

CARE OF GUINEA PIGS

DIET

Hay: The wild guinea pig lives on a diet of grasses and leaves and has a specialised gut which is adapted for this; the large intestine contains bacteria which break down the grass to make it digestible. The adult guinea pig needs a diet high in fibre with restricted carbohydrate and protein and virtually no fat to stay healthy. Guinea pigs must have 24 hour access to loose hay (not cubes). We strongly recommend TIMOTHY hay as this is higher in fiber than Alfalfa. It is very important to check that the hay is of good quality. It should have a fresh sweet smell, not dusty or mouldy.

Pellets: We recommend that an adult guinea pig be given one dessertspoon of pellets a day, this can be split into two meals. Young (under 6 months), pregnant, sick or old (over 6 years) guinea pigs should be given free access to pellets.

Fresh vegetables: These are an important source of vitamins. Around 1-2 bowls should be given everyday. Carrots tops, broccoli, romaine and Chinese lettuce are good. Chinese “Choi” and spinach can be given once a week. Remember to wash thoroughly and make sure they are fresh.

Any dietary changes **MUST** be slow and gentle. Upsetting the gut causes bacterial imbalances which can have serious consequences (even death). Take up to 1 week to gradually introduce a new vegetable or hay or brand of pellets to your guinea pig. Please note their teeth grow continuously and need to be constantly worn down to prevent overgrowth which leads to pain, oral inflammation/ulceration and loss of appetite. Gut stasis (lack of gut movement) is a serious problem so seek veterinary advice if a guinea pig does not eat or poo for 24 hours or has abnormal faeces (such as diarrhoea or constipation). When buying food ensure that it is fresh (always check the expiry date) and keep the food in airtight containers and away from heat.

WATER

24 hour access is essential. Offer water in a bowl and a dripper bottle so the guinea pig can choose which they prefer

CAGE

The cage should be a minimum of 4ft x 2ft x 1.5ft. The floor of the cage should be solid and easy to clean, not wire (as this may cause ulceration of the feet). Of course you must keep the cage clean and dry. Ideally the cage should have a covered area where the guinea pig can have privacy and an open area. Guinea pigs should be allowed out of the cage to exercise every day, but “guinea pig proof” your house first; make sure there are no electric wires they can chew.

HEALTH

To keep your guinea pig healthy please follow the above advice. Guinea pigs are happier when kept with another guinea pig. We advise desexing male guinea pigs if they are to be kept with a female or another male. Please also check your guinea pig’s mouth (for a wet chin and teeth grinding which can be signs of oral disease) and feet (for infection and ulceration) regularly. Also keep the anal/genital area clean to prevent faecal matting/ urine scald and infection. Brush them frequently especially when they are molting (daily if long haired) to prevent matting and skin disease. Any abnormal hairloss please seek veterinary attention. Finally check you guinea pig for any skin lumps as abscesses are common and are difficult to treat.

FOR FURTHER ADVICE PLEASE CONTACT YOUR VETERINARY SURGEON

天竺鼠護理

糧食

乾草：在野外生活的天竺鼠依靠食草葉以維持生命，因此牠們的腸道有特別的構造去適應此類食物。牠們倚賴大腸內的細菌去消化及分解纖維從而獲得營養。成年天竺鼠需要進食高纖維、低碳水化合物、低蛋白質及基本上無脂肪的食物。飼主需確保天竺鼠隨時進食到零散乾草

（不要草磚）。我們建議餵飼Timothy 草，因為它的纖維含量較Alfafa

草為高。另外要確保餵飼高質素的乾草，它們應有一股新鮮的草香。若乾草發出塵味或霉味便應棄掉。乾糧：我們建議給予成年天竺鼠每日小量的乾糧：每日可餵飼一甜品匙乾糧（可分兩餐餵飼）。飼主應給予年幼（六個月大或以下）、懷孕、生病或年長（六歲以上）的天竺鼠足夠乾糧供牠們隨時進食。購買乾糧時務必檢查有效日期，並應將乾糧存放於陰涼處及密封容器內。

新鮮蔬菜：新鮮蔬菜是多種維他命的來源，飼主每天可給予一至兩碗。紅蘿蔔、西蘭花、唐生菜、羅馬生菜等都是好選擇。中式菜及菠菜可以一星期給予一次。食用前緊記徹底地清潔蔬菜及確保蔬菜新鮮。

所有食物上的轉換均必須慢慢進行，否則會引致腸道細菌失衡，並可以帶來嚴重後果，最嚴重者可導致死亡。一般來說轉換不同品牌的乾糧、不同種類的蔬菜或乾草需分一星期漸漸進行。另外需注意的是天竺鼠的牙齒會不斷生長。牠們需要不停咀嚼磨短牙齒，以防止牙齒生過長。牙齒過長的話會導致牙肉發炎或癢瘍、痛楚及失去食慾。此外腸道瘀積（腸道蠕動不足）乃另一種嚴重問題。如發現天竺鼠多於廿四小時未有進食或排便或出現不正常大便（如腹瀉或便秘），請即求診。

食水

要確保天竺鼠廿四小時都有潔淨的食水供應。可同時提供水碗和水樽讓天竺鼠選擇。

籠子

籠的大小最少為四尺乘兩尺乘一點五尺。籠底要密閉及容易清洗。籠底不應用任何類型的網狀或鐵線，因容易傷及天竺鼠足部引致癢瘍。籠子要盡量保持乾爽清潔。如果可以應在籠裏的一邊提供遮蓋使天竺鼠有地方可以躲起來及感覺安全。每天應放天竺鼠出籠外活動，但應小心家居內的東西，例如：電線。以避免天竺鼠誤咬及誤吞。

健康

天竺鼠喜與其他天竺鼠相處。若飼養多於一隻天竺鼠的話，我們建議為雄性天竺鼠進行絕育手術。除了跟隨以上各項建議，你亦應該：

- 1) 定期檢查牙齒及口腔 — 面頰濕潤或牙齒磨蝕可能與口腔問題有關
- 2) 定期檢查腳部 — 檢查有沒有受傷及受細菌感染而膿腫
- 3) 保持肛門及下陰部清潔，防止因大小便積聚而引起的感染
- 3) 定期梳毛，尤其是長毛種的及換毛期間，以防止毛髮打結及患上皮膚病
- 4) 天竺鼠繁殖力驚人，故應為天竺鼠絕育。除此之外，為雌性天竺鼠絕育可預防牠們患上子宮及乳腺癌。為雄性絕育可防止牠們打架。
- 5) 定期檢查皮膚 — 皮膚腫瘤可以由膿瘡引起。此類膿瘡在天竺鼠身上頗常見但難於治理

如有疑問，應請教你的獸醫