



Bonding Guinea Pigs: How we can help

At the branch we advocate introducing guinea pigs in a manner that prioritises their sensitive natures (see *Techniques to Avoid* below). We believe the best way to introduce guinea pigs is to have them live side-by-side in your own home before making any introductions and then taking your time with bonding. So if you are looking for a companion for your existing guinea pig/s then here is how we can help you find their perfect match!

1. **You can take home one of our guinea pigs on a 'foster' basis for up to four weeks so you can see if they will be compatible with one another.** This arrangement is subject to a successful home visit, the signing of a fostering agreement and on the understanding that you care for our guinea pig in line with our branch policy and follow our bonding guide.
2. By fostering rather than adopting it means that if the bonding does not work out then the guinea pig/s can be returned without any quibble.
3. **We can loan equipment** to enable guinea pigs to live side by side initially. If they are indoor guinea pigs we have an indoor cage/pen we can loan to you if needed (subject to availability). For outdoor guinea pigs for purely practical reasons we are unable to lend hutches/outdoor runs so this is something you would have to provide.
4. Our team have many years expertise in regards to guinea pig bonding. **We can offer you in-person support and advice** (if you live in the catchment area) or telephone/email support. We will also provide you with means of contacting us 7 days a week, including out of office hours.

Brief summary of bonding process

(For full details see ['Adopter's Guide: How to Bond Guinea Pigs'](#))

1. The **guinea pigs live, ideally, side by side with one another for 5-7 days before any introductions** are made. This is to allow the RSPCA guinea pig/s time to adjust to their new surroundings and for the owned guinea pig/s to adjust to the presence of a new arrival/s and the perceived 'threat' of them in their territory. NB this timescale can vary according to the needs of the individual guinea pigs.
2. The **next two weeks is dating time.** The time is right to attempt the first date when you are seeing positive signs between them (see ['Adopter's Guide: How to Bond Guinea Pigs'](#)). You will normally know within the first two to three sessions whether it is worthwhile proceeding any further. We usually call you around this time to see how things are progressing but welcome contact from you at any time. NB this timescale can vary according to the needs of the individual guinea pigs.

3. The **fourth week is to consolidate the relationship** and in most cases you know by now whether the guinea pigs are going to be compatible. Usually by the fourth week guinea pigs are living together but each attempted bonding can be different, we are on hand to offer expertise guidance and advice, so please stay in touch! As we've said before, this timescale can vary according to the needs of the individual guinea pigs. No one bonding is ever quite the same!

Techniques to avoid

- **Introducing unfamiliar guinea pigs needs to be done very carefully and usually takes a minimum of two weeks.** Injury and severe stress can be caused if guinea pigs are introduced poorly or attempts are made to introduce incompatible guinea pigs. Additionally poor introductions can lead to guinea pigs creating negative associations about other guinea pigs and so may not bond with any other guinea pig/s in the future.
- Methods such as 'speed dating' can be highly stressful for guinea pigs and could result in serious injury and is likely to be unsuccessful in forming a long-term compatible bonding. This is because transporting guinea pigs can in itself be a cause of stress for a guinea pig/s, but then being introduced to another guinea pig/s without a prior period of becoming familiar with the sight and smell of one another can result in an incompatible pairing, stress related illness and/or injury through fighting.
- The method known as 'stressing' where guinea pigs are placed into a frightening situation (such as a car journey, pet carrier together or the bath tub) relies on fear to force the guinea pigs to tolerate each other and 'pair up'. This method can also lead to incompatible bonding, stress related illness and/or injury through fighting.



Ultimately we want happy, compatible guinea pigs so our methods are based on a gentle and sensitive approach to help them find a friend.

**To discuss guinea pig bonding don't hesitate to contact us
on 0161 737 6600**