

GUINEA PIG ADOPTION GUIDE

Finding your new companions

Step 1: Submit your application form (available on our website)

We will consider your application and contact you if we need a few more details or to invite you to Raystede for a chat. If you do not hear from us, we have everything we need for now, thank you.

We will need to see photos and measurements of your guinea pigs' accommodation (email smallanimals1@raystede.org). If you are looking to adopt a companion for your existing male guinea pig, please send proof of neutering too.

Step 2: Wait for the magic to happen

Once you have registered with us, please keep an eye on our website for new arrivals and contact us if you feel someone might suit your home.

When animals arrive at Raystede, we get to know them through behaviour and medical assessments. Our expert animal care teams carefully use this information alongside your application to see if the match could be a success. Finding the perfect pet can take time. Please be patient; they will be worth the wait.

Step 3: Visit Raystede

We will invite you to Raystede as soon as we have found any potential matches for your home. We will discuss the animals' background, health and behaviour. This sometimes requires a few visits. You will need to provide photo ID, proof of address, and if applicable, written landlord permission to have a pet in your property.

Step 4: Take your new pet home

Once we have found your perfect partner, we will book an adoption appointment; our Rehoming Team will talk you through caring for your pet. Your adoption fee will help us continue our work to give animals a better life.

Rehoming criteria

Guinea pigs are rehomed in pairs or small groups

Guinea pigs are social animals and naturally live in groups. Therefore, we rehome guinea pigs in pairs. We only rehome single guinea pigs as a companion for an existing guinea pig – Raystede provide a bonding service which we can discuss. Males must be neutered before rehoming.

A pair of guinea pigs need a hutch of at least 150 x 45 x 45cm / 5' x 18" x 18"

Large tubes and boxes should be provided for hiding and exploring. For a group of guinea pigs, it will be necessary to provide a larger hutch and outside run. Please note that male guinea pigs require more space.

Guinea pigs need daily access to a secure enclosure of at least 180 x 90cm / 6 x 3ft

During the day, it is important that they have access to part of the garden, ideally an enclosure / run with shade and weatherproof box for shelter. The run should have a mesh lid to prevent access by cats or predators.

Peace of mind when adopting

- All guinea pigs are health checked by a vet
- Male guinea pigs are neutered

You will also receive:

- A comprehensive adoption pack and appointment with our Rehoming Team to ensure you have everything you need to care for your new guinea pigs
- Follow-up advice from our expert Small Animals Team

Thank you for your adoption fee, which will help to cover some of our costs:

- Adoption fee: £20 each
- Bonding fee, if applicable: £20

The average daily cost of care for all small animals at Raystede is in excess of £300.

Guinea pig care

Owning and caring for guinea pigs is great fun and very rewarding, but it is a big responsibility and a long-term commitment. Did you know guinea pigs can live on average 5 – 7 years?

Getting your guinea pigs' diet and environment correct is the best way of ensuring a long and healthy life. Here are some guidelines for offering your guinea pigs the best care:

- **Guinea pigs are sociable animals and need to live in pairs or small groups.** Generally, males (boars) do not live together easily, but females (sows) live quite happily in pairs or groups. A single neutered male can live with a sow or group of sows.
- **Guinea pigs are not as hardy as rabbits** and it is recommended that during the winter months (November to April) they are brought in from the garden and kept in a shed with windows or a conservatory; somewhere that is free from draughts, damp or frost. The indoor accommodation must be well ventilated.
- **As prey animals, guinea pigs are naturally adapted to be fearful of predator, loud noises and sudden movements.** During handling, any guinea pig can become stressed and will scratch and bite. They like having places to hide, so provide lots of large plastic tubes and cardboard boxes with holes for hiding in.
- **Check your guinea pig for signs of injury or illness every day and seek veterinary advice if necessary.**
 - Check teeth and nails are not becoming overgrown.
 - Check coat and skin for signs of mites, bald patches, sores or lumps.
 - Long haired varieties require regular grooming and trimming around their rear ends.
- **Provide plenty of clean, warm hay as bedding,** which can also be eaten to aid dental health. Wood shavings should be avoided as chemicals in the shavings can be the cause of fungal skin problems.
- **Guinea pigs require regular exercise,** so it is essential to provide an enclosed run indoors or outdoors.

Diet

Guinea pig's teeth grow continuously throughout their life. The teeth need to be worn down every day by eating grass and hay. Failures to eat the right diet with quickly result in serious dental disease. Also, guinea pigs are like humans in that they cannot produce their own vitamin C. Lack of vitamin C will result in poor generally health and condition.

The diet should include:

- **Hay:** the best diet consists almost entirely of good quality hay and dried grass forages, available at all times. They love to graze and will keep their heads down all day, mowing as they go.
- **Fresh water,** available at all times. This should be in a bowl to allow natural drinking.
- **Complimentary feeds:** this should be in pellet form with balanced nutrients, rather than a muesli mix, to prevent selective feeding.
- **Fresh fruits / vegetables and forages:** leafy herbs, spring greens, curly kale, chard, broccoli, celery, parsley, coriander, carrots (small quantities) and outer leaves. Small quantities of fruits, e.g. apples, pears, banana, melon and grapes. Clean, dry grass, dandelions, bramble, hazel sticks and fruit wood.
- **Treats:** If treats are given avoid commercial treats which are high in sugars.