



Guinea Pig Adoption Policy

Thank you for considering adopting a rescue guinea pig. The Centre has seen an increase in the number of guinea pigs needing to be rehomed and we are now taking over 90 each year.

This document provides important information and guidance about adopting and caring for Guinea Pigs. The document has the following sections:

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WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE HAPPY WITH YOUR GUINEA PIGS AND ENJOY GETTING TO KNOW THEM FROM THEIR GENTLE PURRING OF CONTENTMENT TO THEIR WHEEKS AND SQUEEKS OF EXCITEMENT.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU SCROLL DOWN TO READ THROUGH POLICY



Important Information

As a rescue centre we want all the animals in our care go to the best 'forever homes', and to reduce the number of animals that need to be rescued. For these reasons:

- Under no circumstances should your adopted guinea pigs be allowed to breed
- Guinea pigs can live for over 6 years and need to be cleaned, fed and handled every day, it is therefore a long term commitment
- We only rehome guinea pigs to adults and we expect parents to take full responsibility for their ongoing care as children often lose interest in them
- We only rehome guinea pigs in pairs (two males or two females as guinea pigs are not neutered / spayed) or a single guinea pig can be bonded with your existing guinea pig
 - Bonding of guinea pigs is only done at the centre, with no exceptions
 - Prior to returning your bonded guinea pigs you need to have fully cleaned their accommodation with animal friendly disinfectant (if it is not new)
- Ensure you and members of your family do not have allergies to guinea pigs or hay
- Two guinea pigs require accommodation space equal to a minimum of **15-16 sq.ft.**
- **PLEASE SEE HOUSING REQUIREMENTS BELOW**
- The accommodation will need to be fox proof - strong mesh, not chicken wire, and not easily knocked over.
- Guinea Pigs should not be allowed to run around in the garden unattended
- Guinea Pigs require constant access to hay for food and bedding, and is essential to avoid their teeth overgrowing. They also need to be fed daily with fresh fruit, vegetables and good quality dried food, as well as being provided with fresh water every day.
- They need to be checked regularly for any signs of symptoms of illness (please refer to our Health Checks section of this document). If in doubt you should contact your vet immediately.



Before you Adopt

Home Visit

- Our home visitor will contact you normally within 48 hours once the online form has been completed.
- Please do not think of your home visit as an 'exam' or 'test' but an opportunity for us to help you ensure you have the right environment for guinea pigs and answer any questions.

Rehome to Adults Only

- Although guinea pigs can make lovely family pets many of the guinea pigs that come into our rescue are because children have lost interest in them.
- Therefore we only rehome guinea pigs to adults as children should not be wholly responsible for their long term care.

Do you have time for your guinea pigs?

- They will need cleaning on a daily basis and given fresh food, hay/grass and water.
- They should be handled each day and also placed in a run (if separate) for additional activity and exercise.
- Gentle handling is very important so that you and your guinea pigs can have the best possible relationship without any handling your guinea pig may become very shy and nervous of you.

Allergies?

- Are you aware of any allergies in your family to guinea pigs or hay?
- If you have any concerns regarding this then please contact the Centre to make arrangements to spend time with the guinea pigs before deciding to adopt.



Guinea Pigs Living Together

- Guinea pigs are social creatures and used to living in herds in the wild and this is why we rehome them in pairs wherever possible.
- Our guinea pigs are not neutered or spayed and therefore the combinations that we rehome are a pair of males and a pair or more of females.
- Generally females are more accepting of each other and can live in groups, unneutered males however are generally happier in a pair and the introduction of another male can cause fighting.
- We will consider a neutered male to live with a female(s).

Guinea Pig in Hot and Cold Weather

Warm weather

- Make sure that there is plenty of shady space for the Guinea Pigs
- You could consider setting up a circulating fan that will breeze past without blowing directly on them
- You can put down a damp towel for them to lay and cover the hutch with one
- Get cool pads for them to lay on (beware they don't chew them)
- Place a ceramic tile or Marble Square in the cage
- Fill bottles with water and freeze them, alternately freezer ice blocks (Put them in some sort of cover to avoid ice burns)

Cold weather

- Move the hutch into a shed or garage (Make sure hutch is raised off the floor)
- Put in blankets or fleeces for them to snuggle into or to line the floor with some cheap carpet samples for them to sit on (make sure the edges aren't fraying)
- Get a cardboard box, close all 4 sides and cut a hole big enough for your rabbits to get through, and fill the box with hay.



- Buy them a 'Snugglesafe Heatpad'. You warm it up in the microwave and it releases heat for up to 8 hours
- Cover their hutch over with old duvets or tarpaulin

Housing for your Guinea Pigs

Guinea pigs enjoy moving in and out of small spaces such as igloos and tunnels and therefore your accommodation should allow adequate space for these to be placed into.

Living Outside

- Guinea pigs can live outside all year providing they have the right accommodation
- They need a draught free area and consideration should be given to the winter months for additional shelter i.e. moving their accommodation into a garage or shed area and giving additional bedding (hay) to keep them warm, duvets can also be used to help insulate their home.
- **Please remember** that your guinea pigs will acclimatize to the outside elements and therefore they should not be taken into particularly warm areas of your house '*for a warm up*' and then returned back out to the cold
 - this can cause problems as they struggle to adjust to the different temperatures and can for example **cause chest infections** and in some cases **can be fatal**.
- During the summer months they **must be**
 - Shaded from direct sunlight
 - Never shut in their hutches without proper ventilation and protection from the sun as this **can prove fatal**.

Required Accommodation equal to 15-16 sq.ft.

The following size requirements are based on two guinea pigs living together:

- They must have at least a **4ft x 2ft (122cm x 61cm)** hutch for their shelter / bedding area with an attached run of **4ft x 2ft (122cms x 61cms)**



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- We will consider separate runs and if you are using a separate run then your hutch shelter / bedding area must be equal to 15 – 16 sq.ft. for example:- upstairs downstairs
- double hutch of **4ft x 2ft (122cms x 61cms)**. A separate run measuring **3ft x 4ft (91cms x 122cms)**. **You will also need to provide shelter within this run for protection ie: a small house with flooring.**
- **Please see our suggestions below for other types of accommodation.**
 - Although many guinea pigs will happily run up and down ladders there are some that may refuse and these would require low level accommodation so that they are not confined to one area only.
 - They can be frightened of heights and also accidents can occur on ladders which are too steep. This will depend entirely on the individual guinea pig and may not be determined until after you adopt
- The accommodation will need to be fox proof ensuring that it has strong mesh and not chicken wire and be sturdy enough that it cannot be knocked over.
- There are many types of accommodation on the market and we can advise you of suppliers by contacting the Centre.
- Guinea pigs should not be allowed to run loose in the garden unattended.

Group of Guinea Pigs

For groups (larger than 2) the accommodation size would need to be increased to **18-20sq.ft.**

- We will advise you of the requirements based on how many are living together on an individual basis
- Generally an additional foot for each additional guinea pig is required. (e.g. a **5ft x 2ft (152cms x 61cms)** hutch with attached run for 3 guinea pigs and so on)
- Consideration would also need to be given to the size of the run as your group increases.



Living Inside

We are happy to rehome guinea pigs to live inside where they can live quite happily in the right accommodation.

The following size requirements are based on pairs only living together for groups the accommodation size would need to be increased **a minimum area of 15-16 sq.ft.**

- Plastic bottom cages are acceptable for this with access to a run which can be adjoined, they come in varying sizes but the overall space should be equivalent to **15-16 sq.ft. ie: minimum 5ft x 3ft (152cms x 91 cms)**
- **Please see our suggestions below for other types of accommodation.**
- You will need to consider any other pets that you may have in the house, such as cats and you would need to ensure that your guinea pigs are protected from them ie: not an open top which they can jump into.
- If you have access to a garden then please consider a run for them to enjoy the sunshine and grass which is very nutritious for them during the summer months, however, **please ensure they are**
 - Shaded from direct sunlight
 - Never shut in their hutches without proper ventilation and protection from the sun as this **can prove fatal.**
- If you do not have access to a garden you can always pick them some grass just avoiding grass verges on busy roads or any area which may have been subject to weed killer.

We can give you ideas on indoor housing either when you visit the Centre or please contact us beforehand.



SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION



Blossom hutch pets at home



Pets corner great and small single guinea pig hutch with great and small fun run



Bluebell hideaway pets at home (Separate run required)



Foxglove hutch pets at home (Separate run required)



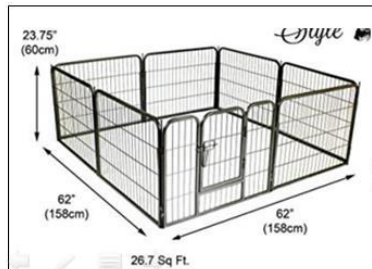
Double guinea pig hutch by Pets Corner (Separate run required)



Pets corner hutch and apex run with run around tunnel connection



Bedgebury Hutch With Adjoining Run (buttercup farm)



Amazon heavy duty play pen

Indoor ideas



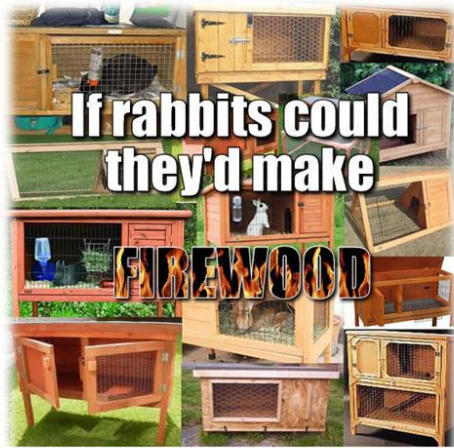
Manor pet housing guinea pig enclosure. Different design available



C&C grid cage with loft



Not suitable



A Hutch is NOT Enough

Best Rabbits



Bonding

Whether you only have one guinea pig that has always lived alone or perhaps your guinea pig has lost their friend, then please consider adopting and we can carry out the bonding for you here at the Centre.

- Females generally bond quite quickly without any problems and therefore after an initial meeting they should be able to come home with you the same day.
- Males tend to need more time to adapt to one another and therefore they would need to stay with us at the centre for 4-5 days so that we can observe them and be confident that they are showing all the signs of being happy together before coming home. The same would apply to a neutered male and female.
- We insist that all bonding is carried out at the Centre and there are no exceptions to this.



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- Whilst your guinea pigs are being bonded you will need to ensure, if the accommodation is not new, that it is completely disinfected with animal friendly disinfectant, this is to neutralize all the scent of your existing guinea pig. This is extremely important as any existing scent of an existing or any other guinea pig can upset the bond.
- Once they are bonded and ready to go home we will give you easy instructions to follow in the coming days.

Diet

- They should always have good quality hay for them to eat 24 hours a day
- Many people will also choose hay for bedding to keep them warm and this must be checked daily and any bedding that is wet or soiled should be removed and replaced with fresh hay.
- As guinea pigs teeth are constantly growing hay and/or grass is essential for them to grind on to prevent their teeth from overgrowing.
- If they have access to the outside then there is no substitute for good grass in the summer months and they love it. Be careful not to give them too much at once if they have not been used to eating this regularly as this could cause an upset stomach. Fresh fruit and vegetables should be given each day. The darker the green the more goodness it will contain for them so avoid things such as lettuce and white cabbage and ensure that they have a variety. Other foods to avoid are onions, potatoes and avocado. Not too many apples as some guinea pigs are prone to swelling of the mouth from these. A small amount of carrot should only be given as a treat as they contain a lot of sugar
- Good examples include: green or red pepper, broccoli, kale, spinach, cucumber, parsley, celery and tomatoes. Fruit only to be given as a treat on the odd occasion. Many other vegetables can be given but always check before feeding.
- They will need fresh water each day and if using a water bottle please check that the nozzle is clean and not stopping the water from coming through.
- Feed good quality dried food for guinea pigs this will have added Vitamin C that guinea pigs need as they are unable to produce this naturally themselves. The whole pellets are much better than the muesli type food and will stop them from selective eating all the bits that taste good and leaving the bits that may have added goodness for them.



Health Checks

- Always check their food and water intake which should remain more or less the same each day.
- Check they have passed urine and their droppings look the same you will get to know any difference just be cleaning each day. If your guinea pig has diarrhoea then they will need to see a vet as soon as possible.
- Guinea pigs can be very clever at disguising illness so handling them each day to get to know them will help you identify if anything is wrong.
- Always check underneath make sure they are clean and dry and everything looks normal.
- Run your hands over their bodies checking for any lumps or bumps.
- Check their teeth are (a) the right shape and no changes and (b) they are not too long.
- Check their nails and make sure that they are not too long. When they are young their nails are quite straight but as they get older they will begin to curl. Although outdoor activities, even on the grass, will help keep their nails trim you will probably need to clip them from time to time.
- Their eyes should be bright and clear.
- Grooming will help keep their coats in tip top condition and help you check that their coat is clean and no signs of any dandruff or mites which would mean a trip to the vet for treatment.
- Check that their ears are nice and clean and not mucky at all.
- One of our staff here at the Centre will always be happy to show you how to health check your guinea pig.
- If you are ever worried about your guinea pig and they are showing signs of being ill then you should contact your vet immediately.