



Preparing for and Acquiring your Guinea Pigs

If you have considered all of the points mentioned in the “Are Guineaas for Me?” Factsheet and you still feel you are ready to give a pair of guineas a great, loving, forever home, it's time to move onto the next step - preparing for, and then acquiring, your guineas.

Preparing for Piggies

You can't just go out, buy a guinea pig and then come home when you don't have anything ready for it – or rather, if you've been paying attention, them. As an initial startup, you should aim to set aside an absolute minimum of £300 to buy everything necessary for the first month or so your guinea pigs are with you. Possibly much more, as some costs vary massively depending on certain choices you make.

Luckily much of this initial expense will last across the guinea pigs' lifetimes, assuming they don't need a new cage at any point, for example, so even though it seems costly at first, when you consider some of your purchases are going to last 5, 7, even 10 years, it feels a lot more reasonable. There are also the regular costs you have to account for, like food, which of course start from the beginning too.

Your initial shopping list should look something like this:

- A large cage (or the materials to build a large cage);
- Suitable bedding, at least three cages worth, and cleaning supplies;
- Appropriate accessories (bowls, water bottles, tunnels, hideys, toys);
- A high quality grass hay;
- A high quality dried food, ideally nuggets/pellets;
- Fresh fruits and veggies;
- A large run or enclosure for exercise time (or anything necessary to piggy-proof a room for them to run free in);
- A suitable travel carrier;
- Some funds to put into a savings account which you can add to over time and access to pay for vet bills.

Of course this price guide is merely based on averages; the actual price may be much higher or much lower.

Aim to have all your supplies ready, and ideally the basic setup already complete at home, by the time you go looking for the guinea pigs themselves. Most rescues require a home check prior to permitting the adoption of any animals to you; it saves a lot of time and effort if you have already done plenty of research into what guinea pigs need, and acquired everything necessary. It also means that when you bring your guinea pigs home, you don't



need to prolong stress by holding them in a carrier while you set the cage up. You can bring them home and let them settle into their new surroundings immediately, with minimal stress.

Acquiring your Guinea Pigs from Rescues

There are guinea pig rescues and animal shelters sited in most major countries in the world. Some rescues that take in and rehome guinea pigs are large public organisations, while many more may be individual rescuers, or private rehomingers. Many unwanted guinea pigs are advertised on animal rehoming websites. Often the best place to find out which rescues are currently rehoming, and where they are, by joining a guinea pig forum in your country and starting your research by reading and asking questions direct to the people most likely to know the answers.

While you can sometimes reserve your chosen piggies before adoption, most rescues do require a home check prior to allowing the piggies to go home with you. This home check is nothing to worry about; if the rescue or shelter does home checks, then it does them for everyone who wishes to adopt from them, it is nothing personal. A home check will typically last a very short time, usually 10-20 minutes at most. The home checker will be looking to see that your plans for the guinea pigs meet with the rescue's rules and guidelines. The main points of a home check tend to be:

- Ensuring the cage/hutch meets their minimum size requirements and is filled with a safe, warm bedding and suitable accessories;
- Ensuring the cage/hutch is located in a safe, secure area and is protected from any other animals or predators, and out of the elements;
- Checking that you understand the basic needs of guinea pigs;
- Checking that any guineas you adopt from them will not be bred from.

Some rescues will not rehome to anyone who does not have an outdoor enclosure (or run) for exercise and grazing time, in which case the home checker will also make sure the run meets their size and safety guidelines.

Reputable rescue centres will never adopt animals out to anyone under the age of 18. If the guinea pigs are going to be in a family home, the rescue will hold the parents responsible for the guinea pigs' setup and lifetime care, and all piggies will be signed over to the parents, not to any minors.

Once the home check has been successfully completed, the rescue will confirm that you are ready to take on your chosen guinea pigs and arrange a date for you to collect them.

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