



Vegas Friends of Guinea Pig Rescue

Foster Handbook & Guide

Introduction:

Welcome to the VFGPR family! Thank you for taking a big step and deciding to foster guinea pigs in need of loving homes. This rescue is foster-based, so the more fosters we have, the more guinea pigs we can save together!

Fostering is easy! The things required of a foster are:

- Provide daily veggies (list will be provided)
- Handle them regularly and perform health checks (training provided)
- Record a monthly weight
- Take pictures and videos to send to me for their profile!

You are now part of a whole family, and we are here to help you and guide you through this process. We recommend that you join our Facebook Group “Vegas Friends of Guinea Pig Rescue Adopter Support/Community Page.” Whether you are new to guinea pigs, or an expert, we are here for you!

Included in the Foster Set-Up Kit:

- Midwest enclosure (may be a different enclosure if you are taking a large group)
- Pellets and Dish
- Box of Hay and Hay Bag
- Vitamin C
- Multi-vitamin (for seniors)
- Liners and bathmats
- Hidey
- Water Bottle
- Broom and Dustpan
- Scale for weighing
- Medical kit (includes critical care, syringes, bene-bac and other necessary medical supplies)

We will show you how to assemble the enclosure (if necessary) and give you guidance on how and when to feed them. If there are special needs for your foster piggy such as supplements or special bedding, those will be provided as well.

So, I have my piggies! Now what?

Give them a few days to get used to their new environment and to decompress. It is not unusual for the piggies to spend most of their time hiding. They adapt quickly and will get used to the sounds, smells, and routines of your house. The best way to a piggie's heart is through their stomach! Once you give them a day or two to decompress, try offering veggies through the bars of the enclosure to see if they come out and eat it from you. Once they are used to that, try offering it to them from your hand inside the cage. Just ensure that you hold the food/treat at the tips of your fingers, so you don't get a nibble!

Most guinea pigs that come into the rescue have not had any socialization. Some have been neglected, some dumped in the wild, and some have been sitting at the shelter for months. The quickest way for the guinea pigs to get adopted is if they are social!

I recommend holding them for at least 10 minutes a day, each. They will get used to being picked up and accustomed to being held. While most guinea pigs hate to be picked up, most of them actually like being held.

If you are fostering babies, this will take even more time and patience because babies are so squirmy and extra skittish.

What do I feed the guinea pigs?

Each guinea pig gets 1 cup of veggies daily (you provide), 1/8 cup of pellets daily (I provide), half of a vitamin C cookie a day (I provide), and unlimited hay (I provide).

It is important that guinea pigs have access to an unlimited amount of hay. Most fosters will make sure the hay bag is full 1-2 times a day. Do not give the guinea pigs unlimited pellets, just 1/8 cup each (so ¼ cup for two piggies). 80% of their diet should be hay since it keeps their digestion going and wears down their teeth. If you feed them unlimited pellets, they will not eat as much hay.

For veggies, there is a veggie list at the end of this guide on what veggies are safe to feed guinea pigs. If it is not on this list, please do not feed it.

Each guinea pig should get about a cup a day. I usually do a leafy base (romaine, spring mix with NO spinach, red leaf lettuce, green leaf lettuce, kale, dandelion greens). I will also do something high in Vitamin C since guinea pigs do not produce their own vitamin C- so a slice of bell pepper or some cilantro. Then I add something else in. I try to only give fruit and carrots once a week due to the high content of sugar. It is ok to give treats, but sparingly. Pea flakes are good to feed daily, I give about 3-4 flakes each. They go crazy over them. Other treats I will do 1-2 times a week.

What do I do if I need more supplies?

PLEASE do not wait until the last minute! Most items I send via Amazon or Chewy. Because I have so many guinea pigs, it is MUCH cheaper for me to

buy hay by the bale. I am allergic to Timothy hay, so I use orchard for the rescue. If you need Timothy hay let me know! Hay is the only thing that must be delivered by me, so please give me as much notice as you can that you are running out so I can make sure to be able to get some to you!

Typically, at the beginning of the month, I or my foster coordinator will reach out to you by social media or text to see if you need anything ordered. Of course, if you need something before then, just let either one of us know! Most items from Amazon are delivered within 1-3 days.

If there is something else that you feel your piggies may want or need, please reach out! I want them to be happy!

How do I clean the cage?

The cage requires just a quick daily spot clean, sweeping up the hay and poop. If any of the fleece is very wet, it will need to be replaced with fresh fleece. Wetness can cause a condition called Bumblefoot on their feet (similar to athlete's foot).

Once a week you should wash all the fleece. I use fragrance-free laundry soap, a squirt of Dawn Dish soap and, about 1/8 cup of white vinegar. If the fragrance-free does not help with the smell, a lightly scented soap would be fine also, as long as the guinea pig you are fostering does not have a pre-existing respiratory condition.

When you take out all the fleece, you can spray the canvas bottom of the case with a little water and vinegar and wipe it down. If your bottom gets too gross, please let me know and I can order you a new one!

Guinea pigs generally do not need baths. They are very clean animals and secrete a white substance from their eyes that they clean themselves with. If a guinea pig has longer hair, they may need a “butt bath” every once in a while but generally, guinea pigs do not need baths.

How do I handle the Guinea Pig?

Guinea Pigs are prey animals, so they do not like being picked up. Their instinct is to tell them that your hands are a giant bird that is coming to get them as food. The best way to pick them up is to nudge them to a corner in their hidey, then “scoop” them up. The best way is to use one hand behind them so they cannot back up and your other hand to put under their chest area to pick them up.

Once you are holding them, they like to feel secure. Always make sure that their feet are not dangling, either prop them on your arm, chest, or leg. Having a blanket or a cuddle cup is also very useful. The guinea pig will feel safe while “hiding” yet you can pet them and offer treats.

Holding them for at least 10 minutes a day makes all the difference in the world. They will get used to being handled, and you can feed them treats and veggies by hand to bond with them. Guinea pigs like to have their heads and cheeks rubbed. They do not like to have their butts pet. They will oftentimes “grumble” at you when you do that.

What is my part in the Adoption Process?

The adoption process has several steps:

- 1) Fill out the adoption application
- 2) Send a picture of the enclosure they will be living in
- 3) Schedule a Meet and Greet

The Meet and Greet is where the potential adopter can meet the guinea pigs, and that is when I am also interviewing the potential adopter. At the end of the Meet and Greet, most people want to take the guinea pigs home with them. They **MUST** have a carrier; no boxes are allowed.

This is stated on the website in the adoption process, and I also tell people that when I schedule the Meet and Greet.

There are several ways the Meet and Greet can occur:

- 1) I can pick up your foster and have the Meet and Greet at my house. This is typically done if there is bonding between your foster and another guinea pig.

- 2) If you are comfortable, you can have the Meet and Greet at your home. If you decide to do this, you will have the opportunity to ask questions and tell the potential adopter all about the personality of the guinea pig you are fostering.

- 3) In some cases, I will bring the guinea pig to the potential adopter's home. This is an option that you can do as well!

If the Meet and Greet goes well and the adopter would like to take them home, the rest of the adoption process is all digital. I will be on standby, so you will let me know if they would like to proceed with the adoption. I send a link to their phone where they can view and sign the adoption contract and pay the adoption fee. The whole process takes under 5 minutes. Then that is it! It's official!

What if I want to adopt?

Yes! You can! Just let me know, and I can process the adoption for you!

What if I think the guinea pig is sick?

One of the most important things to know about guinea pigs is that because they are prey animals, they hide illness and injuries very well, often until it is too late. It is crucial to know the guinea pig's personality and routines.

The first way to tell that something is off is their weight. Although I only get a monthly weight from the foster families, you should weigh the guinea pig(s) weekly to make sure there are no significant weight losses.

Emergency Signs:

If you notice any of these, please get in touch with me right away. Text with 911 and I will respond immediately.

- Lethargy
- Barely moving
- Breathing with mouth open
- Blood coming from anywhere, any visible injuries

Urgent Signs:

If you notice any of these please contact me right away.

- Not eating or pooping (if not treated quickly this can lead to death)

- Bloat (if the stomach looks swollen and feels hard- this also must be treated quickly)
- Crackling noises when breathing, or any loud breathing/congestion
- Discharge from eyes or nose
- Dragging hind legs
- Head tilt

Concerning:

Might not be urgent but let me know as soon as you can.

- Diarrhea
- Blood in the urine
- Significant weight loss (15 grams or more in a week)
- Redness on the bottoms of the feet
- Bald spots or thinning hair
- Constant itching
- Trouble eating
- Any lumps on the body/mouth

It would be HIGHLY unlikely that you would not be able to reach me by phone. PLEASE text or call for emergencies, I do not always check my social media.

In the event you cannot get ahold of me, and the guinea pig is experiencing any of the Emergency Signs above, please call one of these vets (in this order) to see if the guinea pig can be seen immediately. You will NOT be responsible for paying. I can always call and pay charges over the phone, and some vets I have an established account with.

Vets:

****Preferred Vet**

Aloha Animal Hospital

7341 S. Torrey Pines Blvd

Las Vegas, NV 89139

(702)567-5222

**Account is under Vegas Friends of Guinea Pig Rescue

Park Animal Hospital

8400 S. Eastern Ave

Las Vegas, NV 89123

(702)361-5850

** Account is under Vegas Friends of Guinea Pig Rescue with my phone number

Island Animal Hospital

7025 W. Ann Road

Las Vegas, NV 89130

(702)645-7387

*Do not have an established account but I trust their exotic doctors

After-Hours Emergency Vets:

Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care

(please call to make sure they have an exotic vet there)

8650 W. Tropicana #104

Las Vegas, NV 89147

(702)262-7070

Veterinary Emergency Group

470 N. Stephanie St

Henderson, NV 89014

(702)529-4850

Veterinary Emergency Group

880 S. Rampart Blvd

Las Vegas, NV 89145

(702)790-8242

Las Vegas Animal Emergency Care

3340 E. Patrick Lane

Las Vegas, NV 89120

(702)457-8050

*Please try not to use this one in a true emergency. They do not have exotic vets on staff and can only “band-aid” the problem.

As I said above, it is very unlikely that you will not be able to get ahold of me. If I do not answer the phone- text 911

If it is the middle of the night (10pm-5am) call multiple times in a row if I do not pick up, sometimes it takes me a minute to realize my phone is ringing.

Guinea Pig Safe Veggie List

Feed approximately one to one and a half cups of fresh vegetables per pig daily.

Avoid vegetables high in sugar, calcium and known to cause gas or bloat.

Let's Build a Guinea Pig Salad!

The Following are OK to Feed Daily: The bulk should be leafy greens: *"start here as the salad base"*

- Green leaf Lettuce
- Red Leaf Lettuce
- Butter Lettuce
- Endive
- Green Bell Pepper
- Cilantro
- Tomatoes (1" slice or one cherry tomato per pig)
- Zucchini with skin
- Escarole

The following are OK to Feed Two to Four Times Per week: *"then add in"*

- Red, Orange or Yellow Bell Pepper
- Arugula
- Baby Carrot (one per pig as a treat)
- Green Beans
- Snap Peas
- Celery
- Corn Husks and Silk
- Cucumber (can cause gas in some piggies, is rare but watch for this)
- Romaine Lettuce
- Parsley
- Wheat Grass (Cat Grass) or Grass (be sure grass is not treated with pesticides)
- Chicory Greens
- Mustard Greens
- Squash
- Radicchio

The following are OK to Feed Rarely, Once Per Week at Most: "special treats"

- Dandelion Greens (high in calcium)
- Spinach (high in calcium)
- Dill
- Mint
- Raw Pumpkin
- Carrot Tops
- Mustard Greens
- Kale (high in calcium)

The Following Fruit As Special Treats, Ok Once Per Week in Small Amounts: "really special treats"

- Apple (no core, no seeds)
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Cantaloupe
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Watermelon with Rind
- Banana
- Melon
- Mango

Never Feed:

- Frozen or Cooked Vegetables
- Iceberg Lettuce
- Cabbage
- Broccoli
- Brussel Sprouts
- Cauliflower
- Yogurt Drops
- Chocolate (or anything else with caffeine)
- Onions
- Garlic

- Mushrooms
- Avocados
- Nuts
- Potatoes
- Seeds
- Corn Kernels
- Peanut Butter
- Rhubarb
- Bok Choy
- Dairy Products
- Bread
- Meat
- Salt Licks

**We know that others recommend Broccoli, Cauliflower and Brussels Sprouts as being safe for guinea pigs. However we have seen first hand that these particular veggies have a high probability to cause gas/bloat in guinea pigs. We prefer to err on the side of caution so we have removed these from our recommended veggies list.*

