

Prismatic Guinea Pigs Standard Operating Procedures

1. Purpose

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets out the minimum operating procedures and best-practice guidelines for the boarding of guinea pigs by Prismatic Guinea Pigs, operating from premises at 45 Warwick Street, Killara NSW 2071. It is designed to adapt the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No. 5 – Dogs and Cats in Animal Boarding Establishments* to guinea pigs, while incorporating guinea pig-specific guidance from RSPCA resources and other reputable care sources

This SOP is intended to provide clear and measurable requirements for housing, feeding, hygiene, health monitoring, handling and record keeping. This structure is consistent with the RSPCA position that animal welfare standards should be clear, measurable, and accompanied by practical best-practice guidance

2. Basis and framework

This SOP is based on three layers of authority and guidance:

1. NSW boarding establishment compliance requirements adapted from the NSW boarding code, especially responsibilities of the manager, housing, hygiene, health care, diet and record keeping
2. Guinea pig-specific welfare guidance from RSPCA Knowledge base articles and other reputable animal care resources, particularly on housing, temperature, diet, social needs, handling, and health risks
3. The RSPCA GP2 position paper, which supports nationally consistent minimum standards plus accompanying guidelines based on current science, community expectations, transparency, and continuous improvement.

This SOP is applied using the Five Domains model of animal welfare: nutrition, physical environment, health, behavioural interactions, and mental state.

3. Scope

This SOP applies to all guinea pigs boarded, held, handled, or cared for by Prismatic Guinea Pigs at 45 Warwick Street, Killara NSW 2071, including short-stay, long-stay, day-boarding, and emergency holding.

4. Definitions

4.1 Mandatory Minimum Standard

A mandatory minimum standard is a requirement that must be met at all times. Mandatory standards in this SOP are intended to be clear, measurable, auditable, and suitable for internal compliance checks.

4.2 Best-practice Guideline

A best-practice guideline is a recommended procedure that goes beyond the minimum requirement and is intended to improve welfare outcomes wherever reasonably practicable.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Manager Responsibilities

The Manager at Prismatic Guinea Pigs is responsible for ensuring:

- accommodation and equipment suit the physical and behavioural needs of guinea pigs;
- animals are protected from people, other animals, predators, and adverse environmental conditions;
- each guinea pig has sufficient space to stand, move freely, stretch fully, hide, rest, and feed without conflict;
- guinea pigs receive adequate food and water to maintain good health;
- animals are protected, as far as possible, from disease, distress, and injury;
- prompt veterinary treatment is obtained where required;
- the premises are kept hygienic and safe;
- daily feeding, watering, and health inspections occur;
- staff are supervised and trained;
- records are created and maintained for each animal boarded.

5.2 Staff Responsibilities

All staff at Prismatic Guinea Pigs must:

- handle guinea pigs calmly, gently, and competently;
- understand guinea pig behavioral signs of fear, pain, illness, and incompatibility;
- follow this SOP, cleaning schedules, feeding plans, and escalation procedures;
- Report any welfare concern, change in behaviour, injury, escape risk, or illness immediately to the Manager.

All new staff receive an induction covering this SOP, species-specific husbandry, hygiene and infection control, recognising illness, emergency procedures and escalation to the Manager, and their training is recorded.

6. Welfare Objectives

The facility must manage guinea pigs in a way that supports all Five Domains:

1. Nutrition: constant access to suitable hay, fresh daily food, species-appropriate pellets, and clean water.
2. Physical environment: adequate floor area, soft dry bedding, ventilation, shade, thermal comfort, and predator-proof housing.
3. Health: daily checks, early detection of illness, veterinary access, isolation capability, and hygiene controls.
4. Behavioral interactions: compatible social housing, hiding opportunities, foraging opportunities, and low-stress handling.
5. Mental state: reduced fear, reduced pain, predictable routines, and appropriate environmental security.

7. Admission procedures

7.1 Pre-admission Requirements

Before admission, the owner must provide to Prismatic Guinea Pigs the following information:

- owner name, address, phone number, email, and emergency contact details;
- expected collection date;
- animal identification details including name, sex, colour, age, and distinguishing features;

- normal diet and feeding routine;
- bonded companion details and social compatibility information;
- veterinary contact details if different to the vets Prismatic Guinea Pigs use;
- medication instructions and known health conditions;
- authority for veterinary treatment in an emergency;

This information is contained in the Prismatic Guinea Pigs Boarding Terms and Conditions, acknowledging the applicable health, payment, medication, veterinary, incident, collection, and liability terms used by the business which encompasses all requirements and must be signed by the owner before admission is provided.

7.2 Admission Assessment

On arrival, Prismatic Guinea Pig staff record:

- general body condition and, preferably, weight on arrival;
- appetite status if known from the owner;
- coat condition, skin condition, mobility, breathing, and demeanor;
- any wounds, swelling, discharge, parasite concerns, dental issues, or signs of respiratory illness.

7.3 Refusal of Admission

Guinea pigs known or suspected to be suffering from an infectious disease will not be admitted for routine boarding, adapting the NSW boarding code requirement for infectious animals. Guinea pigs showing signs of serious illness will be referred back to the owner and, where appropriate, a veterinarian. Prismatic Guinea Pigs also reserves the right to deny admission to any guinea pig that appears to be in ill health unless the condition has been discussed and accepted before admission, consistent with its Boarding Terms and Conditions.

8. Housing and Accommodation

8.1 General Housing Principles

Prismatic Guinea Pigs operates from a residential house at 45 Warwick Street, Killara NSW 2071, which has a constant potable water supply, is connected to council sewerage services, and is located in a low-noise residential area. The indoor boarding areas are protected from adverse weather, pollution and excessive noise, consistent with the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No. 5 location and facilities requirements.

Housing must protect guinea pigs from rain, wind, direct sun, dampness, excessive noise, predators, escape, and thermal extremes.

8.2 Enclosure Size

At Prismatic Guinea Pigs, all guinea pigs are housed in cages or cage-style enclosures rather than floor pens. Each cage provides enough internal space for guinea pigs to move freely, stretch, rest, access food and water, and use hide areas without crowding, adapting the NSW boarding code requirement that animals have sufficient space to feed, sleep, stand, lie, stretch, and move about.

Minimum cage sizes used by Prismatic Guinea Pigs are as follows:

- 80 cm cages measuring approximately 80 cm (L) x 44 cm (W) x 43 cm (H) are suitable for 1 guinea pig;

- 100 cm cages measuring approximately 100 cm (L) x 56 cm (W) x 45 cm (H) are suitable for 2 to 3 guinea pigs;
- 120 cm cages measuring approximately 120 cm (L) x 59 cm (W) x 50 cm (H) are suitable for 3 to 4 guinea pigs.

Any more than 4 guinea pigs are housed in separate cages.

Where guinea pigs are boarded together, they must be compatible, have adequate hide spaces and feeding points, and be monitored for crowding, conflict, guarding behaviour, or reduced access to food and water.

If any guinea pig shows stress, aggression, repeated mounting, hiding-place guarding, or difficulty accessing feed or water, they are separated and moved to more suitable accommodation immediately.

8.3 Internal Surfaces

All enclosure surfaces are solid, washable, non-slip, and capable of being effectively cleaned and disinfected, consistent with the NSW boarding code requirement for impervious, washable surfaces.

Wire flooring is never used as a primary walking surface because it may cause foot injuries and pododermatitis.

8.4 Bedding and Resting Areas

Bedding must be clean, dry, comfortable, absorbent, and appropriate for guinea pigs.

Prismatic Guinea Pigs uses dust-free wood shavings as the standard bedding material in boarding cages as standard bedding and also has fabric liners for. The minimum bedding requirements are as follows:

- wood shavings used for bedding must be dust-free or dust-extracted;
- bedding must be free from added fragrance, chemicals, and contaminants;
- full bedding replacement is completed every 7 days, with spot cleaning undertaken in between as needed to maintain hygiene and comfort;
- every boarder is placed into a clean cage at the commencement of boarding;
- each cage is cleaned again when the boarder leaves the premises, consistent with the NSW boarding code requirement that housing be cleaned regularly and between occupants.

8.5 Hides and Enrichment Fixtures

Each enclosure contains enough hide spaces for all occupants to shelter at the same time without competition. Best practice is one hide per guinea pig plus one additional hide, with at least two entry or exit points where feasible to reduce trapping and conflict. The owner can also bring additional toys or hides for their guinea pigs.

8.6 Ventilation, Lighting, and Temperature

Ventilation must keep housing areas free of dampness and noxious odours without creating drafts, adapting the NSW boarding code ventilation requirement.

Lighting follows natural patterns as closely as possible, with shade available at all times.

Guinea pigs are protected from extremes of temperature. Housing is maintained within a safe, stable range and closely monitored during hot or cold weather because guinea pigs are sensitive to heat stress and chilling. Air conditioning units are used when temperatures > 30 degrees Celsius along with frozen water bottles to reduce temperatures.

8.7 Security

The premise and cages housing guinea pigs are securely closed and prevents escape and unauthorized entry, adapting the NSW code provisions on security barriers and secure closing devices.

Predator protection includes barriers against dogs, cats, foxes, rodents, and birds of prey along with external baiting traps for small rodents. Fly baits and natural spider/cockroach sprays are used to prevent pest in the boarding areas.

8.8 Cage labelling

Every boarding enclosure displays a clearly legible cage label for each group of guinea pigs. The label includes:

- the guinea pig's name(s);
- owner's name and mobile number;
- date of admission and departure;
- reference number to the Boarding Terms and Conditions.

Labels must be updated promptly if animals are moved, added or removed, and checked at each daily health inspection and cage clean to ensure the animals present match the information recorded.

9. Social Housing and Separation

Guinea pigs are a social species and benefit from the company of other guinea pigs. Wherever possible, Prismatic Guinea Pigs will house boarders in compatible pairs or small groups from the same household, taking into account sex, age, temperament, any veterinary advice or owner instructions require separate housing.

Single housing will only be used where it is in the guinea pig's best interests, for example where the animal normally lives alone, where there is a history of aggression, or where isolation is required for medical or infectious-disease reasons. In these cases, additional environmental enrichment, visual and auditory contact with other guinea pigs where safe, and extra positive human interaction will be provided to reduce isolation stress

Guinea pigs from different households are never mixed due to compatible issues and disease.

Animals showing aggression, severe fear, repeated mounting, injury risk, or incompatibility must be separated promptly, and guinea pigs are never housed in the same enclosure as any other animal as Prismatic Guinea Pigs specializes only in guinea pig boarding.

Before cleaning or moving any cage, staff must check that the number and identity of guinea pigs match the cage label and the boarding record; any discrepancies must be reported to the manager immediately and investigated.

10. Feeding and Nutrition

10.1 General Nutrition Standard

All guinea pigs receive uncontaminated, nutritionally adequate food appropriate to their age, reproductive status, and health condition, adapting the NSW code diet requirement.

10.2 Daily Diet

The standard boarding diet includes:

- unlimited good-quality hay as the primary component of the diet;
- a measured quantity of guinea pig pellets containing vitamin C and Lupin for protein;
- daily fresh vegetables, including vitamin C-rich vegetables such as capsicum and suitable leafy greens

As guinea pigs cannot make their own vitamin C so daily dietary vitamin C is mandatory.

10.3 Feeding Procedure

Food is prepared hygienically and offered in clean containers, consistent with the NSW boarding code. Fresh foods is removed before spoilage and all food containers are cleaned at least daily.

If the owner supplies the animal's regular diet, that diet should be followed as closely as practicable to reduce gastrointestinal disturbance.

Sudden diet changes must be avoided.

10.4 Water

Fresh clean water is available at all times via water bottles. All water bottles are checked at least twice daily to ensure they are clean, functioning, and accessible.

11. Daily Care and Observation

Every guinea pig is checked at least once daily for health and comfort, adapting the NSW code minimum daily check requirement

Daily observations include whether the guinea pig:

- is eating and drinking;
- is defecating and urinating normally;
- has a normal coat and skin condition;
- is moving normally;
- is breathing normally and has no nasal or ocular discharge;
- is behaving normally for that individual;
- has signs of pain, distress, bloating, weight loss, diarrhea, or heat stress.
- The cage label is also checked to ensure the guinea pigs have the correct details

Any adverse change is recorded and reported immediately to the Manager.

12. Handling Procedures

Guinea pigs are handled gently and only as much as necessary for health checks, weighing, transfer, grooming, enclosure cleaning, and welfare purposes.

Staff support the chest and body when lifting and must not scruff, squeeze, or suspend guinea pigs by the limbs.

Handling must be minimized for highly fearful, newly admitted, unwell, or recovering animals unless necessary for treatment or inspection.

13. Hygiene and Cleaning

13.1 General Requirement

Housing areas are kept clean so that comfort is maintained and disease is controlled, consistent with the NSW boarding code

13.2 Cleaning Frequency

- Feces and heavily soiled bedding are removed at least daily.
- Spot cleaning occurs at least once daily and more often where needed.
- Full enclosure cleaning occurs as needed to maintain dryness and hygiene and always between occupants.
- Deep cleaning and disinfection is undertaken after any infectious disease concern and before admitting a new boarder to a vacated enclosure.
- Before cleaning or moving any cage, staff must check that the number and identity of guinea pigs match the cage label and the boarding record; any discrepancies must be reported to the manager immediately and investigated.

13.3 Cleaning Chemicals

Cleaning and disinfection products must be selected for suitability, safety, and effectiveness, and must be used according to manufacturer instructions, adapting the NSW boarding code.

At Prismatic Guinea Pigs, the following cleaning products are used:

- water bottles are cleaned and sterilised using Milton, following the product instructions for cleaning, soaking, dilution, and contact time;
- cages and enclosure surfaces are cleaned and disinfected using F10 SC Veterinary Disinfectant, used in accordance with the manufacturer directions and dilution rates;
- food bowls are cleaned using hot soapy water and rinsed thoroughly before reuse.

All Enclosures are dry before guinea pigs are returned after cleaning.

14. Pest control and Biosecurity

Pests including rodents, flies, mosquitoes, lice, fleas, and mites must be controlled, adapting the NSW code pest control requirement. Chemicals used for pest control are placed so guinea pigs cannot access them and are used safely and in accordance with label directions. Feed and bedding must be stored in a way that minimises contamination, spoilage, and vermin access.

15. Health Care and Veterinary Response

15.1 Veterinary Arrangements

At Prismatic Guinea Pigs we maintain liaison with several specialist veterinary practices to provide advice and treatment for guinea pigs, adapting the NSW boarding code requirement for veterinary liaison.

If veterinary treatment is required during boarding, the cost of treatment is borne by the owner in accordance with the signed Boarding Terms and Conditions, and any veterinary attendance fee applied by the business is disclosed in those terms.

15.2 Conditions Requiring Urgent Attention

Veterinary advice is sought promptly for any guinea pig showing:

- runny nose, eye discharge, noisy breathing, coughing, or respiratory distress;
- diarrhea, especially if severe or persistent;
- failure to eat;
- rapid weight loss or visible decline;
- lameness or inability to stand or walk normally;
- bleeding, swelling, significant wounds, or abscesses;
- bloating, difficulty urinating, or inability to defecate;
- fits, collapse, staggering, or severe lethargy.

15.3 Isolation

Isolation facilities are available on site or through veterinary arrangements for any guinea pig suspected or confirmed to have an infectious disease, adapting the NSW code isolation requirement.

15.4 Euthanasia

If euthanasia becomes necessary due to serious illness or injury, it is only performed by a veterinarian, and owner permission is obtained wherever practicable, consistent with the NSW boarding code and the Boarding Terms and Conditions. Where an animal is considered to be suffering unnecessarily and neither the owner nor the emergency contact can be reached, the signed Boarding Terms and Conditions may authorise the veterinarian to proceed in the animal's best interests; however, Prismatic Guinea Pigs will continue efforts to contact the owner or emergency contact before such action is taken.

16. Exercise and Enrichment

Guinea pigs must have sufficient space for normal movement within their enclosure. Enrichment must include opportunities for hiding, chewing, and foraging.

17. Emergency Management

The facility maintains emergency procedures for fire, flood, heat events, power failure, animal escape, and urgent veterinary transport. This requirement aligns with the NSW code's security and emergency access principles, including ready access to animals and firefighting equipment.

At a minimum, emergency procedures must include:

- emergency contact lists for staff, owners, and veterinarians;
- backup measures for ventilation and thermal protection;
- procedures for isolating sick animals.

18. Records and Documentation

For each guinea pig, the following records are maintained:

- owner details and emergency contacts;
- expected collection date;
- animal description and identification details;
- veterinary contact details;
- medication and feeding instructions;
- admission assessment findings, preferably including weight;

- daily health observations;
- incidents, treatments, and veterinary advice;
- belongings received and returned;
- before cleaning or moving any cage, staff must check that the number and identity of guinea pigs match the cage label and the boarding record; any discrepancies must be reported to the manager immediately and investigated.
- signed Boarding Terms and Conditions and any special service selections or additional item requests recorded on the boarding form;

19. Owner Communication and Consent

Owners are informed of:

- admission requirements;
- feeding and housing arrangements;
- circumstances in which veterinary treatment may be sought;
- the policy for infectious disease concerns, separation, and emergency relocation if needed;
- the policy for uncollected animals, consistent with the NSW boarding code;
- the payment structure used by the business, including deposit requirements, payment timing, additional charges, and cancellation settings set out in the signed Boarding Terms and Conditions;
- the lice and mite policy, including the treatment fee applied if parasites are found on admission or during boarding;
- any medication administration fee that may apply where medication is given during boarding.

All this information can be found on the Prismatic Guinea Pig Boarding Terms and Conditions, quote or website and confirmed by signature prior to booking in for boarding or the guinea pigs is admitted.

20. Uncollected Animals

20.1 Uncollected Animal Policy

Prismatic Guinea Pigs maintains a written policy for dealing with uncollected animals that gives owners a reasonable opportunity to collect boarded animals, consistent with section 10 of the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No. 5 for animal boarding establishments.

20.2 Attempts to Contact Owner

If a guinea pig is not collected on the agreed departure date and no extension has been arranged, staff will:

- attempt to contact the owner using the recorded phone number(s) and email;
- if unsuccessful, attempt to contact the nominated emergency contact;
- document all contact attempts (date, time, method and outcome) in the animal's record.

20.3 Continued Boarding Service

While an animal remains uncollected, Prismatic Guinea Pigs will continue to provide food, water, housing, monitoring and veterinary care in accordance with this SOP and the owner's signed Boarding Terms and Conditions. Standard boarding fees and any additional charges continue to accrue for each extra day the animal stays in care.

20.4 Unclaimed Guinea Pigs

If the owner and emergency contact cannot be contacted, or do not arrange collection, within 21 calendar days after the original agreed pick-up date, the animal may be treated as unclaimed for the purposes of this policy. This 21-day period is intended to give owners a reasonable opportunity to collect boarded animals, as required by the NSW Code.

Once an animal is treated as unclaimed, Prismatic Guinea Pigs may, at its discretion and acting in the animal's best welfare interests, arrange for the guinea pig to be:

- rehomed through Prismatic Guinea Pigs;
- placed with a reputable rescue or animal welfare organisation; or
- dealt with by another lawful means that prioritises the animal's welfare.

Euthanasia is not an acceptable method of disposal solely because an animal has not been collected; euthanasia will occur on veterinary welfare grounds in accordance with section 15.4 of this SOP and the NSW Code.

20.5 Outstanding Fees

All outstanding boarding and related fees up to the date the animal is rehomed or otherwise disposed of remain the responsibility of the owner and may be pursued as a civil debt.

The policy is disclosed to owners as part of the Boarding Terms and Conditions and can also be found on the website at <https://prismaticguineapigs.com.au/guinea-pig-boarding-sydney/> which is acknowledged in writing when signing of the Boarding Terms and Conditions.

20.1 Commercial Terms Reflected in Operations

The following commercial terms used by Prismatic Guinea Pigs are reflected in admission and checkout procedures:

- A 20% deposit is payable at booking and the balance is payable on drop-off, with any additional charges payable on collection;
- rates are charged on a per calendar day basis;
- if a booking is cancelled within 14 days of commencement, the deposit is not refunded;
- no refunds or credits are provided for early collection where the booked period is shortened;
- fees may apply for parasite treatment, medication administration, and veterinary attendance where those services are required and disclosed in the signed Boarding Terms and Conditions.

21. Complaints and Inspections

Prismatic Guinea Pigs maintains a simple system for recording and responding to complaints or concerns raised by owners, visitors or staff about animal welfare, hygiene, safety or service. All complaints must be recorded with the date, complainant's details (where provided), issue raised, action taken and outcome.

The manager is responsible for reviewing complaints, investigating any welfare or safety concerns promptly, taking corrective action where required, and communicating the outcome to the complainant where appropriate.

Prismatic Guinea Pigs will cooperate with inspections or inquiries by authorised officers (for example, council officers or RSPCA inspectors) acting under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No. 5 and other applicable laws. Relevant records, policies and areas of

the premises will be made available for inspection on request, and any lawful directions relating to animal welfare will be followed

22. Governance, Review, and Continuous Improvement

This SOP is reviewed using a continuous-improvement model consistent with the RSPCA GP2 position paper.

22.1 Review Principles

Review of this SOP is to:

- be based on contemporary scientific knowledge and current best practice;
- consider animal welfare outcomes across the Five Domains;
- allow updates when emerging issues, new knowledge, or improved practices arise;
- distinguish between minimum enforceable standards and best-practice guidance.

22.2 Internal Review Frequency

The SOP is formally reviewed every two years and earlier where necessary because of scientific developments, operational incidents, regulatory change, or updated welfare guidance.

22.3 Review Inputs

Review must consider:

- current scientific and veterinary knowledge;
- RSPCA and other reputable guinea pig welfare guidance;
- practical experience within the boarding facility;
- incident reports, health outcomes, and any gaps between current practice and best practice.

23. Online Transparency and Public-Facing Information

When Prismatic Guinea Pigs is promoting boarding services online, the business clearly states the following:

- All guinea pigs are accepted;
- general housing and care standards;
- health admission expectations;
- contact details;
- links to reputable guinea pig care information.