

**CODE OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE  
WELFARE OF PET GUINEA PIGS**

**DUTY OF CARE TO A PET GUINEA PIG UNDER THE  
ANIMAL WELFARE (GUERNSEY) ORDINANCE, 2012**

Section 8 of the Animal Welfare (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2012 provides that the owner or keeper of an animal owes a duty to take such care as, in all circumstances, is reasonable to see that the animal is free –

- from thirst, hunger and malnutrition,
- from discomfort,
- from pain, injury and disease,
- from fear and distress, and
- to express normal behaviour patterns.

In determining what care is reasonable in all the circumstances described above, the owner or keeper of an animal shall have particular regard to -

- (a) good practice for the care of the animal in question,
- (b) any lawful purpose for which the animal is kept,
- (c) any lawful activity carried on in relation to the animal,
- (d) the physical activity undertaken by the animal,
- (e) seasonal climatic conditions,
- (f) the life-stage of the animal, and
- (g) any special or additional dietary and nutritional requirements that may arise -
  - (i) where the animal is pregnant, brooding or rearing young, and

- (ii) from the general state of health of the animal.

"**normal behaviour patterns**" means normal behaviour patterns for a domestic animal or a captive animal, as the case may be, of the kind concerned.

The duty of care includes providing the animal with-

- (a) a supply of fresh drinking water and food of sufficient quantity and quality to keep the animal in good health,
- (b) where appropriate, suitable shelter which is sufficient to maintain the animal in good health and such shelter must include -
  - (i) access from the shelter to water and food,
  - (ii) sufficient space for the animal to lie down or otherwise rest in comfort, and
  - (iii) where appropriate, adequate light, heat and ventilation,
- (c) protection from injury, disease or unnecessary suffering including, where appropriate, providing timely and appropriate medical diagnosis and treatment where necessary by a recognised veterinary surgeon, and
- (d) the opportunity to express normal behaviour patterns and living conditions that are conducive to maintaining those normal behaviour patterns.

The Welfare Recommendations below provide practical guidance on meeting this duty of care when caring for a pet guinea pig.

**RECOMMENDATIONS MADE UNDER SECTION 13(1) OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE (GUERNSEY) ORDINANCE, 2012 FOR THE WELFARE OF PET GUINEA PIGS**

**A FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE WELFARE RECOMMENDATIONS MAY BE RELIED UPON IN COURT AS TENDING TO ESTABLISH LIABILITY FOR FAILING TO MEET THE DUTY OF CARE**

**RECOMMENDATIONS – FOOD AND WATER**

1. A guinea pig should be provided with food that contains the correct balance of essential nutrients, in sufficient quantity to keep it, in all circumstances, in good health and vigour.
2. A guinea pig should be provided with fresh, clean water in sufficient quantity to keep it, in all circumstances, hydrated.

**RECOMMENDATIONS - LIVING ENVIRONMENT**

3. As a minimum a guinea pig should be provided with living accommodation that –
  - a. is large enough to allow it to lie down and rest or sleep in a natural position and have a separate space for it to exercise,
  - b. is predator and vermin proof, dry, ventilated, but protected from draughts and which provides protection from direct sunlight and extremes of heat and cold,
  - c. has an enclosed sleeping area or shelter that is large enough for it to sleep and rest in a natural posture,
  - d. is large enough to provide it with space, other than the place in which it rests and sleeps, to stand up on four legs, stand up on its back legs and turn around in a normal posture and to exercise,

- e. provides it with shelter that is predator proof, dry, ventilated, but protected from draughts and which provides protection from direct sunlight and extremes of heat and cold,
  - f. provides daylight or light equivalent to daylight during normal daylight hours,
  - g. allows continuous access to water and appropriate access to food (to ensure it receives a sufficient quantity of food as required to meet the duty of care), and
  - h. is constructed from materials that are not hazardous to guinea pigs.
4. Living accommodation should be provided with dust-free nesting and bedding material and bedding material should cover the floor of the accommodation. Nesting and bedding material must not have been treated with substances which are hazardous to the health of guinea pigs.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS - HEALTH**

5. A guinea pig that is injured or ill should be provided with timely and appropriate treatment for the injury or illness or in the case of a serious injury or illness, medical diagnosis and treatment by a veterinary surgeon. In the case of doubt, advice should be obtained from a veterinary surgeon.
6. Veterinary medicines or treatments should only be administered in accordance with the directions of a veterinary surgeon or a person authorised to supply such products, or in the case of products that can be purchased by the general public, in accordance with the directions of the manufacturer of the product.
7. A guinea pig should be provided with protection from temperatures that exceed 25°C.
8. Hazardous substances should be kept out of the areas to which a guinea pig normally has access.

9. A guinea pig should be protected from hazardous appliances (household and garden) by keeping such appliances out of the areas to which it normally has access or by using measures to ensure it does not suffer harm from the appliances.
10. A guinea pig should be given the opportunity to exercise to keep it in good health and vigour.
11. A guinea pig's coat should be checked regularly for external parasites and, if necessary, parasites treated.
12. A guinea pig's nails should be checked regularly and excessive growth should be clipped.
13. A guinea pig should be provided with untreated wood or twigs to gnaw on to prevent its teeth from becoming overgrown.
14. A guinea pig should be handled so as to avoid distress or injury.
15. Food and water containers that are provided for a guinea pig should be kept clean of waste food, droppings and other contamination.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS - BEHAVIOUR**

16. A guinea pig should be provided with the opportunity to regularly socialise with its owner or keeper or other guinea pigs.
17. Guinea pigs that fight when kept together should be provided with separate accommodation.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS - BREEDING**

18. Only a guinea pig that is adult, well developed, in good health and condition and with a favourable temperament should be used for breeding.

19. A pregnant female should be separated from other guinea pigs late in the last trimester (last 3 weeks) of pregnancy and housed separately. It should be provided with an area that is safe, warm, dry and quiet and also provided with clean bedding material. It should be inspected frequently to ensure that it is not experiencing difficulties, but otherwise disturbed as little as possible. If a female exhibits any signs of significant difficulties, during pregnancy or birth, veterinary assistance should be sought promptly.
20. A young guinea pig should be able to feed independently and be in good health and condition before it is re-homed.

### **RECOMMENDATION - EXHIBITING GUINEA PIGS**

21. A guinea pig that is exhibited must be at least 3 months of age, in good health and free from injuries or skin parasites. A pregnant guinea pig should not be exhibited.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS - TRANSPORTATION**

22. A guinea pig that is transported in a vehicle should be restrained in a secure container.
23. A travelling container should be large enough to allow a guinea pig to stand up, turn around and lie down with ease. It should be provided with bedding and food, including moisture-rich food. The container should be secured within the vehicle and positioned so that a guinea pig is not exposed to extremes of temperature, drafts or high humidity.
24. A guinea pig should not be left unattended in a vehicle unless the environment within the vehicle is maintained below 25°C air temperature in the shade.

Further, more detailed guidance for the welfare of pet guinea pigs is set out in "Guidance for the Welfare of Pet Guinea Pigs" issued by the Commerce and Employment Department and available on the States of Guernsey website. That guidance does not form part of this Code.