

Guinea Pig Bonding Advice

Bobtails Rabbit & Guinea Pig Rescue

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Guinea pigs LOVE company!

Guineas are extremely social little creatures and should not be forced to live alone. They are relatively easy to introduce together but care should still be taken because some do not get on and fighting can occur.

The Introduction

The secret is creating the right environment, which must be completely **neutral**. None of the guineas to be bonded must have been in contact with the bonding pen or any of its contents. The area should be large (minimum 1 metre x 1 metre) and contain fun items – tunnels, toys, boxes etc with entry **and** exit holes. There should be plenty of hay around and food and water at either end of the pen so if each piggy claims a side, both have access to nourishment without confrontation.

Next, place the guineas to be introduced into the pen together and wait. After they have explored and investigated their new environment, they will then turn their attention to each other. There may be a little mounting for both sexes – this is often used to determine hierarchy within their relationship, coupled with some chasing and possibly chattering of teeth and a significant amount of squeaking. This often sounds like murder is being committed – it isn't; guineas just love to make a fuss!

Another interesting activity is a stiff legged, slow motion swaying and purring which seems to be the guinea pig way of showing off, saying "look at me, I'm so big and beautiful"!! The 'machine gun' type noise produced is an irritated or dominating sound and should be expected from the pigs during bonding and even from a happily paired couple on occasion.

You will need to keep a close eye on the guinea pigs for at least a few hours. During this time it is very important that you do not talk to or touch them unless there is a problem which you need to intervene to resolve.

They should stay in this pen for 48 hours before returning them as a bonded couple or family to either's existing territory. This territory should be cleaned and as neutral as possible. If they are returning to completely neutral territory to live, they can be moved after 24 hours.

Suggested Pairings

Neutered boar and sow make a great pairing once the male has been neutered for at least 4 weeks. It is easy to introduce boars and sows together and makes one of the best combinations.

If you have a lone female, this is undoubtedly your best option.

Two sows will usually live happily together. You will always have a 'boss' pig and as long as they accept their position, they will usually be happy together.

Two boars, if siblings or if introduced before 6 weeks of age, will normally live fine together. Be aware, however, that the scent of a female will probably lead to problems in their relationship. This could be caused by housing or exercising females nearby or if you have not washed your hands after handling females and before handling boars.

N.B. Here at Bobtails we have sows and pairs of boars living close together with no scrapping as we have the continuous smell of both boars and sows which seems to confuse them.

If you have a single boar who has lost his companion, you have two options:

- If he is young and fit enough, we strongly recommend he is neutered. This will mean that he can then be paired with a female – **you must leave 4 WEEKS after neutering before any introductions as he may still be fertile.**

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- If he is older, we recommend you try to introduce an immature male under 6 weeks old. The older boar may accept him if introduced very carefully but this combination can be difficult and you must ensure bullying does not develop, even at a later stage when the young male reaches maturity and may try to become the dominant pig. The younger male should be neutered from 4 months old.

Note it is NOT advisable to attempt to bond two adult boars, even if neutered.

Groups of bonded guinea pigs live well together. They love the company and it is wonderful to watch the little colony interacting with each other. As always, they must have enough space with lots of interesting tunnels and toys to keep them entertained.

**If you need any further advice,
please contact us via bobtailsrescue@aol.com
or telephone 020 8393 2016.**

