


# Guinea Pig Diet and Husbandry

Cats and Critters  
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Hay	Western Timothy Hay <a href="http://www.oxbowanimalhealth.com">www.oxbowanimalhealth.com</a>
<p><b>Timothy Hay</b> should be <b>90-95%</b> of an adult guinea pig's diet. Oxbow Timothy Hay is highly recommended for the quality and the freshness of the product.</p>	
<p><b>Alfalfa Hay</b> is rich in calories and calcium. It should be fed to babies (&lt; 4 months old) and nursing or pregnant mothers. It should <b>not</b> be fed to adults because it can lead to obesity and urinary tract issues. Guinea Pigs are at an increased risk of developing bladder stones when fed food <b>high in calcium</b>. (i.e. Alfalfa Hay, Alfalfa Pellets, and certain vegetables.)</p>	
<p>Other hays: <b>Orchard Grass, Oat Hay, Botanical Hay</b>                  These hays can be offered if your guinea pig won't eat timothy hay.</p>	

The quality of hay varies more than you might think. Make sure your hay is **green** and smells **fresh** before buying.

Pellets	Vitamin C Supplement
<p><b>Timothy-based pellets</b> are recommended for adults. <b>1/8-1/4 cup</b> of pellets per day should be offered. <b>Oxbow Cavy Cuisine</b> is a high quality timothy-based pellet. Other Brands: American Pet Diner Timmy Guinea Pig Pellets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guinea pigs cannot produce vitamin C on their own and require 10 to 30 mg daily to prevent disease.</li> <li><b>Vegetables:</b> Red and green peppers, dandelion greens, parsley. (See page 2 for Vit C amounts)</li> <li><b>Vitamin C Supplement:</b> Oxbow GTN-50C Tablets</li> <li><b>Liquid Vitamin C Drops:</b> Make sure that it contains no sugar. (Found at Lori's Natural Food)</li> </ul> <p><i><b>We do not advise adding vitamins or medications to Cavies water as it may cause them to not drink as much.</b></i></p>
<p><b>Alfalfa-based pellets</b> are recommended for babies (&lt;4 months old) and nursing and pregnant mothers. Cavy Performance is a high quality alfalfa-based pellet. <b>Most pellets purchased at pet stores are alfalfa-hay based. Make sure you check the ingredients before buying.</b></p>	

Fresh Produce	Avoid these vegetables:
<p><b>Vegetables:</b> Red and green peppers, parsley, carrots, red and green leaf lettuces, dandelion greens, cilantro</p>	<p><b>Too high in calcium:</b> Kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, collard greens, spinach, carrot tops</p>
<p><b>Fruits:</b> Apple slices, banana slices, strawberries can be fed in very small amounts. <i>*Sick animals should not be fed fruit or anything high in sugar.</i></p>	<p><b>No nutritional value:</b> Iceberg lettuce, cucumbers, celery. These can cause diarrhea/soft stools.</p> <p><b>Gas producing:</b> Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli.</p>

## Vitamin C content of vegetables and fruits:

### FOOD SOURCE mg per cup

Red Pepper	450 mg
Turnip Greens*	260 mg
Mustard Greens*	252 mg
Dandelion Greens	200 mg
Green Pepper	195 mg
Kale*	192 mg
Brussels Sprouts	173 mg
Parsley	140 mg
Collard Greens*	140 mg
Guavas	125 mg
Radish	45 mg
Zucchini	39 mg
Potatoes	36 mg
Broccoli Leaves	120 mg
Cauliflower	100 mg
Broccoli Florets	87 mg
Tomato	87 mg
Spinach*	75 mg
Asparagus	69 mg
Raspberries	60 mg
Rutabaga	52 mg
Cabbage	50 mg
Orange	50 mg
Pears	48 mg
Swiss Chard*	42 mg

\*These foods are high in calcium, so it might be best to choose others.



**Five Freedoms** with which all animals should live their lives.

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst
2. Freedom from pain, injury or disease
3. Freedom from fear and distress
4. Freedom from discomfort
5. Freedom to express behaviors that promote well-being

## Housing/ Medical Concerns

**Caging:** The home cage should be a minimum of **seven square feet** for one cavy, adding two to four square feet per additional cavy. The home cage should contain a large smooth bottom (with no wire bottom, ramps or shelves on which cavies can injure their feet). The larger the cavies cage, the cleaner the cage will remain. Also a larger cage provides space for play, toys, and exercise necessary for physical/mental wellbeing. A minimum of at least 1 to 2 hours of exercise outside of the home cage in a secure environment is needed for overall health.  
[www.guineapigcages.com](http://www.guineapigcages.com)

### Cage Accessories:

**Water Bottle and/or Crock for Water**

**Crock for Pellets**

**Toys:** cuddle cups and tents made out of towels for hiding, paper bags, and tunnels, crumpled up paper, ping pong ball, baby stuffed animals, and large bird toys.

**Bedding:** Cover the cage floor with 1 to 2 inches of Care Fresh or similar paper based bedding. Aspen bedding is another acceptable choice. A thick towel topped with a fleece blanket is also great alternative to traditional bedding. **Cedar and pine contain harmful phenols and oils therefore these products should be avoided.**

**Companion:** Guinea Pigs thrive in groups of two or more. The best combinations are groups of sows (female) or groups of one or more sows and a neutered boar (male). **Guinea Pigs should not be housed with other rodents or rabbits.** These animals may harbor diseases and their different dietary needs make cohabitation dangerous and impractical.

### Common Medical Concerns

**Respiratory Infections:** sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge (maybe present on feet), and abnormal breathing.

**Lice, Mites, and Fungus:** hair loss, scratching, aggressive behavior when touched (due to pain), and in some severe cases seizures.

**Decreased Appetite/Stool Production:** decreased eating or stool production is a serious medical concern that can quickly become an emergency. **Please contact your veterinarian for an appointment right away.**



**Cleaning:** A complete cleaning of the bedding every **3 to 4 days** is crucial to a cavies overall health. For general cleaning use a diluted bleach solution (1 part bleach to 20 parts water). Use a few tablespoons of vinegar to clean urine build up, allowing the vinegar to sit for ten minutes.