

RABBITS AND GUINEA PIGS

Why guinea pigs and rabbits should not be housed together?

Nutritional requirements

Rabbits and guinea pigs need different foods to meet their different dietary requirements; guinea pigs need a diet rich in Vitamin C or they can become ill. Rabbits are the opposite and may become ill from too much Vitamin C or a lack of other important vitamins. The two animals sharing the food may make it difficult to know which animal has eaten what and easy to assume both have eaten. This can result in illness going unnoticed.

Different languages

Rabbits and guinea pigs communicate differently so it is in both of their interests to have a friend that talks the same language.

It is always best to have pairs or trios of the same species (rabbit with rabbit, guinea pig with guinea pig). Imagine living with an animal other than a human! Communication with the same species is important.



Behaviour

Rabbits are a lot stronger than guinea pigs and can easily hurt or even kill a guinea pig without meaning to, simply by kicking out with their powerful back legs or jumping over the guinea pig. The rabbit may also bully the guinea pig. Sometimes guinea pigs ingest rabbit fur which can cause them problems. Rabbits and guinea pigs are unable to establish a hierarchy as they cannot communicate because they don't speak the same language. Rabbits can become aggressive and dominant without a hierarchy causing frustration which may cause them to attack the guinea pig. They may also see them as a threat, especially around food.

Space and exercise needs

Rabbits need a lot more space than guinea pigs to hop, jump, run and binky. This is not to say guinea pigs don't need a lot of space, they need and like space, but rabbits need much more. Guinea pigs are creatures that like to hide much more than a socialised domestic rabbit because it's in their nature. A well socialised and friendly rabbit will only 'hide' when scared or if they do not want to be disturbed. This is once again a difference in behaviours.

Disease transferral

Rabbits can pass bacteria (*Bordetella bronchiseptica*) to guinea pigs, which can cause respiratory disease, pneumonia which can be fatal. Rabbits are very clean animals and can be litter trained. Guinea pigs cannot be litter trained resulting in a messy and dirty space for the rabbit to have to live in. Guinea pigs and rabbits have been housed together; however, it does cause health risks to both species.