



≡ HOW TO ≡

# Adopt a Guinea Pig

*In celebration of Adopt a Guinea Pig Month*



Although they're small, guinea pigs can be a big responsibility. This guide is designed to help you through the process of how to adopt a guinea pig, & will also provide you with some tips & information to consider throughout the process of meeting your new furry family member.

## • • — Before Adoption: Considerations — • •

- ♦ **Spend time with guinea pigs before bringing one home** or purchasing any of their necessities. Will they be a good fit for your lifestyle?
- ♦ **Guinea pig bills can add up.** Just like any pet, guinea pigs have necessities. Hay, an age-appropriate food, appropriate veggies, enrichment (treats & chews), bedding, an appropriate habitat & play pen, & regular veterinary care are all essential to keeping your new friend happy & healthy.
- ♦ **Guinea pigs should be a family commitment,** not just a child's responsibility. Children sometimes do not have the maturity to understand what the 5-8 year commitment of a guinea pig means, & aren't always perceptive enough to understand when an animal is sick.
- ♦ **Guinea pigs are prey animals.** They will instinctively run from loud sounds & fast movements, & will hide when they're scared. They also mask illness when they're sick; if you see them acting sick, they have likely been ill for several days. An immediate vet visit is recommended.
- ♦ **Guinea pigs are social animals** & are usually happiest with a friend of the same sex. Regardless of sex, it can take rescues time to pair up guinea pigs. It is not recommended to pair guinea pigs without experience or a rescue's advice.
- ♦ **Look up cavy-savvy veterinarians** in your area so you know who to go to before problems arise. Guinea pigs need an exotic veterinarian, as they are very different from dogs & cats.
- ♦ **Have a family member or friend who will take your animal's needs seriously** if you need to go out of town. Speak with them before adopting to ensure they are open to pet-sitting as needed.
- ♦ **Make sure no plants or electrical cords are ever around enclosures** or play pens, as these are dangerous for guinea pigs & other animals who have an instinct to chew.
- ♦ Some animals might not be considered "special needs" when you adopt them, but **over time they might develop special needs.** It's best to prepare for this reality so your pet can continue living a meaningful, healthy life, regardless of what the future brings.



## ◀ — Where to Start — ▶

- ♦ **Google search** "guinea pig rescue near [your town/city]"
- ♦ **Petfinder** is a great resource to find out about rescues in your area, & can give you an opportunity to learn about individual animals before contacting the rescue.
- ♦ **Local or regional humane societies** often take in surrendered small animals. While some humane societies might not have as many resources to direct toward small animals, they can still help you find a guinea pig who needs a good home.

### ≡ TIP: ≡

*If there aren't any guinea pigs up for adoption currently, wait a week & try searching again. According to petfinder, on average over 10,000 homeless guinea pigs are listed on their website each year.*

## Questions to Ask the Rescue:

1. Does this animal have any special needs or particular health issues? What was their life like before coming to the rescue?
2. What are this guinea pig's likes, dislikes, & general personality? Are they shy or outgoing, & do they like being handled?
3. What vet does this animal go to for care?
4. What cage, food, hay, & other products does the rescue recommend?
5. Can you take a handful of pellets & hay from the rescue so you can mix old & new food together to avoid gut upset?\*

\*it's courteous to offer the rescue a small monetary donation in addition to adoption fees to make up for the small amount of product you are taking home.

## TIP:

*Some rescues are run differently than others. Often rescues are run 100% by volunteers who donate their efforts & finances to the organization. Make sure to contact the rescue before visiting, as they possibly have limited hours or might have paperwork you need to fill out before meeting the animals in their care.*

## Precaution

Beware of animal "flippers." These are individuals who take in animals, either by stealing them or finding them for free, only to turn around & sell them. "Flippers" will generally not have the animal's best interest in mind & likely know very little about the animal's personality, health history,

or individual needs; their goal is to make a quick sale. If you ask questions about the animal that they can't seem to answer, or if you're feeling pressured into taking a pet home without having time to meet the animal or to think about it, you may want to look for alternatives.

## After Adoption: Welcome Home!

- ♦ **Set up the enclosure before bringing your new family members home.** This will allow them to settle in right away.
- ♦ **Try to avoid touching or picking up your new family member for a few days** unless they appear to want attention. Being in a

different place with new sounds & smells can be frightening, & the guinea pig will need time to adjust to new surroundings.

- ♦ **Regularly set aside at least an hour a day** to spend time with your furry family member. This can include hand feeding them hay or fortified food, interacting with them through enrichment, or simply sitting by their enclosure while reading or completing a quiet task.



☆☆☆ *To your new family members, you are the biggest part of the world that they know. Make sure the world they experience is happy & healthy!*

*For more information about guinea pig nutrition & behavior, visit [www.oxbowanimalhealth.com](http://www.oxbowanimalhealth.com).*