

## Guinea Pig Nutrition

**Never let guinea pigs go without timothy hay** . They should always have an ample supply of timothy hay available. Hay provides the much-needed fiber for their digestive tract. Other grass hays (such as oat and orchard grass hay) also provide a large amount of fiber, but these can be more difficult to find. A lot of fiber means firmer poop, fewer furballs, and an overall healthier pet.

**Alfalfa hay is only a treat** . Alfalfa contains too much calcium, protein, and carbohydrates, which can lead to obesity, kidney and bladder stones, and gastrointestinal upset.

**Pellets are not a necessity** . Although most pets love their pellets, it should be offered only as an added supplement to their diet. Timothy hay pellets (versus the common alfalfa hay pellets) are preferred, and should be given in small amounts. Give a maximum of ½ cup pellets daily if your pet is not overweight. Just remember that feeding too many pellets can lead to obesity and overgrown teeth. Pellets should be fresh and replaced with a new bag at least every 3 months.

**Alfalfa is under 6 months old, pregnant, or nursing, alfalfa is important** . Feeding alfalfa-based pellets and alfalfa hay during these situations provides your pet with the extra calcium, protein, and carbohydrates needed for growth and development for the expectant/nursing female. After your pet reaches 6 months of age or once the female weans her young, stop giving the alfalfa.

**Leafy greens must** . Feeding a variety of leafy green veggies with the unlimited hay prevents boredom and provides essential nutrients. Greens should be introduced into the diet slowly, so as to not irritate the guinea pig's gastrointestinal tract. If a guinea pig hasn't had a certain green before, offer only a couple of strands the first few days. After that, you can increase the amount daily. Below is a list of greens that are good for guinea pigs.

Kale	Basil
Cilantro	Spearmint
Parsley	Collard greens
Red leaf lettuce	Romaine lettuce
Carrot tops	Radish tops
Grass	Dill
Spinach	Celery tops
Mustard greens	Dandelion greens
Green leaf lettuce	Endive
Turnip greens	Arugula

It is very important to purchase organic fruits and vegetables (no pesticides) and rinse dirt/debris off before feeding to your guinea pig.

Guinea pigs do not produce their own vitamin C, so they require at least 50 mg a day from vitamin C supplements and vegetables. Such vegetables are parsley, bell pepper, and kale. A daily slice of orange (no seeds) is also a great choice for natural vitamin C.