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### The Importance Of Water

Guineas need to have fresh, clean water available to them at all times. Bottles are the most hygienic way of providing this, although some guineas prefer to drink out of pots. Ceramic pots are the best so that they can't be tipped over. Guineas do get some water from their vegetables, but water must still be available to them.

- Water should be changed daily, more frequently if it becomes contaminated with bits of food. I had one guinea that was very good at blowing food up the spout, so his bottle had to be changed at least twice daily! In hot weather bottles can quickly end up turning into green "bacteria bottles". If you are using a bowl, this will need to be changed more frequently as it can easily become contaminated with hay, bedding, droppings etc. In the winter you need to ensure that your guinea's water bottle doesn't freeze, so their cages need to be protected from the cold – either in a shed or indoors.
- Bottles should be kept clean - use a bottle brush daily. A clean mascara brush is the perfect size for cleaning the top and spout. Metal spouts can become blocked with bits of food, so always check that there is nothing stuck in them. Once a week, sterilise the bottles and cleaning brushes using tablets or a solution that is suitable for baby's bottles and available from chemists and supermarkets (Milton for example).
- When you've refilled the bottle and put it back on your guinea's cage, always tap it to check that the ball bearing at the end of the spout is working properly, otherwise your guinea won't be able to drink from it.
- Ensure that the water bottle is at an appropriate height for your guinea to reach. It may be necessary to have a couple of bottles at different heights when you have a mum and babies for example.
- Whenever you put guineas out to play on the grass, don't forget that they need water there too.
- Guineas that are poor drinkers may be more prone to bladder stones and infections as sludge and bacteria don't get flushed out of the bladder. Fluid intake can be increased by syringing water into your guinea - around 40ml per day is recommended. If you live in a hard water area, use filtered water instead of tap water to remove some of the Calcium from the water as most guinea pig bladder stones are composed of Calcium Carbonate.
- There is no need to add extra vitamins to the water, especially Vitamin C as this breaks down within a few hours. Guinea pigs can get enough Vitamin C (which they can't make, just like humans) from a varied diet including fresh vegetables each day. Dark green vegetables such as spring greens, kale and broccoli contain plenty of Vitamin C.