

# Guidelines for the Housing of Guinea Pigs in Scientific Institutions

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## Overview

- Intended for use by people involved in the housing and care of guinea pigs in scientific institutions.
- Will be revised periodically.
- Based on principles regarding the care and management of guinea pigs taken from published scientific literature.

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## How they were developed

- Literature search revealed 86 published and refereed papers and articles.
- These discussed the principal subject areas of housing, behaviour, enclosure design, management and environment.



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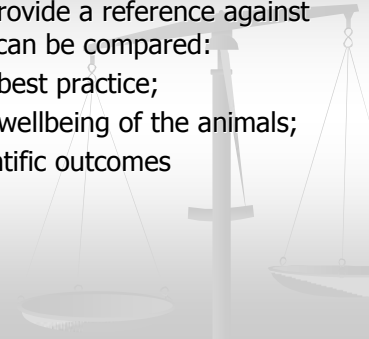
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### How they are intended to be used

The guidelines provide a reference against which methods can be compared:

- To help achieve best practice;
- To maintain the wellbeing of the animals;
- To improve scientific outcomes



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### Interpretation

Different interpretations of the guidelines and different approaches to their implementation may achieve equivalent outcomes in promoting the well-being of the animals.



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## Space and Shelter

The provision of sufficient floor space is essential to the well-being of guinea pigs.

Careful positioning of shelters in the enclosure optimises the use of floor space by the animals.

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## Environmental Enrichment

Designing the environment of captive animals for the benefit of the inhabitants -

To meet species specific requirements and;

To enable animals to express their natural behaviours and avoid developing abnormal ones.

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## Diet

- Supplementation with Vitamin C is recommended by fortification of pelleted rations or in the water supply with additional sources from fresh leafy green vegetables.
- Addition of Zn and Se may need to be considered, particularly for one-off or special rations.

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## Social Interaction

The basic need of the species for social interaction is an important consideration for Animal Ethics Committees in determining whether it is justifiable to house guinea pigs singly and in what circumstances single housing might be approved.

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## Effect of Isolation

Guinea pigs moved from group housing into single enclosures in an unfamiliar room may lose weight and drink less water.

These changes are not seen in guinea pigs separated into single cages in their familiar room, where visual, olfactory and auditory contacts with cohorts are maintained.

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## Feedback from Referees

The guidelines were sent to referees in Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States, who contributed their time and expertise to provide detailed comments, updates on information and constructive criticism.

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## Thank You

Pictures with kind permission of:

- Dr Greg McKay
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- Dr Anne Fawcett
- animalphotos



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