

# Guinea pigs

Guinea pigs have an average lifespan of five to seven years.

Follow this guide to make sure your furry friend lives a healthy and happy life!

## Food

Guinea pig teeth are always growing so they need food that makes them continuously chew.

There are three important parts of a guinea pig's diet:

1. Good quality fresh grass or grass hay (e.g., Timothy, Oaten, Wheaten, Pasture, Paddock, Meadow or Ryegrass hays) should be most of their diet because it's very important for digestion and healthy teeth.
2. Small amounts of foods that are rich in Vitamin C, such as citrus and kiwi fruits. Guinea pigs need a direct source of Vitamin C in their diet to stay healthy.
3. Fresh leafy green vegetables and herbs, including:

- |                    |               |                       |                      |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| ✓ Basil            | ✓ Cabbage     | ✓ Dandelion           | ✓ Kale               |
| ✓ Bok Choy         | ✓ Carrot tops | ✓ Dark leafed lettuce | ✓ Mint               |
| ✓ Broccoli         | ✓ Celery      | ✓ Dill                | ✓ Other Asian greens |
| ✓ Brussels sprouts | ✓ Coriander   | ✓ Endive              | ✓ Parsley            |

Guinea pigs can have a very small amount of fruit or small chunks of 'sweet' vegetables as rare treats, such as apples and carrots.

Guinea pigs should never eat:

- |                     |                      |                 |                  |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| ✗ Beans             | ✗ Cereals            | ✗ Nuts          | ✗ Raw beans      |
| ✗ Beetroot          | ✗ Chocolate          | ✗ Onions        | ✗ Rhubarb leaves |
| ✗ Biscuits          | ✗ Corn               | ✗ Onion grass   | ✗ Seeds          |
| ✗ Bread             | ✗ Garden shrubs      | ✗ Peas          | ✗ Spinach        |
| ✗ Breakfast Cereals | ✗ Grains             | ✗ Pickled foods | ✗ Sugar          |
| ✗ Buttercups        | ✗ Lily of the Valley | ✗ Potato tops   | ✗ Sweets         |

## Water

Always provide fresh, clean water. It's best to use a water bottle drinker so the water stays clean. If your guinea pig doesn't know how to use a water bottle drinker, give them a small, shallow water bowl.



## Shelter

The more space, the better! But the minimum space for an enclosure to house one guinea pig would be 70 centimetres (length) x 70 centimetres (width) x 70 centimetres (height).

With outdoor hutches, you must make sure a few things are in place.

Guinea pigs will need to live in a hutch that has two parts. One part must be completely covered to protect the guinea pig from the weather and predators. It will act as a safe sleeping place. The other part should have space to move around in and something they can hide inside, such as a box. It should also have a mosquito-proof wire mesh that allows fresh air and sunlight in.

Cover the floor with bedding material, such as grass hay or shredded paper. Make sure inside the hutch is always a comfortable temperature, so your pets do not get heat stress.

Guinea pigs are social animals and should be kept in pairs or groups that can't reproduce with each other.

## Grooming

If guinea pigs have long hair, they should be brushed daily to remove tangles. While grooming, check the length of toenails and for signs of illness or external parasites (e.g., if your guinea pig loses patches of hair, take them to your veterinarian).

With daily handling and grooming, a guinea pig will build its confidence and become a more social pet!

## Hygiene

Every day, check for wet bedding, poo or leftover food. If there is, make sure to throw it out and put in fresh, dry bedding. The entire hutch should be cleaned out at least once a week and water should always be clean.

## Health

Most of the common health problems for guinea pigs can be prevented with good cleaning and feeding practices. If your guinea pig becomes quieter than normal, is eating or drinking differently, or their poo or wee is different, they should be taken to a veterinarian to be checked out!

## Enrichment

Guinea pigs should be provided with a gnawing log (made of untreated wood) and given access to an exercise enclosure which is escape-proof and safe from predators.

Because their teeth never stop growing, wooden toys are important for them to chew on.

## Desexing

Guinea pigs should be desexed so they don't breed unexpectedly. It also reduces the chance of getting some serious diseases, and makes them happier and healthier!

For more information about guinea pigs, visit [kb.rspca.org.au/56/](http://kb.rspca.org.au/56/).