

The Critter Connection, Inc
P.O. Box 371
Durham, CT 06422
www.CTGuineaPigRescue.com

Food & Water

People who have had guinea pigs for any length of time will tell you that guinea pigs' lives revolve around food, and that they very easily get in a routine with respect to their feeding. Get them in a routine of getting fresh veggies at 7:30 in the morning before you go to work, and they will treat you to a symphony of squeaks and demands if their routine runs behind on the weekends when you're not up so early. Most guinea pig owners will tell you, though, that feeding time is one of the best times of the day because it's one of the times when each pig's personality really shows through.

Food

Guinea pigs and their health (and their spirits) benefit greatly when their daily diets include fresh fruits and veggies, and hay, along with their regular food pellets.

At the rescue, this is what our pigs are fed:

- Hay, unlimited access to timothy hay for the pigs over six months old. For the pigs under six months old, they receive alfalfa hay as well as the timothy. We get our hay from Linda's Hayloft at www.kmshayloft.com. This hay is awesome and is very competitively priced. It comes from Washington State, and while the shipping is expensive because of the distance, it is still comparably priced to Oxbow Hay (which we also like) or Kaytee.
- Food Pellets, particularly Kaytee plain pellets, Blue Seal Guinea Pig Food, or Oxbow Cavy Cuisine plain pellets. We also add a mixture of Gerty guinea pig food. One-quarter-cup per day per pig for adults, more for babies.
- Vegetables, one cup per day per pig split between two feedings. This has consisted of romaine or red leaf lettuce, red (sweet) bell pepper, flat or curly parsley, small amounts of kale, small amounts of dandelion leaves, leafy green carrot tops, the leafy tops of celery, two baby carrots per day. At bedtime, the pigs get a treat of a baby carrot or a piece of fruit.

You can adjust this to fit your schedule; however, it is advisable to feed the fresh foods twice a day. Guinea Lynx, at www.guinealynx.com, has an entire list of vegetables and fruit that you can mix, add, or change. Make these changes slowly so the guinea pig does not get diarrhea. Should the pig get diarrhea, eliminate the vegetables and fruit for 24 hours and only feed hay and a small amount of pellets. This should clear the diarrhea up immediately. If it does not, **seek veterinary advice immediately.**

Know, too, that guinea pigs have very definite likes and dislikes when it comes to food. One may like kale, and another will turn up their nose at it. Some like grapes and

strawberries, while others will only eat cantaloupe and honeydew melon. Finding out what your guinea pigs like is definitely a matter of trial and error. We get many of our supplies from ePetPals at www.epetpals.com. This Web site has the best price for Kaytee second cut hay as well as Oxbow pellets.

Water

While the pigs were in the rescue, they grew accustomed to drinking well water. If you have city water, there is a certain amount of chlorine in it that causes newly adopted guinea pigs not to drink. Try bottled water at the beginning, and then gradually switch over to your own tap water (or filtered tap water). A good rule of thumb is that if you won't drink your tap water (even filtered), then your critters probably won't (and shouldn't) either.

Water should be changed daily. If you feel like you're "wasting water" you can always dump the water out in your garden.

Cleaning Food Dishes & Water Bottles

Water bottles should be cleaned at least after every other water change. Cleaning the food dish every other day is also advised.

Do not use soap or bleach, only hot water; soaps leave a residue that will cause your pigs not to drink from their water bottle or eat from their dish. Don't forget to clean out the mouthpiece as well as the bottles. Cotton swabs, or baby bottlebrushes, work great for getting into the small nooks and crannies. Pet stores have also been starting to sell double-ended brushes that are made specifically for water bottles manufactured for small animals.