

Planet Guinea Ratewatchers D.I.Y. Menu

Ratewatchers is a complete diet for all guinea pigs and focuses on feeding the correct Calcium to Phosphorus ratio of fresh foods in order to maximise 'bladder health'. There are no 'good' or 'bad' foods, these are carefully chosen combinations. Foods have been grouped and colour coded, according to nutritional value, for ease of selection.

Group one

10g Collard Greens/Spring Greens
 10g Dandelion Greens
 10g Dill
 10g Pak Choi
 10g Rocket

Group two

10g Cabbage
 10g Kale
 *10g Parsley
 *10g Spinach
 10g Watercress

Group three

10g Celery
 10g Coriander
 10g Escarole (Dandelion type leaf)
 +10g Pear
 10g Round Lettuce / Butterhead

Group four

10g Baby Carrot
 10g Belgian Endive (White Chicory)
 10g Broccoli
 +10g Cantaloupe Melon
 10g Carrot
 10g Cucumber
 +10g Grapes
 +10g Honeydew Melon
 10g Peppers (Red or Green)
 10g Romaine Lettuce
 10g Savoy Cabbage

+ Represents fruit, do not feed more than twice weekly.

* Represents foodstuff that is high in Oxalic Acid. Feed these in small amounts; no more than 1 * portion (10g) of food daily per guinea pig, spaced out throughout the week so that urine does not become saturated with Oxalates (the product made during the metabolism of Oxalic Acid). It is particularly important that the urine is diluted with large amounts of water (15ml 3 x daily) when these foods are included in the diet. This can be done orally via syringe. The Oxalic Acid rate changes with the age of the plant.

Feeding Ratewatchers!

To select your D.I.Y. meal, use one of the combinations below and take note of the + and * information, and guidance on choosing 2 foods from sections three and four. Feed two guinea pigs one Ratewatchers meal twice daily.

- Each sample meal below is 1 meal of 2 for 2 guinea pigs.
- Option 2 should not be fed more than once daily, feed Option 1 as the other fresh meal to ensure balance and correct Vitamin C intake. Option 1 can be fed twice daily.
- Hay and water are major components of the guinea pig diet; ensure both are available 24/7, 365 days a year.
- Encourage a greater hay intake by providing a variety of hays.
- Oxbow Cavy Cuisine is a well balanced dry food based on Timothy grass feed approximately 25g per guinea pig daily.

Option 1	Option 2
3 Group two	1 Group one
2 Group three	1 Group three
1 Group four	2 Group four

Choose 2 **different** foodstuffs from the **2 Group three** and **2 Group four** sections, i.e. 10g Carrot and 10g of Romaine Lettuce as opposed to 20g of Romaine Lettuce.

Nutritional data used is from the [USDA National Nutrient Database](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/). All data is an average, values vary depending on variety of plant, freshness and the age of the plant. Nutritional values are not static and constantly change throughout the plant's life.

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Hay and Water:

Hay and water are vital components of the guinea pig diet. Hay provides the necessary indigestible fibre needed to ensure the gut is 'kept moving'; water is important in amounts large enough to flush the kidneys and bladder through to prevent minerals reacting and binding with each other to form stones.

A choice of good hays should be available if possible but it is more important to provide a good hay 24/7, 365 days a year than to provide inadequate amounts of a variety of hays. Guinea pigs need to be eating their body mass in hay daily - many will eat much more. Hay should be 'scrunched up' into the size of the guinea pig to find the amount as opposed feeding a loose pile of hay.

Water must be fresh daily, in hard water areas use filtered water (a Brita filter jug is good), do not give bottled water! These can contain minerals not needed by guinea pigs, not to mention other additives (be they natural or otherwise).

Ensure that guinea pigs that have had bladder stone operations or those passing sludge/grit are having at least 40ml of fluids a day. This can be achieved by giving 15ml 3 x daily, orally via syringe; this amount will overload the guinea pig bladder (thought to hold approximately 10 ml).

Feeding:

- Give a variety of foods using the colour combinations given. Try to include 5 different vegetable/greens a day in the diet, interchanging throughout the week to ensure any foods with a high Oxalic Acid content are only fed in small amounts. Limit the frequency they are fed as directed above, this only applies when the portions are Ratewatchers size.
- Ensure food is room temperature when fed; remove from fridge an hour before feeding. Failure to do so can cause stomach complaints.
- Wash food before feeding to remove surface dirt, this does not ensure everything is removed (e.g. chemicals).
- Prepare roots and fruits in strips, more can be made of them and it is the natural shape for guinea to feed on. Leaves can be cut into strips/shredded using scissors.
- It is less likely that there will be any leftovers when feeding Ratewatchers Diet, but if there are remove them after a few hours.
- Ensure good hay is available at all times. The bulk of the Ratewatchers Diet is hay; it is likely you will see an increase over time in the amount of hay eaten.
- Feed a large handful of Just Grass/Readigrass (or similar quick dried grass forage) daily between two guinea pigs.
- Water needs to be changed daily; failure to do this can lead to bacterial growth which may cause diarrhoea which in turn can be fatal. Having fresh water available will encourage your guinea pig to drink. Their intake of dry foods (hay for example) will have increased and in turn it is to be hoped that the water intake will too. Guinea pigs that do not drink enough (around 10ml a day) may need to be given water by syringe particularly if bladder problems arise. The bladder holds around 10ml therefore 15ml of water is needed in one go to overload it. Taking water via syringe is the only way this can be achieved.
- Feed new grown grass (also known as Spring Grass) in small amounts and introduce it gradually. Where possible, offer herbage and give grass for foraging in. Mix with hay for foraging fun!
- Water bottles must be rinsed daily and sterilised weekly in a baby bottle sterilising solution such as Miltons. For cleaning use a brush intended for babies' bottles.
- Feed a dry food that does not contain colourings, even EEC permitted ones. They are thought to irritate the gastrointestinal tract.
- Some recommended dried foods are:
 - **Oxbow Cavy Cuisine:** (correctly balanced and based on Timothy grass)
 - **Supreme Science Selective:** (a pellet that has a hole in the middle be aware that these can get caught on guinea pigs' teeth, particularly guinea pigs with one incisor).
 - **Wagg Guinea Pig Food:** both mixes and pelleted
 - **Chudleys Rabbit Royale:** does not contain Vitamin C but guinea pigs on the Ratewatchers diet will receive this through their fresh food.
 - There are many more dried foods that can be given; it is important to read the ingredients label for is to see whether or not it contains colourings. Avoid foods containing Locust Bean and/or Sunflower Seeds.

For more on feeding see: www.guineapigwelfare.org.uk

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Sample Meals

Each one is for 2 guinea pigs to share, give one in the morning and one late afternoon/early evening:

10g Cabbage	10g Dill
10g Kale	10g Coriander
*10g Parsley	10g Romaine Lettuce
10g Celery	10g Chicory (Belgian Endive)
10g Coriander	Ca:Ph : 1.78:1
10g Peppers	Vitamin C: 13.88mg
Ca:Ph : 1.90:1	
Vitamin C: 50.92mg	

Day One: A total of 64.8g of Vitamin C for two guinea pigs that require 10-30g a day each.

20g Kale	20g Cabbage
10g Watercress	10g Watercress
10g Celery	10g Pear
10g Coriander	10g Endive
10g Cucumber	10g Carrot
Ca:Ph : 1.93:1	Ca:Ph : 1.61:1
Vitamin C: 32.23mg	Vitamin C: 12.72mg

Day Two: Option 1 fed x2 daily. Vary how 'Options' are fed, as well as portion size.

10g Cabbage	10g Dandelion leaves
*20g Parsley	10g Round Lettuce
10g Round Lettuce	10g Broccoli
10g Celery	10g Red Pepper
10g Honeydew Melon	Ca:Ph : 1.59:1
Ca:Ph : 2.04:1	Vitamin C: 33.32mg
Vitamin C: 33.8mg	

Day 3: The Vitamin C level is particularly high due to the inclusion of Red Pepper.