provide all of the essential nutrients, as long as the pellets are of high quality and fresh when offered. Some guinea pig owners will be tempted to feed rabbit pellets, assuming that they are roughly equivalent to guinea pig pellets. They are not equivalent. Unlike most mammals (including rabbits), guinea pigs require a high level of the vitamin C and folic acid.

Unlike rabbits, guinea pigs cannot manufacture their own vitamin C and must, therefore, receive it from an outside source. Interestingly, man and his primate relatives share this metabolic inability and dependence on vitamin C from the food that they consume. Pellets milled for guinea pigs take these special requirements into consideration and are appropriately fortified with these two nutrients, among many other essential ones. By far the best quality pellet on the market is [Oxbow](#). This product is available exclusively through veterinarians and stocked at Campus Estates Animal Hospital.

Even when the fresh pellets are properly stored in a cool, dry place, approximately one half of the vitamin C content is degraded and lost within six weeks of manufacture. Therefore, we recommend that the diet be supplemented with vitamin C as follows: 200 milligrams ascorbic acid (= vitamin C) added to approximately one quart of drinking water, made up fresh every 12 hours, or a single guinea pig should be offered one handful of kale or cabbage or one quarter of an orange daily.

We recommend that fresh greens, free choice Timothy hay and small amounts of fruit be offered daily with several cautions. The fresh items must be thoroughly washed to avoid exposing pet guinea pigs to pesticide residues and possible bacterial contamination.

All foods should be provided in heavy ceramic crocks that resist tipping over. The crocks should possess high enough sides to keep bedding and fecal pellets out of the food or the crocks should be elevated slightly above the bedding.

Water is most easily made available and kept free from contamination by providing it in one or more water bottles equipped with "sipper" tubes. Guinea pigs tend to contaminate and clog their water bottles more than other pet rodents by chewing on the end of the sipper tube and "backwashing" food particles into it. For this reason, it is imperative that all food and water containers be cleaned and disinfected daily. Guinea pigs tend to be creatures of habit and do not tolerate changes in the presentation of their food and water or changes in the taste, odor, texture, or form of the food itself. Pet owners should avoid making radical changes in the food and water containers used and changes in the food itself should be made gradually. Failure to do so usually results in guinea pigs' refusing food and water which can be dangerous.



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