



Guidelines for Piggy Parents

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Congratulations and welcome to the joyful and exciting world of guinea pig parenting!

The following are some important guidelines for every piggy parent to follow. Visit Guinea Pig 101 on our website for additional information.

- ♥ Guinea pigs eat a lot and poop and pee a lot! Be prepared to do poop duty at least once a day. Boy piggies seem to produce more poop than girls.
- ♥ Hay messes happen! They eat it, drag it out of the hay rack, sleep in it, play in it, and use it for a bathroom. Hay is not only food, it is enrichment. It is not wasted, just used. At least once daily clean out the used hay and replace it with fresh hay. Guinea pigs need unlimited access to fresh hay 24/7. *See additional hay information at the bottom of this list.
- ♥ An adult piggy gets 1/8 cup of pellets daily. For a pair this is 1/8 cup in the morning and 1/8 cup at night, or 1/4 cup once daily. Some will scarf them down; others will nibble throughout the day. As long as they have good quality hay 24/7, they are getting plenty to eat. We use Oxbow pellets for all the guinea pigs. Six months and under eat young guinea pig pellets. Six months and older eat adult pellets.
- ♥ Guinea pigs love salad! Base for a good guinea pig salad is leafy greens. Spring mix, green leaf, red leaf, and romaine are the best. Other greens such as kale, Swiss chard, and broccoli leaves can be mixed in occasionally. Dandelion leaves and flowers are free, and piggies love them! Rinse before offering and confirm they are not from an area which has been sprayed or treated. A cup of greens in the morning is a good way to start a piggy day. In the evening feed more greens with some veggies mixed in. Favorites are bell pepper (any color, necessary for vitamin C), baby carrots (one each), baby tomatoes, and cucumber. We like to stick to the basics. Fruit can be added occasionally, maybe twice a week. Blueberries, apple, grapes and strawberries are all well received. Fruits should be served in small portions. *See the list of the top 10 fresh foods. You can also find a comprehensive list of safe vegetables and fruits that guinea pigs can have on our website.
- ♥ Most of our adoptable guinea pigs are used to being handled. However, your new guinea pig(s) may be shy at first in a new environment, with new humans. You may need to partially cover the cage until they feel secure. This may take a couple of days depending on the pig(s). Remember they are prey animals. Anything coming at them from above is perceived as a threat.
- ♥ Many of our adoptable guinea pigs have been exposed to dogs or cats in their foster homes and are used to their presence. However, always use caution introducing your guinea pig(s) to other animals in your home. You know your pets and which dog/cat has a high prey drive. If there is any doubt, it's better to be safe than sorry. Never leave a guinea pig unsupervised with another pet!
- ♥ They need out of cage time every day. This is not only important for exercise and their mental enrichment but is also a great way to bond with your guinea pig. This can be lap time watching TV with the family, helping with homework, or floor time. Piggies who have been in foster care are accustomed to being outside the cage.



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- ♥ They respond to your voice. Talk to them, especially when offering salad or treats. School age children can read to them. You can also include them in your daily story time with younger children.

Grooming

- ♥ Guinea pigs are very good at grooming themselves. You should rarely, if ever, need to give them a bath.
- ♥ Nail trims are important. Some guinea pigs' nails grow faster than others so it is important to keep an eye on your piggy's nails. When nails get too long, they start to curl and are very uncomfortable for the piggy to walk on. Your veterinarian will do nail trims, most will do them for a small fee.
- ♥ Long hair guinea pigs need to be brushed daily. It is ok to trim their hair to keep it clean, but this should be done with care to prevent injury with scissors.

Hay

In addition to using Oxbow Timothy and Orchard Grass, we also order hay from Small Pet Select.

Small Pet Select also has excellent hay with fast shipping (2-3 days in most cases). We like the 2nd cut Timothy and the Orchard Grass. They also have a hay sampler with 4 different varieties of hay. Visit them at smallpetselect.com to check out their products. They are a sponsor of KGPR. Follow the link on our Facebook page for 15% off your first order.

We also like Rabbit Hole hay in California. Medium Timothy, Soft Timothy and Soft Orchard are all favorites. www.rabbitholehay.com

*Remember, guinea pigs require unlimited hay.

Top 10 Fresh Foods for Guinea Pigs (not in order)

- ♥ Romaine Lettuce
- ♥ Green Leaf Lettuce
- ♥ Red Leaf Lettuce
- ♥ Kale (high in vitamin C but high in calcium)
- ♥ Parsley and Cilantro. Parsley is high in calcium as well as vitamin C and should be fed sparingly.
- ♥ Green, red, orange, or yellow bell peppers (high vitamin C)
- ♥ Carrots
- ♥ Apples (occasionally)
- ♥ Tomatoes (high in vitamin C)
- ♥ Strawberries (high in vitamin C occasionally)

The bagged/boxed salad mixes work well to give them some variety. Avoid anything with iceberg lettuce. Each piggy should get 1 cup to 1 ½ cups of fresh foods daily. It is best to divide it into 2 feedings, one in the morning and one in the evening.



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Your Guinea Pig's Health





Many guinea pig health problems are a result of nutrition, diet, digestive and dental issues. Contact your veterinarian if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Loose, soft, or lack of stool
- Small, dry, or infrequent stools
- Blood in the urine
- Sneezing or trouble breathing
- Hunching in a corner or lack of activity (lethargy)
- Overgrown front teeth
- Observed difficulty with chewing
- Bald patches in the fur
- Sores on the feet
- Abnormal eating or drinking

Cage Requirements

A common mistake that guinea pig parents make is not providing a large enough cage. Most pet store cages are much too small, even though they are marketed as acceptable for guinea pigs. At KGPR, we prefer C&C (cube and coroplast cages), but other types of cages can be used if you follow the size guidelines. The chart below lists the appropriate cage size for your number of guinea pigs:

Cage Size Guidelines

# of Pigs	Minimum Size	Preferred	C&C Cage Size
	7.5 square feet approx. 30"x36"	Bigger is better!	2 x 3 grids
	7.5 square feet approx. 30"x36"	10.5 square feet approx. 30"x50"	2 x 4 grids
	10.5 square feet approx. 30"x50"	13 square feet approx. 30"x62"	2 x 5 grids
	13 square feet approx. 30"x62"	16 square feet approx. 30" x 76"	2 x 6 grids

C&C cages are available from many online sellers. One of our favorite C&C cage stores is GuineaPigCageCompany.com.



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Checklist of Supplies

The following is a general list of supplies you will need to help your guinea pig live its best life:

Cage & Cleaning	Care & Grooming
<input type="checkbox"/> spacious cage	<input type="checkbox"/> small animal nail clippers
<input type="checkbox"/> dustpan & small whisk broom	<input type="checkbox"/> soft bristled brush
<input type="checkbox"/> cage bedding	<input type="checkbox"/> small pet carrier
<input type="checkbox"/> paper towels	Veterinary Care
<input type="checkbox"/> trash bags	<input type="checkbox"/> an exotic veterinarian
<input type="checkbox"/> spray bottle with 50/50 water/vinegar solution	<input type="checkbox"/> Find a vet before adopting!
Cage Accessories	Visit our website for a list of reputable veterinarians. Don't wait until you have an emergency to start searching!
<input type="checkbox"/> plastic or wooden hidey houses	
<input type="checkbox"/> no-drip water bottle	
<input type="checkbox"/> ceramic or no-flip food bowl	
<input type="checkbox"/> wooden chew toys	
Food	
<input type="checkbox"/> high quality timothy hay	
<input type="checkbox"/> Oxbow guinea pig pellets	
<input type="checkbox"/> fresh water (filtered is best)	
<input type="checkbox"/> assortment of safe veggies and fruits	

♥ Ongoing KGPR Support ♥

When you adopt from Knoxville Guinea Pig Rescue, you become part of our extended family. You will always have our expert knowledge at your fingertips. Our board of directors has over 50 years of guinea pig experience at your disposal. Do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions...there are not dumb questions!