



Guinea pig adoption – information sheet

Thank you for considering adopting an animal from Marias Animal Shelter. We believe every animal should have a happy, comfortable, and safe home where all their welfare needs are met.

Unfortunately, outdated information and incorrect assumptions surrounding the care of small animals is extremely common, which is why so many animals come to us. We have created this sheet to provide all the relevant information you need to consider before rehoming from us.

When we rehome animals, our goal is to find them the most suitable environment in which they can thrive, not simply survive. We assess each potential adopter and their set up to ensure adopted animals will be taken care of properly to prevent any future issues, for pet or owner.

Why are our standards in place?

Rescue centres are often seen to have high standards that must be met to adopt an animal. These standards may differ from what some people believe to be suitable, however, our standards are in place to ensure that the animals we rehome live happy and healthy lives.

We have over 20 years' experience rescuing, rehoming, and caring for small animals. We work closely with vets and rodentologists, constantly updating our knowledge in line with best practice and academic research.

Please note that knowledge and advice on animal care and welfare is constantly changing. The advice and recommendations we provide are carefully researched and reviewed regularly. Staying up to date with the latest information is crucial to providing the best animal care. **Please remember, simply having owned an animal in the past may not necessarily mean you have all the up-to-date information you need for current or future pets.**

Do you adopt to homes with children?

Yes. However, guinea pigs are not children's pets. An animal is not a child's responsibility; the whole family should be providing a lifetime home. Children can get involved, but the animal should not be for them. If you do have children, you must ensure that the animal receives thoughtful, calm, and gentle interaction; older children are typically more suited to this. We encourage interaction with the guinea pig in their own environment or being supervised and assisted as the guinea pig sits on someone's lap and enjoys a food reward. Please note, we may ask the age of your children and provide further advice.

Wanting to adopt from us?

1. Read this information sheet carefully!

Please take care to check this information sheet before asking us questions, although we are happy to advise and answer questions, many of the answers can be found on this sheet.

2. Follow the instructions on the bottom of this information sheet. Thank you.

Housing details

Minimum housing requirements: 24hr access to a 5ft x 2ft area for a pair of guinea pigs.

Ideally, guinea pigs should have access to additional space through a permanently attached run or exercise area. The bigger the enclosure the better.

We are aware that housing can differ in shape or design. We review all housing photographs before adoption and may provide recommendations as necessary so if you are unsure, please get in touch. The most important consideration for us is that your pets have ample space and stimulation.



We advise that guinea pig accommodation is all on one level with no ramps as these can cause serious or fatal injuries, and guinea pigs often show reluctance to use them. Consequently, double tier hutches tend to be unsuitable for guinea pigs. If a ramp must be used it should be as shallow as possible, have guarded sides and some form of grip.

If you intend to keep pigs outside, we recommend attaching a large run to the sheltered bedroom/hutch, to create one larger enclosure. By doing this, your pets have more



space, get more beneficial exercise, and can use the area 24/7. This is important as they are most active during dawn and dusk, but also short intervals throughout the day. Creating one larger enclosure also reduces the need for stressful daily handling.

If you must use a separate exercise area to move them into during the day, care must be paid to the temperature and weather the animals are exposed to. Don't leave your pigs exposed to wet cold grass or constant direct sunlight. Provide hides/housing that offer shelter and protection, and ensure security from predators like cats, dogs, and birds.



Guinea pigs can live indoors or outdoors, however, **they cannot tolerate a sudden temperature change of 10°C or more.** Consider any temperature change carefully and acclimatise them gradually. Do not put pigs outside during the day in winter bringing them inside with heating overnight - leave them in one environment or the other so they can regulate their temperature more easily.

Outdoor housing should be well ventilated, naturally lit and offer shelter from the elements with waterproofed areas. Pigs should have an enclosed bedded area that's protected from the weather, damp and draughts. Raising housing off the floor slightly can help reduce damp issues.

If possible, offer choice with some of the enclosure being in the sun and some in the shade. If access to fresh grass is possible, your guinea pigs will enjoy it!

Make sure your enclosure is secure from predators (cats, dogs, birds, rats, stoats etc). We recommend your housing be fully covered (e.g. with mesh or wood etc) on all exposed sides, while allowing ventilation. Small wendy houses with a run attached often make fantastic enclosures.

Don't forget your pets will be exposed to the changing seasons, so bedding and shelter needs to be adjusted accordingly.

In very cold conditions we recommend moving accommodation to a sheltered area such as a naturally lit car-free garage, shed or similar. In hot conditions, ensure the accommodation is not in direct sunlight and provide shade wherever possible using umbrellas, sheets or similar, but do not prevent air flow.



Indoor housing can consist of a run, pen or large cage. We use C&C cages at the shelter (see links below) as they are affordable and hygienic.

Consider the experience your guinea pig will have indoors; loud noises and sudden movements tend to be very scary and stressful! Avoid housing pigs directly under windows or near radiators due to the temperature fluctuations. Guinea pigs must not be exposed to cooking fumes, perfumes,



essential oils, aerosols, or similar as these can be toxic. Being prey animals, pigs should not be approached by or housed near dogs/cats as this can be extremely stressful. Keep other caged animals housed in a separate room. **Ensure electrical wiring and house plants are always out of reach and do not place pigs near speakers, TV's, computers or similar as they have sensitive hearing!**



Furniture: make sure to provide lots of hiding places. **Guinea pigs need a minimum of one separate place to hide per pig to prevent fights**, ideally more to allow extra choice. We do not recommend the use of enclosed plastic houses as condensation from these can result in fungal related health problems.

Guinea pigs love soft beds and fleece lined houses which can be washed easily when soiled.



Bedding: We recommend a newspaper base with a layer of hay on top. For outdoor/colder environments fill all bedroom areas with more hay to bury in. For indoor/heated environments we recommend soft fabric beds and hides on fleece lining or towels, or a newspaper-hay combination.

We ask that you use the bedding outlined above, or a similar alternative. Unfortunately, we are unable to rehome if sawdust or wood shavings will be used as these can cause severe skin, foot, and respiratory irritation.

Companionship:

Guinea pigs can live 5-8 years and **they must live in pairs or groups of the same species as they are a social animal.** The best pairing is a neutered male and female, or a group consisting of one neutered male to multiple neutered females. We can advise on bonding if needed.



Guinea pigs must not be housed with rabbits, they have very different behaviours and diets, they cannot communicate with each other and rabbits can seriously injure or kill guinea pigs. Rabbits can also pass serious diseases to pigs.

Diet: should be 85% hay and grass, 10% fresh food, and 5% nugget style dry food.

GUINEA PIG FOOD PYRAMID



Guinea pigs must have constant access to fresh eating hay to keep teeth and guts healthy. Keep hay off the floor by providing it in a bowl, rack (ensure head/legs cannot get trapped) or similar - once hay is old or soiled it will not be eaten. Guinea pigs should not be fed muesli as this encourages selective feeding and can lead to obesity and dental disease.

A small handful of daily fresh food should include leafy greens, herbs and vegetables. Fruit and root veg should be fed very occasionally as it is high in sugar. Guinea pigs cannot make their own Vitamin C, so fresh food is essential to their diet. We don't recommend commercial Vitamin C supplements; these are

unnecessary if a proper diet is provided. Never feed lawn mower clippings, these can be fatal.

We strongly recommend providing both a water bowl and water bottle; bowls are more natural, accessible, and preferred by most small animals. However, they can become soiled, tip over or empty quickly, hence the need to provide a backup bottle. A non-tip design or ceramic bowl is best.

Handling: guinea pigs are prey animals, the only time they would be picked up in the wild is when they are going to be eaten so being handled can be very stressful. Any loud noises or sudden movements will scare your pet. **We recommend interacting with your pet on their level** without the need for picking up, this way your pet will learn to trust you and your interactions will be much more positive. Guinea pigs do not typically enjoy being cuddled; they prefer to have their feet on the floor!



If you do have to pick up your animal support their weight fully, having one hand supporting the rump and the other around the chest, avoid sneaking up on your pet or chasing them around a large area. Encourage them into a corner or smaller area, lightly cover their face with your hand, then pick up.



Never use a harness and lead to take small animals for a walk. This is highly stressful for a prey animal. Likewise exercise balls for pigs are unsuitable.

Behaviour: keep pigs stimulated by providing toys and opportunities to explore. Cardboard boxes, toilet roll tubes etc make great accessories to nibble, hide food in or make beds from. Swapping items in and out or adding new ones on a regular basis keeps up interest and stimulation. Hiding food, forage or herbs among hay is also great for keeping pigs busy.

What to do next - adoption instructions



Please note: We charge an adoption donation of £35 per guinea pig. We are a registered charity, and this fee does not cover our costs; any additional donations are very gratefully received. Males are typically neutered, and all our animals receive regular health checks while in our care.

Thank you for adopting from us.

Steps to adopt:

Due to Covid-19 restrictions we are unable to conduct our usual home visits, so please read our requirements above carefully.

1. Read this information sheet thoroughly! Please take care to check this information sheet before asking us questions, we are more than happy to advise but most answers can be found on here.
2. Send us a picture of your housing and set up so that we can see the size, design, and contents. Email these pictures to mariasanimalshelter@hotmail.com. Please note that telling us what you intend to provide is not adequate; we must see a picture of your existing set up.
3. We will reply to your email as soon as we have reviewed your housing and set up. Please note that due to the busy demands of our work it may take up to several days for us to respond.
4. We may provide some recommendations or suggest adjustments to your housing before we rehome to you. Please do not think us rude, the only reason we do this is to ensure the best welfare for the animal(s) in question.
5. Visit our website for animals currently available for adoption at www.mariasanimalshelter.com and let us know which individual you are interested in.
6. Arrange a collection appointment with us. We politely ask that your adoption donation is paid prior to collection of your animal(s).

Payment details

We prefer payment via bank transfer if possible.

BACS: Marias Animal Shelter, Lloyds Bank; Sort code: 30-88-22; Account number: 18735760

If this is not possible, we do accept cash payment on collection. We are very grateful for your payment which goes towards the running of the shelter.

Thank you!



Useful Links

Listed below are some useful links, simply click on them to open.

Please remember the minimum size we rehome to is 5x2ft.

Housing:

If you are looking for indoor cages, we recommend:

[C & C Cages](#)

[Kavee Cages](#)

[Soft strawberry beds – a piggie favourite!](#)

If you are looking for outdoor housing, we recommend a Chartwells hutch.

Ideally 6ft with run permanently attached (5ft accepted).

Can be found at the following websites (not an exhaustive list):

[Home and Roost](#), [Scratch and Newton](#), [Rabbit hutch world](#), [Amazon](#)

Health:

We recommend weighing weekly. Weight loss can be the first sign of an underlying health condition:

[Guinea pig body size/condition chart](#)

Poop can tell you a lot about your piggie, keep an eye on it daily! [Poop guide](#)

Gut stasis is an emergency: [Oxbow Animal Health website](#), [Pet Place website](#)

[Signs of illness – Guinea Lynx](#)

[Common health issues – Guinea Piggles](#)

[Guinea pig diseases – MSD Veterinary Manual](#)

Note: if you suspect your pig is ill, always seek veterinary attention urgently.

Further care and behaviour info:

[Care advice on our website](#)

[Handling – Guinea Lynx](#)

[Guinea pig noises explained - Burgess](#)

[Enrichment and toys – Guinea Piggles](#)

Our Services

Can't find good quality hay? We sell two types of quality palatable eating hay:

Nature's Own 5-a-day hay, £3 per 1kg bag.

Sweet Green hay, £5 per 3.5kg bag.

Don't have a carrier? Don't worry, we sell them for £10. Simply enquire with us to arrange.

Worried about nail clipping, bathing or grooming? We offer: Nail trimming for £15 per animal. Bathing £30 per pig, and grooming e.g., haircuts, removing small matts etc at £15 per 15 minutes.

Simply book an appointment and bring your pigs to us.

Going away? We offer a boarding service. Board your animals with us for £12 night per enclosure (£15 for trios). Please enquire as soon as possible with the dates you are looking for.

