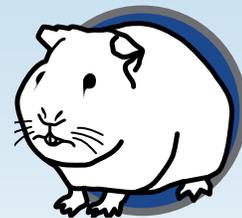


Clean Housing Is Vital to Guinea Pig Health



Unsanitary housing significantly increases the risk of common guinea pig health problems like pneumonia, submandibular abscesses (lumps or swelling under the jaw), and ringworm.

Sanitizing an enclosure involves two distinct steps: **cleaning** and then **disinfecting**. These are different processes and only work if done properly, in the right order.

DID YOU KNOW?

Some disinfectants and detergents can cancel each other's actions. Avoid combining these products unless specifically directed by the manufacturer.

1. CLEANING

Cleaning **removes** animal waste, dirt, and other organic debris from surfaces. This includes changing bedding and washing objects with soap/detergent and water. While cleaning removes some harmful germs from the environment, it does not eliminate all of them.



Helpful Tips

- **Clean housing as often as needed to promote good health and welfare.** Enclosures that have an odor or are excessively soiled indicate that you need to increase cleaning frequency.
- **More guinea pigs = more cleaning.** Enclosures with densely housed guinea pigs need to be cleaned even more often than less densely populated ones.
- **Winter may bring a need for more frequent cleaning.** Ammonia odors tend to build up when there's less fresh air circulating inside.
- **Daily spot cleaning can help maintain a healthy environment between full cleanings:**
 - Replace soiled or wet bedding, especially around water bottles and feeders, to help keep bedding clean and dry.
 - Check food receptacles for fecal pellets and replace soiled feed.
 - Check drinking access points and keep them free of feces, mold, slime, and algae. If daily spot cleaning doesn't keep the water source free of contamination, you may need to redesign the setup.

2. DISINFECTING

Disinfecting **kills** germs by applying chemicals or heat to clean surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily remove organic debris.



To be effective, all disinfectants **MUST** be:

- **Used at the concentration specified in the product instructions.**
- **Applied to a clean, non-porous surface that is free of organic matter.** Organic matter cannot be disinfected and will deactivate most disinfectants when present.
- **Left on surfaces for the amount of time specified in the product instructions.**

CAUTION! After disinfecting, be sure to rinse well and completely dry pens before adding new bedding and returning the guinea pigs. Disinfectant left behind on housing surfaces may irritate the skin and respiratory passages of your guinea pigs.



This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to promote optimal guinea pig care and health.

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

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