

## Types of Hay

### Oaten Hay:

The most common and readily available hay. Quality can vary from season to season depending on the rains. Expect to pay roughly \$10 for a 2kg bag or if you can, buy a bail for roughly \$15-\$20 for 16kg.

Bails must be stored in a sealed container or bin as it will attract mice and insects.

### Timothy Hay:

An imported hay which is known for its lush colour. Good quality but more expensive.

### Lucerne hay:

Not a true hay, Lucerne is a pea shrub that does not contain silica granules for dental health and is very high in calcium and protein which can cause urinary problems and gastric upset when fed in large quantities. Think of Lucerne as a special treat.



## Treats and Fruits

Fruits and berries are suitable as a treat 2-3 times per week. They are high in sugars and very appealing but piggies are very prone to weight gain and holding off from their hay if they know they'll get treats if they make a fuss!

They can have in volume the equivalent of a quarter of an apple weekly. This may be equivalent to 8-12 cranberries or 1/4 of a carrot.

Typical favorites:

- Apple
- Fresh banana or dried banana slices
- Cranberries
- Carrot
- Pear
- Nashi

## Guinea Pigs and Calcium

Calcium is readily excreted in the urine of guinea pigs. This is often apparent as areas they have urinated that have dried up often have a scale residue left over.

Diets high in calcium increase the concentration of dissolved calcium in the urine which has a tendency to form small particles (precipitate). These particles can form a heavy sludge that sits in the bottom of the bladder and can also form into larger stones called uroliths.

Bladder stones are very problematic and can cause blockages. Once firmly lodged in the urinary tract it is common that only surgery will be able to retrieve them. It is recommended to limit foods high in calcium;

- Parsley
- Kale
- Broccoli

# Guinea Pig Diet

All you need to know



Little  
**PAWS** Rescue  
Perth

[www.littlepawsrescue.org.au](http://www.littlepawsrescue.org.au)

## 90% Hay

Give unlimited hay.

A good estimate is to give a handful of hay the same size as your guinea pig in the morning, top ups can be given if this is eaten by the evening.

## Why Hay

### Dental health:

Grass hay's have small glass-like particles called silica which are essential for wearing rabbits teeth appropriately. In order for both front and back teeth to be kept healthy hay needs to be kept in long strands. Chaff hay is hay but cut up into small pieces and is good for back teeth but does not wear front teeth.

### Gastric Health:

The majority of absorbed energy and protein comes not from hay directly but from the fermented products of good digestive bacteria and the bacteria itself. Hay supports this population of bacteria. Feeding too much foods high in carbohydrates/sugars and or proteins causes bad bacteria to overgrow. The fermented products of these bacteria produce a potent acid that causes disease.



## 5% Pellets

Give 1tbsp morning and night.

It is highly recommended to feed a veterinary formulated veterinary diet such as **Vetafarm, Oxbow or Burgess**. These diets are designed to be used in conjunction with a predominantly hay diet and are formulated for the guinea pig's long term health.

Pellets containing hard corn, seeds, grains or mueslis are not recommended as these unbalance gut bacteria, can promote dental disease, chip teeth or lead guinea pig to not eat their hay.

Typical non veterinary brand muesli or pellet diets do not account for any hay or veggies being included in the diet.

### Vitamin C Requirements:

Guinea pigs (like humans) are unable to synthesize their own vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid). Therefore they must obtain it through their diet. If they don't they will develop a disease called scurvy (vitamin C deficiency) which causes skin disease, weakness and eventually paralysis of the legs.

Reputable manufacturers will add in appropriate amounts of Vitamin C into their pellets. Otherwise be sure to include a portion dark leafy green veggies in your guinea pigs diet.

## 5% Leafy Green Veggies

Give ¼ a cup morning and night.

### The staple veggies:

- Any Asian greens
- Kai Lan
- Yau Choy
- Baby spinach

### OK in small amounts:

- Broccoli\*
- Carrot
- Kale\*
- Parsley
- Basil
- Mint

(\* denotes good source of vitamin C)

### The Veggie Salad

The staple veggies should make up the bulk of the salad mix. It is recommended to slice up the leafy greens into roughly 3cm pieces and mix well.

