

# Caring for our Guinea Pigs



## Cleaning the Cage

The cage should be cleaned everyday. Every other day, clean out the entire cage. In between, spot clean.

### Spot Clean:

Put on a latex glove to pick out wet spots and poops from the bedding. Fluff up the bedding and add a bit more if needed. Use shredded paper or store bought paper bedding.

### Cleaning out the Entire Cage:

Use the dust pan to scrape out all the bedding into the garbage can. Rinse the cage with hot water. If there is crusty residue, soak with vinegar for a few minutes and scrub clean with paper towels. Rinse again with hot water. Dry thoroughly before adding bedding. Add bedding to the bottom of the cage, about 2 inches deep.

***\*Please launder all the blankets before returning the guineas to school. We have no way to wash blankets here at the school. Thanks!***

## Food

Guineas are snackers. They eat throughout the day and should have their food replenished several times a day. Three items make up their diet: dry pellets, timothy hay, and fresh veggies.

**Dry Pellets:**

Keep a bowl of pellets available. The best food you can buy is organic timothy hay pellets with no seeds or added 'fluff'. Oxbow brand timothy pellets is the best. Dried fruit and nuts and seeds are not nutrient rich enough for guineas and provide too much fat and sugar, or are harmful to their digestive system. Also, refill their water daily.

**Timothy Hay:**

Keep a lot of timothy hay in their cage. They should always have access to hay. Chewing the hay keeps their molars worn down which is essential. If they do not have access to chewing, their molars can grow into the side of their mouths and cause infection.

**Fresh Veggies:**

Guineas have a natural vitamin C deficiency which means that if they do not get regular vitamin C through their diet, they can develop scurvy. Several slices of bell pepper a day is the best way to get vitamin C. Other fresh veggies help them get the water they need and other vitamins crucial to their health. Serve larger veggies in manageable slices. Suggested veggies include:

- bell pepper (red and orange are best)
- cucumber
- cilantro
- parsley
- romaine lettuce (no other lettuce)
- kale
- spinach
- carrots (not too many, too much sugar)
- celery

## **Snuggle Time!**

Guinea pigs are social animals and like to be around other guineas. They snuggle up for warmth and chatter to each other to communicate. They also like to be held by humans, when they feel safe. Guinea pigs like to hide and be in small spaces.

**Lap Snuggles & Work Time:**

When holding a guinea on your lap, make sure you have a blanket under the guinea for the guinea to grip. If holding the guinea for a long time, the guinea may pee or poo on the blanket. When petting the guinea, be gentle. You can also set the guinea on a table in front of you while you are working, but have a close eye on them because they might start to wander

off and you do not want the guinea to fall off they table. They can easily break their backs. If on a table in front of you, be sure to let them have a portion of the blanket that they can hide under. Remember, they like to feel safe and warm.

## Exercise

Guineas need exercise, especially guineas with small cages. They should have time every day to run around.

### Run of the Room:

You can let them run around an enclosed room, but please make sure you have blocked off any places they can sneak into. They are tricky like that! Guineas will find the tightest space to fit into, especially if they are scared. Guineas do not like to run on hard surfaces, so make sure it is carpeted or you have put down towels or sheets for them to run on. You will need to clean up their poo with the dustpan and broom, as they will leave it everywhere :)

### Playpen:

You can leave the guineas in a playpen for most of the day if it is safe from other animals. Put down the oil cloth first, then a sheet or blanket. You can create a circular fence with the two wire fences. Use string or something to tie it together. You can also use the top of the cage for a part of the enclosure. Create fun obstacles for the guineas with large cardboard tubes and scrunched up blankets. Make sure that you make water and timothy hay available to them during their play time. If it is a nice sunny day, take them outside and set up the cage in the grass! They can eat clover and dandelions.

## Health Concerns

If you feel one of the guineas are sick, please take them to the nearest vet that cares for guineas. Closest to Corbett:

Banfield Pet Hospital (located inside of Petsmart)

**Address:** 430 NW Eastman Pkwy, Gresham Town Fair, Gresham, OR 97030

**Phone:** (503) 465-8267

Feel free to email me if you have any questions or concerns.

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