

Adopting a Guinea Pig? This is what they need

(RSPCA advice)

- ❖ Secure accommodation large enough for all to exercise and high enough to stand up fully on their back legs.
- ❖ A large exercise area and secure shelter to rest, feel safe and protected from predators, extremes of weather/temperature. Ensure all areas are well ventilated/dry/draught-free. Living in draughty/damp/poorly ventilated/dirty environments can cause suffering/illness.
- ❖ Regular exercise. Ideally give free access to the exercise area with pipes/shelters to encourage exercising. They are active animals needing opportunities to run/stand upright on their back legs and stretch out when lying down.
- ❖ Protecting from draughts/temperature extremes. They are sensitive to temperature changes. Temperatures above 26°C can cause heat stroke; below 15°C can cause them to become chilled.
- ❖ Outdoor accommodation sheltered from direct sun/prevaling wind direction. In temperatures below 15°C, they should be housed indoors. Otherwise, they need sufficient bedding throughout the whole enclosure to keep warm.
- ❖ Indoor accommodation away from direct heat sources e.g. radiators/sunny windows, and draughts. Room temperatures of 17-20°C are ideal. Some areas of centrally heated houses may get too hot so locate their accommodation carefully.
- ❖ Keeping in quiet/calm/safe areas away from dogs/cats/ferrets and other pets they may see as threats.
- ❖ Enough warm bedding. Bedding should be safe to eat, e.g. dust-free hay. Do not use softwood products, e.g. pine - these can cause illness.
- ❖ Do not give guinea pigs nesting materials that separate into thin strands, e.g. cotton wool or similar 'fluffy' bedding products. They pose a serious risk to their health and welfare due to the possibility of entanglement or ingestion.
- ❖ Untreated wooden toys to chew, e.g. fruit tree/willow sticks. Avoid plastic toys as they may harm them if chewed/swallowed. They are intelligent and enjoy gnawing/chewing/exploring by moving to different areas through tunnels.
- ❖ Regularly cleaned accommodation.
- ❖ Caring for by a responsible person when you are away to meet all their welfare needs within their familiar home. If boarding, keep grouped guinea pigs together and take familiar items e.g. toys. They prefer routine and can become stressed if housed around lots of noise/activity.