

# Guinea Pig Diet

Good quality food and fresh, clean water must be available at all times. Commercially available pelleted chows provide all the essential nutrients, as long as the pellets are fresh and wholesome when offered. Pelleted and/or grained food left opened in a bag for a prolonged period of time will lose essential nutrients and will no longer be satisfactory. Only buy bags large enough that will sustain your guinea pig for 2-4 weeks maximum. Do not feed your guinea pig rabbit pellets. While both rabbits and guinea pigs require high amounts of folic acid in their diet, unlike rabbits, guinea pigs cannot manufacture their own vitamin C and must, therefore, receive it from an outside source. Interestingly, guinea pigs share this dependence on vitamin C from the food they consume with humans and our primate relatives. Pellets made for guinea pigs contain these special requirements.

In addition, it is recommended that fresh greens, hay and small amounts of fruit be offered daily. However, these items should not exceed 10-15% of the daily diet. All fresh food items must be washed thoroughly to avoid pesticide residues and possible bacterial contamination. Possible suggestions include: carrots, apples (no seeds), spinach, kale, parsley, bananas, melons (no skin or seeds), orange slice (no skin or seeds).

Water is most easily made available and kept free from contamination by providing it in one or more water bottles. Since guinea pigs tend to chew on the ends of the 'sippers' more than other rodents which can lead to backwashing and contamination, it is best to clean and fill the water bottles daily.

Guinea pigs tend to be creatures of habit and do not tolerate changes in the presentation, taste, odor, texture or form of their food and water. Thus it is advised not to make radical changes in food and water containers and any changes in the food itself should be done gradually. Failure to do so usually results in the guinea pigs refusing

gradually. Failure to do so usually results in the guinea pigs refusing food and water, which can lead to disease.

