



City Council Health Committee Hearing on Int. 04 - Guinea Pigs  
Testimony of Alexandra Silver, Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare  
December 14, 2022

Good morning, Chairperson Schulman, Council Member Ayala, and members of the Health Committee. My name is Alexandra Silver and I am Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare. I'm grateful that the City Council is taking up this legislation concerning guinea pigs and appreciate the opportunity to testify in its favor. I'm joined by Risa Weinstock, President and CEO of Animal Care Centers of New York City (ACC), who will also offer testimony, and Corinne Schiff, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Environmental Health at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

As laid out in the City Charter, the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare has the power to "advise and assist the mayor in the coordination and cooperation among agencies under the jurisdiction of the mayor that are involved in animal welfare administration, regulation, management or programs." A wide variety of issues fall under this purview, including but not limited to those surrounding wildlife management, exotic animals, and animal abuse, as well as animal shelters, animal population control, and pet shops.

In New York City, several agencies—including the Health Department, Parks Department and NYPD—are responsible for animal-related issues. Many additional agencies—for example, the Department of Social Services and NYCHA—come across animal issues during their operations. This Office is positioned to both raise awareness among other offices and agencies regarding animal welfare issues and resources, and work with them to improve animal welfare protocols. Another important function of the Office is to "serve as liaison for the city regarding animal welfare needs and concerns."

One such concern is the large number of guinea pigs being brought to ACC, which is contracted by the Health Department to operate the city's animal shelter system. As Ms. Weinstock can speak to more directly, the increase in guinea pigs in recent years has been an added strain on the organization, which is charged with a daunting task.

ACC is the only open-admissions animal-sheltering organization in the city. It accepts all animals regardless of medical condition, behavior, or age. A variety of species come to ACC, from a variety of sources. Some are stray animals with unknown histories, while many are surrendered by owners who can no longer care for them. Animals may be brought to ACC by members of the public, NYPD officers and Parks employees, as well as by ACC's own rescue specialists.

The Administration appreciates the hard work and dedication of ACC staff. Running the open-admissions animal shelter system in a city of nearly nine million people is challenging enough, without the added burden of operating during a pandemic. As ACC strives to end animal homelessness in New York City, it's important we recognize the role the broader community plays in such a mission. ACC did not create the high numbers of guinea pigs coming into its shelters and cannot be expected to solve the issue on its own.

Intro 4 is a common-sense effort to address a concrete problem. While it would ban the sale of guinea pigs in pet shops, it would not prohibit New Yorkers from keeping guinea pigs as pets, and guinea pigs could still be adopted through a humane society, animal shelter, or animal rescue group. ACC currently

adopts out guinea pigs, as well as rabbits, cats, and dogs. ACC and other animal welfare organizations frequently host adoption events across the city in partnership with pet stores and other venues.

Guinea pigs can make wonderful companion animals, but, like any pet, they come with responsibilities, and the decision to bring one home should not be taken lightly. One benefit of adopting a companion animal from ACC is the counseling that comes along with it, and the connection with the organization in case any questions or concerns about animal care come up down the line.

While promoting adoption is essential, animal-sheltering across the country over the past several years has focused more and more on preventing animals from coming into shelters in the first place, and not just on rehoming efforts. Helping people keep their pets is a prime goal of ACC and other leaders in animal-sheltering. The bottom line is that it's not enough to focus only on increasing adoptions or finding alternative placements with rescue groups. We must also address root causes.

The Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare appreciates the City Council's acting on this issue and seeking a solution that both protects the wellbeing of guinea pigs and could help alleviate difficult conditions in animal shelters. Thank you again for the opportunity to address this proposed legislation. We are looking forward to discussing the details of the bill further with you. I will now turn it over to my colleague, Risa Weinstock of ACC, to deliver her testimony.



Steve Gruber – Director of Communications

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Mayor’s Alliance for NYC’s Animals

*In support of Intro 4 – A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to prohibiting the sale of guinea pigs as pets, and clarifying the definition of the term “pet shop” to address inconsistent use of such term in the code.*

**Hearing before the New York City Council’s Committee on Health  
Wednesday, December 14, 2022**

Good morning. My name is Steve Gruber and I'm the Director of Communications of the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals. I'd like to thank City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, Deputy Speaker and Prime Sponsor Diana Ayala, and Chairperson Lynn Schulman for the opportunity to speak today in support of Intro 4, which would prohibit the sale of guinea pigs as pets by New York City pet stores. I'd also like to thank the bill's 35 co-sponsors.

Over the past few years, the number of abandoned guinea pigs has exploded in New York City. In 2022 alone, 769 guinea pigs have been taken in by Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) through November, placing a tremendous burden on the shelters' dedicated, but overwhelmed staff. While those surrendered and abandoned guinea pigs are better off than the ones abandoned in parks and public places where they have no chance of survival on their own, it's clear that the time has come to close the floodgates on guinea pig sales in New York City for the benefit of the pigs, the shelters, and New York City taxpayers who foot the bill for their care.

With Intro 4, we have the opportunity to end the proliferation of guinea pigs suffering, dying, or ending up in the shelters. Passage of this important bill will go a long way to ease the burden on ACC and other local rescues that take in abandoned and surrendered guinea pigs.

When the New York City Council voted in 2014 to ban rabbit sales in New York City, that wise action greatly reduced the flood of rabbits surrendered to ACC, and the suffering and costs associated with those surrenders. With Intro 4, we have a simple tool to repeat that success for guinea pigs.

The Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals heartily supports Intro 4.

Thank you.



**Testimony of Risa Weinstock, President and CEO Animal Care Centers of NYC  
New York City Council Committee on Health**

Intro. 004

**Wednesday, December 14 10:00 a.m.**

**Introduction**

Good morning, Chairperson Schulman, Council Member Ayala and members of the Health Committee. My name is Risa Weinstock and I am the President and CEO of Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing concerning the proposed Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of NY with regard to pet shops. I would like to address the bill's main provision prohibiting the sale of guinea pigs.

Before I address the particulars of the proposed bill, allow me to give a brief overview of Animal Care Centers of NYC, otherwise known as ACC.

**Background and Overview of ACC**

Established in 1995 and incorporated in NY State as a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization, ACC has been dedicated to rescuing, caring for and finding loving homes for NYC's homeless and abandoned animals for over twenty-five years.

Our mission is to end animal homelessness in NYC. ACC is unique among all other animal welfare organizations in NYC in that we are the only organization that accepts every animal brought to it, whether the animal has been abandoned, surrendered, found as a stray, brought in by the public, NYPD, the Parks Department, or ACC's Animal Rescue Team, and regardless of age, health status, breed, species or condition. As the only "open admission" animal sheltering organization in NYC, our annual intake exceeds that of any limited admission facility or other shelter in all five boroughs. So far this year, ACC has taken in over 16,000 animals -- including more than 14,000 dogs and cats. In this same time period, we have received over 750 guinea pigs. In 2021 ACC, together with nearly 250 New Hope adoption partners and an active animal welfare community, achieved a placement rate of 91% for companion animals.

### **Proliferation of Guinea Pigs**

Prior to the start of the pandemic, ACC on average took in approximately 300 guinea pigs each year. However, over the past 30 months guinea pig intake has doubled. This growth has strained ACC in terms of the staff and resources needed to care for and find placement for these animals. In an already overcrowded sheltering system, Intro. 004 provides a pragmatic solution to the proliferation of stray and surrendered guinea pigs at ACC.

### **Starting at the Source**

Intake data has revealed the majority of guinea pigs coming in to ACC starting in May 2021 were between the ages of 6-9 months, indicating that they had been “acquired” by their owners between July and August of 2020. Many shelters, did not have a generous supply of available pets for adoption after the big adoption/foster frenzy in the Spring of 2020. However, the public was still seeking animal companionship and likely found that pet stores were the best option.

### **Guinea Pigs are Not ‘Starter Pets’**

Throughout the pandemic many sought the comfort and companionship of a pet. Having a family pet can be a wonderful experience. However, many people mistake guinea pigs as great “starter pets.” When ACC counsels adopters on the care and needs of any pet, we always make sure they understand the commitment involved – regardless of the pet’s size. Just because a guinea pig is small, doesn’t mean it doesn’t require extensive care. In particular, guinea pigs need an endless supply of food (they are known as graze animals) including fresh vegetables and hay. Guinea pigs require much more space to lead a physically and mentally healthy life than most people think. Guinea pigs are considered “exotics” in the veterinary world, and New York City only has a handful of veterinarians who work with them. In fact, spaying or neutering a guinea pig is considered very costly and complicated surgery. In our experience, the guinea pigs sold in pet stores are not sterilized. Determining the sex of a guinea pig is also extremely difficult, which leads to males and females being sold together. This has resulted in surprise litters to unexpecting consumers. Moreover, since the majority of guinea pigs come into ACC unaltered, we incur costs associated with sending them out to specialized veterinary centers for this surgery before we place them with partners or members of the public.

ACC welcomes the efforts of City Council to help control the overpopulation of pets in city shelters, including guinea pigs. As the third largest species being surrendered and abandoned in NYC it is imperative to take action to stop the source of guinea pigs into the city shelters.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



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Maisy Sylvan  
Outreach Manager, Government Relations

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AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY  
TO ANIMALS

In support of Intro. 4 of 2022

**Testimony Before the Health Committee**

**December 14, 2022**

Good morning, I am Maisy Sylvan, Government Relations Manager for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). On behalf of the ASPCA I would like to thank Deputy Speaker Ayala for introducing Intro. 4, a local law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to prohibiting the sale of guinea pigs as pets, and Health Committee Chair Schulman for the opportunity to testify this morning.

The ASPCA has served New York City for over 150 years, since its inception in 1866. Today, we provide human and animal residents alike with direct program and care services at our ASPCA Animal Hospital, Adoption Center, and Kitten Nursery in Manhattan, as well as at our Community Veterinary Clinics in the Bronx and Brooklyn. We also have a very successful mutually supportive partnership with the NYPD to stop animal cruelty, prosecute abusers, and care for animal victims.

Additionally, the ASPCA has a productive, forward-reaching relationship with Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC). We work very closely with and strongly support ACC to help advance their efforts to drastically reduce euthanasia, increase adoptions and placement numbers, and improve access to care for the city's most vulnerable animals. Since 2017, ACC has maintained a placement rate of more than 90%, making New York City one of the nation's leaders in the placement of dogs, cats, and rabbits among high-intake shelters. Ensuring that ACC has the resources necessary to continue this critical, life-saving work remains a priority for our organization.

The passage of Intro. 4 would – simply put – help prevent guinea pigs from overburdening our animal shelters and rescues as well as encourage the adoption of homeless guinea pigs from ACC. From the start of the pandemic to the introduction of this bill in February 2022, ACC shelters have taken in 1,065 guinea pigs. This year alone, 600 have entered the shelter system, more than double pre-pandemic numbers. Of these, most are under three years old (indicating they were pandemic purchases), 61% were originally purchased from a pet store, and the vast majority of them were not sterilized since pet stores and owners often choose to forego



sterilization due to cost and other factors. Guinea pigs reproduce in significant numbers in short periods of time, and the resulting overpopulation is exacerbated by the fact it is difficult to identify the sex of a young guinea pig. As a result, a pair will frequently produce multiple litters of unwanted guinea pigs commonly dumped in the city's shelters and parks. This population surge has forced ACC to invest over \$20,000 in infrastructure to accommodate the overwhelming number of animals. The growing issue of housing and placing guinea pigs is occurring at the same time as ACC faces significant challenges with increased dog and cat populations, space shortages, and increased funding needs.

We are grateful to the Council for recognizing the value of investing in our sheltering infrastructure and look forward to making the most of this opportunity to best protect animals across the city. We need to make sure that ACC can maintain and enhance their levels of service to the public, and this legislation serves as an important step toward meeting this essential goal.

Thank you.

Good Morning Council Members,

My name is Barbara Dennihy, I am the New York Director for Companion Animal Protection Society. I am writing to you today in support of Intro 4 which will prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in pet stores in New York City.

Just to give a little background on guinea pigs, researchers have found that they are highly intelligent, emotionally intelligent, and perceptive. Guinea pigs are very affectionate and sensitive. They are sentient beings.

This issue has become critical in the wake of the pandemic; city shelters and rescue groups are suddenly overwhelmed with people dumping their pandemic purchases of guinea pigs. Workers and volunteers are caring for hundreds of abandoned guinea pigs looking for homes. Many guinea pigs were purchased on impulse from pet stores, when the reality of caring for a guinea pig becomes real work for the unprepared purchaser, they surrender them or dump them.

Reports of abandoned guinea pigs in city parks are on the rise, which is a death sentence for these small and defenseless animals. [NYT: The Great Guinea Pig Giveaway Has Begun](#)

In 2014, the NYC council voted to prohibit the sale of rabbits in pet stores for the very same reason - impulse buying, second thoughts, and dumping in overwhelmed shelters or rescues.

Legislation works, as proven by the 2014 NYC rabbit sale prohibition.

Prohibiting sales of companion animals prompts adoption, curbs euthanasia and stops impulse buying.

I urge you to pass Intro 4, common sense legislation for the suffering guinea pigs, overburdened shelters and rescues in NYC.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Barbara Dennihy  
New York State Director  
Companion Animal Protection Society

Centereach, NY

[barbara@caps-web.org](mailto:barbara@caps-web.org)



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

December 12, 2022

Honorable Lynn Schulman  
Chair, Committee on Health  
New York City Council  
250 Broadway, New York, NY 10007

**RE: Testimony, Intro 4**

Dear Chairperson Schulman and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Brian Shapiro, New York State Director for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), representing our members and supporters in New York City and speaking in favor of Intro 4.

Animal shelters across New York State are facing unprecedented challenges in accepting ever-increasing numbers of companion animals surrendered by the public. NYC Animal Care Centers (ACC) is no exception, with a **117% intake increase** since 2020.

In particular, the HSUS has tracked the shocking increase of guinea pig intakes at ACC and we even see rescues outside of the city attempting to assist with this overflow of small, cheap and unaltered animals that originate from NYC itself. Many are abandoned in city parks, where they will die. These lively, high maintenance animals may be purchased for what is often less than the average price of a single beer in NYC.

This legislation would implement protections similar to a law passed by the City Council in 2014, addressing the sale of rabbits within city limits. This law was put in place to help ACC cope with the deluge of rabbit surrenders impacting the organization.

The HSUS supports similar action now to help ACC weather this storm and respectfully urges the Committee on Health to pass Intro 4.

This legislation is also supported by our affiliate organization, the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA) and their letter of support is included for your consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this information.

Sincerely,

**Brian Shapiro**

New York State Director, State Affairs  
[bshapiro@humanesociety.org](mailto:bshapiro@humanesociety.org)  
(845) 707-5350  
[humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org)



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**



## Humane Society of New York

ANIMAL CLINIC / VLADIMIR HOROWITZ AND WANDA TOSCANINI HOROWITZ ADOPTION CENTER  
306 East 59th Street, NYC 10022 / tel: (212) 752-4842

The Humane Society of New York supports passage of Intro. 4 of 2022 to prohibit pet shops from selling guinea pigs. Much of the same reasoning that caused the New York City Council in 2015 to ban the sale of rabbits from pet shops is now applicable to guinea pigs.

- New York City's Animal Care and Control shelters (ACC) are inundated with many hundreds of surrendered guinea pigs.
- It is difficult to find homes for so many guinea pigs, particularly when guinea pigs continue to be sold at pet shops.
- There have also been reports of unwanted guinea pigs being abandoned in our streets and parks. These animals cannot fend for themselves and, unless rescued, suffer and die.
- Guinea pigs are inexpensive to purchase, resulting in impulse buying. Yet, guinea pigs require specialized care and people who want to have guinea pigs as pets should be carefully screened, a process which, unfortunately, is not common at pet shops.
- Many fewer veterinarians are skilled in the treatment of guinea pigs than more traditional companion animals, such as dogs and cats, thus making it more difficult for guinea pig guardians to obtain convenient and affordable medical care for their guinea pigs.

The bottom line is that there is an overpopulation of guinea pigs. The sale of guinea pigs at pet shops exacerbates this problem and makes it much more difficult for shelters to find homes for these animals. Intro. 4 is humane legislation that will not only help to curtail the influx of guinea pigs at shelters and the abandonment of guinea pigs in our streets and parks but will also allow the ACC to use its limited resources to help the thousands of homeless and unwanted animals relinquished to its shelters every year. Thank you for your support.

Dated: December 14, 2022

Elinor Molbegott, Esq.  
Legal Counsel/Animal Issues

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Website: [www.HumaneSocietyNY.org](http://www.HumaneSocietyNY.org)



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December 14, 2022

**MEMO OF SUPPORT FOR INTRO 4: LEGISLATION TO PROHIBIT  
THE SALE OF GUINEA PIGS IN NEW YORK CITY PET STORES**

Dear Honorable New York City Councilmembers:

On behalf of the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA), I am writing to express support for Intro 4, legislation to prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in New York City pet stores.

It is well-known that New York City's Animal Care and Control is both chronically overburdened and struggling with the number of guinea pigs being taken into its facility. Over 750 such animals were admitted in 2022 alone.

Due to their small size and relatively low cost, pet shop guinea pigs are often subject to impulse purchases by individuals who are ultimately uncommitted to their needs and care.

Additionally, guinea pigs are physiologically and temperamentally sensitive to the repeat transports and crowding that typically precede pet store sales. Because guinea pigs are social animals, pet stores often house multiple guinea pigs together; however, this typically amounts to crowding in small glass display aquariums in which the animals lack necessary individual space. Guinea pigs subjected to such stressors are predisposed to upper respiratory infections, diarrhea, parasitic symptoms, behavior changes, and injuries. These factors in turn all increase the likelihood of shelter relinquishment or abandonment after purchase.

Additionally, the skittish behavior and difficult handling of many guinea pigs, combined with a lack of expertise among pet store staff, means that it is not uncommon for male and female guinea pigs to be misidentified and inadvertently housed together. This results in animals being sold pregnant or with an unrequested gender. Guinea pigs have an extremely high reproductive rate; they can produce up to 5 litters yearly with as many as 10 offspring per litter. Misreported genders and unwanted offspring inevitably catapult the rates of both fatal abandonment and relinquishment to already over-taxed shelters and rescues.



HUMANE SOCIETY  
VETERINARY MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION.

Because of the extreme overpopulation of guinea pigs and the ease with which they can be responsibly acquired from shelters and rescues in a more vetted manner, we support Intro 4 as a humane and sensible measure. We thank you for your responsible leadership in addressing this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Eileen Jefferson, DVM'.

Eileen Jefferson, DVM  
New York State Representative,  
Humane Society Veterinary Medical  
Association (HSVMA)

November 3, 2022

To: NY City Council

I fervently urge you to **stop NYC pet stores from selling guinea pigs.**

Over the past few years New York City has seen the number of abandoned guinea pigs skyrocket, with 600 surrendered to an already overworked and under-resourced city shelter system in 2022 alone. Those surrendered guinea pigs are better off than the ones abandoned in parks and public places, left to starve or be killed by predators on their own.

Please do the right thing.

Respectfully,

Gabriele Schafer-Fracaro  
Dean Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11217



LIGHTS OUT TESTIMONY FOR [INTRO 4](#)  
December 14, 2022

Good morning, Chair Woman Schulman and members of the Health Committee. My name is Kathy Nizzari. I am Founder and Chair of the Lights Out Coalition, and I thank you for the opportunity to present testimony written by our member Jessica Zafonte, Founder of They All Want To Live, animal rescuer and rehabilitator, and member of the New York Bar Association’s Animal Law Committee. We fully support Intro 4 and thank CouncilWoman Ayala for this important legislation.

The purchase and subsequent disposal of companion animals – through abandonment in parks, surrender to shelters or for “free” giveaways on Craigslist, and others – is a widespread issue that has far reaching negative effects. Many do not survive the ordeal, and shelters, rescue groups, park rangers and staff, all overburdened, simply cannot respond to and help all of the animals no longer wanted.

A recent NY Times [article](#) noted the uptick in both the procurement and then surrender of animals during COVID – cats and dogs, but also chickens, ducks, and small animals including guinea pigs. Folks who purchased pets during lockdown did not make a lifetime commitment to these animals, but merely sought companionship during a time of temporary isolation. Once the lockdown was lifted, these “other” animals were surrendered at a much higher rate. This is largely due to people’s lack of empathy for them. Because guinea pigs do not behave like cats or dogs, they simply don’t feel as guilty giving them away.

It couldn’t be easier or cheaper to purchase small animals like guinea pigs from pet stores. They are cute and small and are purchased constantly for kids without



a second thought to their long-term care or needs. As is often the case, rather than investing precious few minutes in educating themselves, which would make a world of difference to the animal, people make the rash choice of abandoning their impulse purchases.

Very few people think to adopt guinea pigs, so they continue to buy them while surrendered ones languish in New York's Animal Care Center in stacked trays for the duration of their short, sad lives. ACC reported 769 guinea pigs relinquished to them so far this year, more than double pre-pandemic levels.

Another human mistake often made is purchasing them in [pairs](#) without having them spayed or neutered. Unlike cats and dogs who are required to be neutered to keep populations down, no such mandate exists for guinea pigs, and they quickly reproduce. So they are surrendered or abandoned soon after purchase, many of whom are pregnant or just had babies.

We simply do not have a safety net for these animals. Rescue groups are already overburdened and most are full at any given time. Those who even attempt to rehome their guinea pigs grow frustrated and drop them off at a general intake municipal shelter such as ACC or pass them on to anyone who will take them. The cost of care, as well as neutering, is then passed on to the taxpayers or the rescuers themselves who have limited funds and do this work out of the goodness of their hearts.

Shockingly, many, possibly even most other people, will not even make the effort and abandon them in city parks, in buildings, or even leave them out with the trash. Guinea pigs don't, and can't, live in the wild here, but they are regularly dumped illegally. It happens nonstop across our many parks. Park rangers do not have the time or ability to catch every dumped animal. Most will die of the elements, starvation, or predation before any rescuer even knew they had been abandoned.

The problem is so much more prevalent than people realize and it is only getting worse. We must end the sale of guinea pigs. There is no downside. Guinea pigs of all ages and temperaments can be adopted from ACC and from other rescue groups across the city. Therefore, we urge you to please pass Intro 4. We thank you for your time.

[kathy.nizzari.nam@gmail.com](mailto:kathy.nizzari.nam@gmail.com)

**In response to Council Woman Narcisse's question about costs of guinea pig care:**

One-time costs:

\$600 spay/neuter

\$200-300 cage

\$50 food bowl, water bottle

\$25 brush and nail trimmers

\$60 carrier

\$300-500 sick vet visit (likely to be incurred at least once in the life of the animal)

**\$1235-1535 one-time costs**

Ongoing care - prices are annual:

\$800 bedding

\$100 toys, hidey houses, and other enrichment

\$700 food (hay plus pellets plus fresh produce)

\$50 vitamins and supplements

\$250 veterinary checkup

**\$1900 annual cost of care**



*NYSAPF is the voice of New York's humane societies, SPCAs, non-profit and municipal animal shelters as well as animal welfare organizations which focus on homeless animals.*

**TESTIMONY TO NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

**INTRO. 004**

**Presented by Libby Post, Executive Director of the NYS Animal Protection Federation**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to you today on behalf of the New York State Animal Protection Federation (NYSAPF). The Federation represents all the humane societies and SPCAs as well as non-profit and municipal animal shelters across the state. From a policy perspective, our focus is two-fold—on the organizational strength and financial sustainability of our membership and on the health and well-being of companion animals—mainly dogs, cats, puppies and kittens but also other domesticated animals such as guinea pigs. Our members also include animal welfare organizations such as the ASPCA and the Humane Society of the United States.

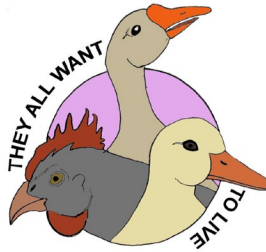
I am here today to talk about the impact the sale of guinea pigs has on the city's shelter system, the Animal Care Centers of New York City, one of the Federation's members. Guinea pigs are coming into ACC at an unprecedented rate. In 2020, ACC recorded 357 guinea pig coming into their care (January – November). In 2022, ACC has taken in 777 during that same time, an increase of 117%. Guinea pigs are now the third largest species coming into ACC. While ACC rescue partners try to help by pulling as many guinea pigs as they can, they too are overwhelmed.

It's not just that stores are breeding and selling guinea pigs. It's that they are selling guinea pigs unaltered and often with their sex mislabeled. According to testimony dated April 30, 2014, PetSmart stated that they "cannot source sterilized guinea pigs, and the cost of sterilizing in-store would be prohibitive." Unsuspecting consumers are bringing home pairs of guinea pigs sold as same-sex, only to find out 60 days later that they purchased a male and female. The litter size ranges from 1 to 8 pups and a female can give birth to up to 5 litters per year. Moreover, owners have stated that they were unable to return their guinea pigs to stores, so ACC became the only option. At this point, it is up to ACC to house, place and fund the sterilization of guinea pigs.

There is momentum among New Yorkers to create a more humane community. The New York State Legislature passed the Puppy Mill Pipeline bill, sponsored by the City's own State Senator Michael Gianaris and Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal. The bill end the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in pet stores. Banning the sale of guinea pigs in pet shops in New York City is a simple and effective way to stop the influx at its source. We must continue to increase adoptions and encourage people to adopt not shop, but we also need to address the root cause of pet overpopulation in shelters.

I'm grateful to have this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council on what could be a consequential bill in moving New York City's record as a humane city forward. Thank you.

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## **Testimony re: Guinea Pig Sale Ban, Int 0004-2022**

**Submitted by: They All Want To Live**

Over 700 guinea pigs were surrendered to just the NYC city shelter system alone in the last year. Many of these animals were pregnant. Hundreds more were dumped in city parks or otherwise surrendered. But there are very few rescue groups who focus on small animals. There is simply no safety net for these animals that are easily purchased, often for kids and on a whim, with no research done on their care or ongoing needs.

Contrary to the belief of misguided consumers, guinea pigs are not “easy pets.” They need a properly sized enclosure, balanced diet, time out of the cage, proper bedding, environmental enrichment, regular cleaning, socialization, and veterinary care. They grow despondent when kept alone as singles, but pairs of opposite sexes must be spayed/neutered otherwise they will quickly reproduce.

As a rescue group that focuses on abandoned domestic animals, we are familiar with the huge number of domestic animals, who were raised by and lived inside with people, being dumped in city parks, and guinea pigs are no different. This is shocking since it seems evident that guinea pigs don't, and can't, live in the wild here, but they are regularly dumped outside. Our park rangers do not have the time or ability to catch every dumped animal. Most will die of the elements, starvation, or predation before anyone even knew they had been abandoned. There is also evidence that people are more likely to surrender small animals to shelters than cats and dogs. ACC has guinea pigs living in stacked trays, yet very few think about going to ACC to adopt. Instead they go to pet stores and pay often not more than \$50 to purchase a guinea pig who will soon wind up neglected and abandoned. The problem is so much more prevalent than people realize and the numbers show that it is only getting worse. It is time that the sale of guinea pigs as pets be restricted in NYC. There is no downside.

Subject of Testimony: Support Intro 4 – Guinea Pigs  
Alexandrea LaFata

I am Alexandrea LaFata, founder of Vegan Muse, lobbyist & activist. I have lobbied for many laws in New York, with nearly all focused on animal welfare.

The size of guinea pigs contributes to the cruelty they endure for reasons worth noting. There is a widespread misconception that an animal's body size correlates to its capacity for intelligence, ability to feel emotions & process pain. Though they are tiny, Guinea Pigs are exceptionally clever, sensitive & aware. Their petite size also means they are specifically marketed by the pet industry as both "cute" & "easy to care for." The small nature of Guinea pigs is exploited by the pet breeding industry to feed a relentless cycle of breeding, marketing & sales. Some guinea pigs are lucky enough to end up in loving homes, but many are abandoned to the wild where they are prey or are surrendered to any already overwhelmed NYC Shelter System.

The often danced around aspect of pet breeding is the mother herself. Guinea pig pregnancies are difficult by nature as they are born with fur, ready to run & large compared to their mother. Pregnant Guinea pigs can suffer from a prolapsed uterus, hypocalcemia, dystocia, & pregnancy ketosis (blood poisoning). If a female Guinea Pig begins her first pregnancy after she is 8 months old, there is a high chance of dystocia, and she cannot deliver unaided by humans. The survival rate of cesarian surgeries for guinea pigs is extremely low.

Allowing the exploitation of these tiny but sentient animals who already have high risk pregnancies for profit in NYC is unnecessarily cruel, especially when many ultimately have lackluster fates.

Thank you.

**From:** [Marilyn Animal Lover](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony Supporting Intro 4  
**Date:** Saturday, December 17, 2022 10:29:59 AM

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My name is Marilyn Galfin of Voices for Shelter Animals, We are in support of intro 4 to ban the sale of guinea pigs.

COVID created an explosion in the sales of companion animals which included guinea pigs to help people through those trying times. Now record numbers are being surrendered to the NYC ACC shelters which are already in crisis. Many are abandoned ( as are dogs which is against the law. There needs to be a crackdown). Some are being given away for free or dumped outside left to fend for themselves to potentially suffer a horrific fate which in itself is enough to merit this legislation.

This crisis was created by unscrupulous and greedy retail stores. Many were sold to families who purchased them for their children during COVID. .With no animal welfare in mind, typical of stores selling pets, they sold to anyone who paid the small price tag allowing people to buy them on impulse.

There is no screening, no education given to the customer on the high maintenance & costs involved, including high cost of spaying or neutering not feasible for many people. Being irresponsible selling unaltered animals to cut costs and not knowing the sex of many, unsuspecting consumers may have ended up with surprise litters of guinea pigs. The stores will not take back the animals and they have complete disregard for the fate of these animals who are no more than merchandise to be sold for profit.

Guinea pigs are sourced from the mills which are as horrific as the puppy mills with inhumane conditions and neglect causing immense pain and suffering which no animal should ever have to endure.

There is double the number of guinea pigs since 2020 flooding into the shelter. It is draining resources and taking away urgently needed staff to handle the escalating crisis of homeless dogs and cats. This homeless crisis is also taking an emotional toll on advocates promoting the animals ( especially with the killing of adoptable treatable dogs escalating) shelter volunteers, and rescue partners. Rescues are already overwhelmed with dogs and cats and now some are trying to help to save guinea pigs taking time and resources. I have recently seen a rescue on social media stating they are close to giving up rescuing as they cannot keep up. This is happening all across the US. The situation is dire with no end in sight. Thus the need for legislative intervention.

This crisis is highlighting the symptoms of deeper issues and solving the root cause of homeless animals is imperative to keep them out of the shelter in the first place. The whole culture of how animals are perceived must be changed now. That includes animals getting status as sentient beings and treating them as such.

Proper pet ownership must be addressed through education and that companion animals are a lifetime commitment and not disposable items when inconvenient. Education on animals should include adults and kids. There is legislation for having humane education taught in schools but it needs to be researched to see if it is being implemented.

The message of adopt don't shop needs to be promoted along with the message that abandonment is illegal. The message needs to also get on tv so the public knows the shelter offers resources and alternatives to abandoning pets. Any negative myths of shelter animals must be addressed.

To end the homeless animal crisis it is critical that lawmakers make NYC pet friendly .NYC rates very low.

<https://www.newsweek.com/best-worst-states-cities-america-rent-cats-dogs-pet-friendly-new-research-1708912>

There is much pet discrimination in housing which must be changed. It is impacting the pool of potential adopters and fosters. Fosters are the lifeline to keeping animals out of the shelter. People need to have a right to have a pet .No one should have to choose between a place to live or giving up their beloved family member.

Unaffordable pet care needs to be regulated. Low cost veterinary services must expand. Celebrity vet Dr Jeff coined a word that sums it up. Economic euthanasia. People should not have to put animals in a shelter where they can be destroyed or put their beloved family pet to sleep for lack of money.

Right now more pet food pantries must be set up as well . During this crisis it needs to be community helping their fellow neighbors to help them keep their pets. I have asked many elected officials to consider sponsoring pet food drives to help constituents to keep their pets and share links to the NYC ACC in their newsletters.

Backyard breeding must be addressed which is adding more animals into the homeless mix and with no oversight animals may be suffering the fate similar to animals in the mills.

There is much more to be done on the animal welfare front and therefore the need for a Dept of Animal Welfare to address the many animal concerns of this city especially in a major crisis. There is a need for shelter reform and changing the old culture of the accepted status quo of killing adoptable treatable animals. The DOH should also be replaced from overseeing ACC.

Companion animals helped many New Yorkers during COVID offering them comfort & emotional support during a time of isolation,depression, overwhelm and more.

We now especially owe these animals protection from exploitation, suffering and death and intro 4 is a great way to do that for the guinea pigs.

When people are causing harm to animals which is happening by the selling of guinea pigs in stores they must lose their rights to continue doing that through legislation..

Intro 4 is a great step toward making NYC humane for its companion and non companion

animals and showing other cities across the US what real animal welfare looks like. Animals' lives do matter.

Thank you members of the Health committee, Chairperson Shulman, Speaker Adams, and Deputy Speaker Ayala for creating this piece of compassionate legislation. We look forward to the passing of intro 4.





My name is Allie Taylor and I am the president of Voters For Animal Rights (VFAR) in NYC. Thank you Speaker Adams, Chairperson Schulman, and the Committee on Health for holding today's hearing. Thank you to Deputy Speaker Ayala for your leadership on the bill, and to the 34 Council Members who have co-sponsored Intro 4. We recognize and appreciate that this is the first piece of animal protection legislation taken up by the new City Council, and we are grateful to you for prioritizing this time-sensitive matter.

I also want to thank the animal advocates testifying today, and to remind all of us that while I understand that there are many animal issues that we care about, today's hearing is focusing specifically on guinea pigs, so let's all please be respectful of the Council's time by staying on topic.

I want to give some background on how this bill came to be. In the Fall of 2021, our colleagues at Animal Care Centers of NYC (NYCACC) came to us for help with brainstorming ideas on how to stop the increasing and untenable influx of hundreds of guinea pigs surrendered annually to their shelters. We knew from our experience working on stopping puppy mills that pet stores would never volunteer to do the right thing and stop selling guinea pigs as "merchandise". We agreed that legislative action, like the successful 2014 law that banned the sale of rabbits in NYC pet stores, is the only means to a permanent solution.

Pet stores, who sell guinea pigs for around \$50, have openly admitted that they don't provide vet care for illnesses, injures, or spay/neuter because this would cut into their profits. Pet stores will sell guinea pigs to anyone who walks through the door, as their motivation is to sell their "inventory" as quickly as possible. Guinea pigs are often impulse buys. Because they are sensitive animals with complex needs, people often surrender them after the novelty wears off, creating a crisis in our city's animal shelters and rescues. Additionally, New Yorkers have been abandoning guinea pigs in city parks, which is a death sentence for the animals. They cannot survive in the wild and will either starve to death or be attacked by predators.

By contrast, when guinea pigs are adopted out to individuals or families from shelters or rescues, potential adopters are carefully screened to ensure that they have time, resources, lifestyle, and support to provide a loving forever home. Shelters and rescues also provide education so that adopters understand how to care for their animals and provide an environment for the guinea pig to thrive in. They are adopted out to homes where they feel confident that the adopter understands that this is a commitment for the lifetime of the guinea pig. Therefore, they are far less likely to be surrendered to a shelter in the future.

VFAR is proud to support Intro 4, which represents a critical step towards ensuring that all companion animals have safe homes while also reducing the burden on our overwhelmed shelter system. This bill is common sense, humane legislation. We urge the City Council to move swiftly on this bill, as any delay will only increase the number of unwanted guinea pigs. Thank you.

Allie Taylor, President  
Voters For Animal Rights  
1276 Putnam Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11221

**WOODSTOCK**  
**FARM SANCTUARY**  
FARM ANIMAL REFUGE • EDUCATION CENTER • RETREAT

December 13, 2022

To New York City Council,

My name is Herve Breuil, I am the Shelter Director at Woodstock Farm Sanctuary in High Falls, New York. Woodstock Farm Sanctuary offers sanctuary and cares for 365 rescued farmed animals.

I am here today to testify in strong support of New York City Council Intro 4 to ban the sale of guinea pigs and promote adoption in New York City.

As Shelter Director I can attest that in the past 2 years, there has been a 200% increase in inquiries about surrendering guinea pigs, rabbits, chickens and ducks to us. People impulse bought them during the pandemic to have a small companion animal or to use the avians and their eggs for food.

Per our mission as a farm sanctuary, we do not rescue guinea pigs nor are we equipped to rescue them. Therefore we tell people who are calling us from NYC to ask if we can adopt their guinea pigs or if we can pick up guinea pigs they spotted in public spaces, to contact their local shelters instead, such as the Animal Care Centers of New York City. However, we do rescue rabbits, chickens and ducks and the cost associated with a new rescue is high. From spaying or neutering in the case of rabbits, to blood work, fecal float tests and at times emergency care as well. You cannot leave male and female rabbits (and guinea pigs) together for 30 days after they have been spayed or neutered so that they cannot reproduce. Rabbits, like, guinea pigs have to be separated from each other as guinea pigs are often very territorial and introduction needs to be done slowly and carefully.

Finally, with so many animals being rescued, it is impossible to place most of them and they have to stay in the care of the shelter for many months or years.

As an animal caregiver, and advocate for the compassionate treatment of animals, I urge you to vote yes on New York City Council Intro. 4 ban the sale of guinea pigs and promote adoption in New York City.

Sincerely,

Herve Breuil

Hello,

My name is Alyssa Ryba and I am writing this in regards to supporting the passing of the bill to prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in NYC pet stores. I myself am a guinea pig owner to the sweetest boy I have ever had the pleasure of raising. I support this bill for many reasons because guinea pigs deserve a voice too.

Guinea pigs are not low maintenance animals and require a lot of attention, time and care. They should not be confined to one space all day long, as they are one of the animals that require room to run and be free the majority of the day. Guinea pigs also need large living spaces so that they do not feel caged in while they are locked up.

Selling guinea pigs in pet stores does not give people this awareness of how much work needs to be put into caring for a guinea pig. Most people impulsively buy guinea pigs because they are cute, but do not understand that they are not just animals you can buy without doing research on how to care for them. Because of this, people who impulsively guinea pigs end up realizing they are not fit to care for them and end up releasing them into the wild. This is not fair to guinea pigs and is extremely cruel treatment. By passing this bill, pet stores can no longer advertise guinea pigs, just to make a profit. Everyone needs to be aware that these adorable and loving animals deserve a better life than locked up in pet stores, and better than being owned by people who don't know how to care for them. Stopping the sales of guinea pigs will prevent them from being let loose and from a lifetime of suffering. These poor little animals deserve a life filled with love and proper care.

This is my official written testimony in support of passing this bill. Let's give the animals a voice and support proper care for them by making people aware of the commitment it takes to own one. I couldn't imagine putting a guinea pig in pain or for ignoring their needs. As a guinea pig mom, we must do anything we can to protect these little animals.

Thank you for your time,  
Alyssa Ryba

## In Support of Intro 4 on the Prohibition of Guinea Pig Sales

**Wednesday, December 14, 2022**

Whether animals are conscious and aware is a question many of us have caught ourselves thinking of at some point or another. So, I invite you to think about the conscious experience of someone close to you to answer this to yourself.

You may think this is a radical thought, but then—why is it that researchers have spent countless of hours and resources to study animal behavior, in particular that of rodents? Because rodents such as prairie voles and guinea pigs can tell us about how we love, how we care for our mates and our children, and how we experience safety, fear, loneliness, and so many other emotional states.

When prairie voles bond, they do so for life-- the male alongside the female raise their young together—and when separation or death occurs, their stress systems and hormones like vasopressin which regulates blood pressure increase in density—they retreat and show increased anxiety in laboratory tests.

Under somewhat different circumstances, a 1986 study followed 12 guinea pigs placed in long-term isolation. Among their many symptoms were higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol, severe loss of more than 20% their body weight, and death. Out of the 12, only 5 survived, who gained low ranking social positions and were unable to reproduce.

These may be small beings, but they are conscious beings. Which we ship in stacked bins and small cages to pet suppliers under extreme conditions-- and when they don't arrive frozen or dead after that traumatic transit-- we display in storefronts, releasing them to people under a quick transaction, which serves to fund this cycle of harm and torture.

In the reverberating words of American Ecologist Carl Safina: “[Animals] have the same imperatives as we have: stay alive, keep our babies alive, and let life continue.” For this, I invite you to support Intro 4.

Thank you,

-Cindy Nunez del Arco

**From:** [Domenick Acocella](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Intro 4 Testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 14, 2022 12:54:12 PM

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Hello! Thank you for listening to us. (My how quickly two minutes goes!) Here is my full testimony.

Every so often, a friend of mine asks me to look after Ginger, her guinea pig. When I stop by to feed her and clean her cage, she squeals with delight. She recognizes me and when I first come up to her (spacious) abode, she sticks her nose to the cage and nibbles and wants a treat. When I put my finger near her nose, she gently bumps it. She does not bite me. Sometimes, before feeding her, I pick her up. I place her against my chest and she purrs. But, it turns out, she does not like to be picked up and when I leave she screams with dread. If I cannot pick her up---for I am also allergic---I can pet her and she purrs. But once she has been fed, I cannot touch her. She will jump and run off and hide in one of her many chambers. She will tell me to leave her alone. See: I have served my purpose and am no longer needed, no longer important. This happens again and again and I am simply floored at her ability to emote and play and know what she wants and know what to do and say to get it. Clearly, Ginger is a sentient being and, yet, her sisters and brothers are not, in this city, being treated with dignity and the fault lies with us. But today's proposed ban is one small step we can take to ameliorate this terrible situation. Animals being purchased as pets from pet stores when there are plenty of homeless ones in our shelters and on our streets is massively problematic. This strikes at the core of what is wrong with a community that professes to care for life and yet allows animals to be used and discarded like fast fashion. Some might say (have said) it is our right to buy what the market offers. I totally agree. One should be allowed to buy whatever one wants. And so perhaps the next step is to limit what options the market can offer because, though the practice is economically sound (that is, people want something and the market offers it or it is the market offers it and people end up wanting it?), it is morally repugnant and ethically unsound. Hyperbolic as this may sound to some of my neighbors and fellow citizens, we can appreciate this sentiment perhaps more fully when we look at how overcrowded our shelters have become with the influx of pandemic pets now filling them as people return to whatever passes for normal. It is our—and by “our” I refer to not only the council but the community it represents and I also refer to us, the people of this amazing community called New York City—it is our obligation to protect the most vulnerable from market forces when those forces exploit life. Simply put: removing the option to buy an animal from a store removes one more avenue for blithe neglect and abuse of these vulnerable, sentient, family-oriented creatures. Like Ginger, they do suffer. They do prefer. They do remember. By recklessly buying—and let me not even talk about the offense that is

embedded in the notion of buying another living creature—by recklessly buying and then discarding another being—and by not stopping this cruelty by removing the legal market for this criminality—such consumers send a message to children that this sort of behavior is acceptable, that it is okay to discard what is no longer wanted, even when she is alive and, thanks to breeding and domestication, incapable of living as she might have, incapable of survival, say, in one of our public parks where many other guinea pigs are often simply abandoned. This council has finally taken the initiative to listen. And so my hope is that this council will decide ethically and morally and no longer deem it legal to sell living beings for profit—especially when there are plenty of young, sentient, loving ones in our shelters who now need a home. And I hope this council does not stop with guinea pigs and frees all animals from unconscionable market practices that enable other cruelties sentient creatures endure merely for market-imagined and -driven consumer needs and desires.

Donna Karlin  
Brooklyn, NY 11215

December 14, 2022

Attn:  
New York City Council  
Committee on Health

## **SUPPORT of Intro 4 - Guinea Pigs**

Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you so much for taking the time to address this very real issue at stake in our community. My name is Donna Karlin, I am an avid animal lover. As a family, we've had dogs, a fish and a parakeet. But in 2014 my then 6-year-old son asked me if we could adopt a guinea pig. I had never thought about a guinea pig as a pet. They're rodents, right? I could never have been so wrong. This 1 pound of fluff brought so much love into my family's life. He greeted us with squeaks when we arrived home after work and school, he 'popcorned' with excitement when we'd wake up in the morning, he went nose to nose with our dog and he always made eye contact. Garbanzo Bean, as he was known, has since passed away after 6 years of a beautiful life. His presence has made us re-think how we see guinea pigs. Guinea pigs are *not* toys. They are real living creatures with heart, they are extremely intelligent, they have the capability to give and receive love.

Every time I walk into a pet store and see how they are inhumanely hoarding them in glass boxes for sale, it breaks my heart. My knee jerk reaction is to buy/save them but then I would be encouraging the sale and perpetuating the problem. I encourage you to pass Intro 4 and stop the sale of these loving creatures. Animal shelters are at capacity and there are more than enough available should someone want to thoughtfully adopt. The problem is, in pet stores they are sold so cheaply that it's almost an impulse buy. But just like any pet – they are a responsibility. To properly care for them you need to buy food, bedding, provide veterinary care and so on. And when that realization sets in many are forced to surrender them to a shelter or, worse yet, just set them free in the wild. The Animal Care Centers of NYC do a wonderful job in helping pet owners stay united with their animals. But in the case of guinea pigs, the inflow has been overwhelming. Since 2018 the annual intake of guinea pigs at the ACC has more than doubled, with the reported rate of guinea pig surrenders at 61% purchased from a pet store. Now is the time to make this crucial change for the health and welfare of guinea pigs. I implore you, please lead by example and pass Intro 4 and stop the sale of guinea pigs in pet stores. Thank you.

**PLEASE READ AND SUBMIT TO CITY COUNCIL**

**Testimony by Elizabeth Cuccia**

My son and daughter in law rescued 2 guinea pigs that someone dumped in Powell's Cove Park in College Point, Queens in early July 2022. They had no intention of permanently keeping them since they live in a small apartment, money is tight and have a 2-year-old child and a rabbit and didn't have the space to provide the guinea pigs with what they needed and it was a hardship for them to provide food and bedding for them. They reached out to a rescue and at first the rescue thought they had space for two more but unfortunately a pending adoption that would have opened up a space for them fell through. They tried to find someone to adopt them and while 2 people expressed interest, both potential adoptions fell through. No organizations were accepting them and since they are a bonded pair, it was challenging to find a home for them. They fostered the guinea pigs until after Thanksgiving 2022 when a wonderful, caring, adoptive family was found.

Please put an end to the sale of small animals in pet stores. This was the second dumping in my area.

Thank you.

Signed electronically.

Elizabeth Cuccia

See screenshots on next page.





Elizabeth Atkinson Cuccia

July 9 · 🌐



Recently, there has been an uptick in the number of abandoned animals being left in our local parks to fend for themselves. 😞 Leaving them in the parks can lead to attacks by hawks and other birds of prey, disease, and injuries, and sometimes death. A dead dog was found in the water at MacNeil Park on July 4th. Another dog was rescued from the park a few days earlier.

Adopting or purchasing a pet should never be done impulsively. Google care of and type of pet so you know what you will need to do. If you aren't willing to take care of the pet you are considering, please don't adopt or purchase! If you are unable to take care of a pet and are unable to rehome it, take the time to google the name of animal/rescue/nyc.

On Wednesday, my daughter in law was walking in one of our local parks when a guinea pig was sitting in the middle of a path and she spotted another laying in a nearby bush and panting. She called my son and he met her there with my cat carrier. The first guinea pig was apparently used to being handled and came right up to my son but the second one was scared and ran into the group of trees surrounded by thorn bushes. My son had to go through the thorn bushes to rescue it. Its nails were overgrown and my son had to clip them. Guinea pigs are domestic animals and are unlikely to survive in a park. My daughter in law felt that they had just been dumped because their fur was clean and they were both near the path. Thank you to [Jennifer Shannon](#) and [Cathleen Shannon](#) of A Better College Point Civic Association who knew of a local guinea pig rescue. My son and his wife connected with the rescue group. The rescue is currently full so they will be fostering the guinea pigs until a spot opens up. Thank you also to [Lauren Anchor](#) who passed a guinea pig enclosure and supplies on to Jennifer Shannon who dropped them off to us.

If you are considering getting a pet, research the pet's care first. Know what you are getting into. Don't be impulsive!

If you are unable to take care of a pet, google local rescue groups. My family has reached out successfully to 2 rescue groups in the past month for animals that have crossed our paths. Please don't leave them to fend for themselves in our parks!

At  
Gc



Countless guinea pigs, who provided companionship during the early years of the pandemic, are cruelly being discarded like trash. As a result, these sweet, gentle, and defenseless animals have suffered and died in our parks and other NYC locations. In addition, animal care and control has been overwhelmed by an influx of unwanted guinea pigs.

I support Intro 4, which will prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in NYC pet stores.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Graham Wood  
Midtown East

SUPPORT Intro 4 - guinea pigs

Hearing on December 14th

New York December 13, 2022

Guinea Pigs are highly sensitive and perceptive animals.

They can learn tricks and display high emotional intelligence and empathy.

They are also quick learners and have the ability to learn tricks and respond to commands.

They can learn their own names and can also recognize certain words and commands. For instance, food words will be associated with food.

Guinea pigs are very sensitive creatures and respond to both their owner's and herds emotions. Guinea pigs are known for being emotionally intelligent which shows how clever these animals are. In the wild, guinea pigs can sense emotions and will stay in tune with the rest of the herd. They have the ability to sense feelings and emotional changes and constantly stay alert. Since guinea pigs are social animals, they are extremely devoted to supporting and protecting each other and their leaders.

Guinea pigs are very sensitive creatures and respond to both their owner's and herd's emotions. Guinea pigs are known for being emotionally intelligent which shows how clever these animals are. In the wild, guinea pigs can sense emotions and will stay in tune with the rest of the herd. They have the ability to sense feelings and emotional changes and constantly stay alert. Since guinea pigs are social animals, they are extremely devoted to supporting and protecting each other and their leaders.

Guadalupe Ruiz Fajardo

Dear Committee Members,

Many years ago I inherited two Guinea Pigs from my downstairs neighbor. Her child had several “throw away” animals which she quickly tired of. I felt really bad for the Guinea Pigs (and later the Turtle) and their plight. I can’t express how heartbreaking this disposal of animals is to me and many others.

While Cholly and P-nut had nice lives in my Home, I had a growing awareness of how horrible these animals are mistreated and how sadly immune young children became from a full range of feelings for another live being.

This is not a small matter. The youngest among us (and apparently their elders) need to develop feelings of humanity at an early age toward all creatures great and small for our very survival.

Please vote in favor of Intro 4 – Guinea Pigs.

Heide Fasnacht

December 13, 2022

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to request your co-sponsorship of a high-priority legislation, Intro 4. Intro 4 is a legislation by Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala and is supported by 35 Council Members that would prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in New York City pet stores.

This law would not only prevent guinea pigs from overburdening our city's animal shelters but it would also encourage the adoption of guinea pigs from Animal Care Centers of New York City (ACC), whose staff is facing an unprecedented increase in the intake of guinea pigs.

Since 2018, the annual intake of guinea pigs at ACC has more than doubled from 325 in 2018 to 709 in 2021. Our city shelters are overcrowded and there are only two veterinarians in NYC who can perform spay/neuter surgery on guinea pigs at a high cost of \$400-\$515 per animal. There were many incidents of people abandoning guinea pigs in our parks, which is a death sentence for the animals. They cannot survive in the cold/parks and will either starve to death or be attacked by predators such as hawks and falcons.

This bill is supported by Voters For Animal Rights (VFAR), The Humane Society of the United States and the Mayor's Alliance For NYC's Animals.

This bill is a humane legislation, like that which successfully banned the sale of rabbits in New York City pet stores in 2014.

It represents an important step towards ensuring that all animals have safe homes while also reducing the burden on our overwhelmed shelter system.

It is time we make New York City more humane and safe for everyone. Thank you.

With gratitude,  
Inga Guliyeva  
Resident of New York City, District 2

**PLEASE READ AND SUBMIT TO CITY COUNCIL**

**Jennifer Shannon**  
**20<sup>th</sup> Ave**  
**College Point, NY 11356**

**Testimony 1 of 3**

I currently have 4 Guinea Pigs. I did NOT decide to go out buy 4 Guinea Pigs one day, all the Guinea Pigs with me were rescued. They are with me because they had nobody else.

Two of the Guinea Pigs, Hazel and Maisie (both female) are victims of “I don’t want a Guinea Pig anymore because I did not know they were this much work and I do not have time to take care of them.” Fortunately, their owners did not just dump them and they ended up with me. I fell in love and I knew they needed love, so I became their forever home two years ago. Prior to living with me. it was clear they were not fed properly. They would not take vitamin c (a yummy biscuit treat) or eat leafy green vegetables. All they wanted was pellets and some hay. It took months to get them on the proper diet. They are safe, but there are so many more that need to find homes, just check in with ACC and ask how they are doing with Guinea Pigs. They recently had to spend \$20,000 on a special environment because they have so many Guinea Pigs. In addition, private rescues are not taking Guinea Pigs in at this time.

This could be avoided if pet stores properly educated their customers, which they don’t, it seems to be about sales and not proper care. I am in the Petco located at 133-11 20th Ave, College Point, Queens, NY 11356 all the time and the Guinea Pigs are not housed properly, they NEVER have enough hay and the employees can only tell you the bare minimum about proper care. Please put an end to this cruelty.

*Jennifer Shannon*

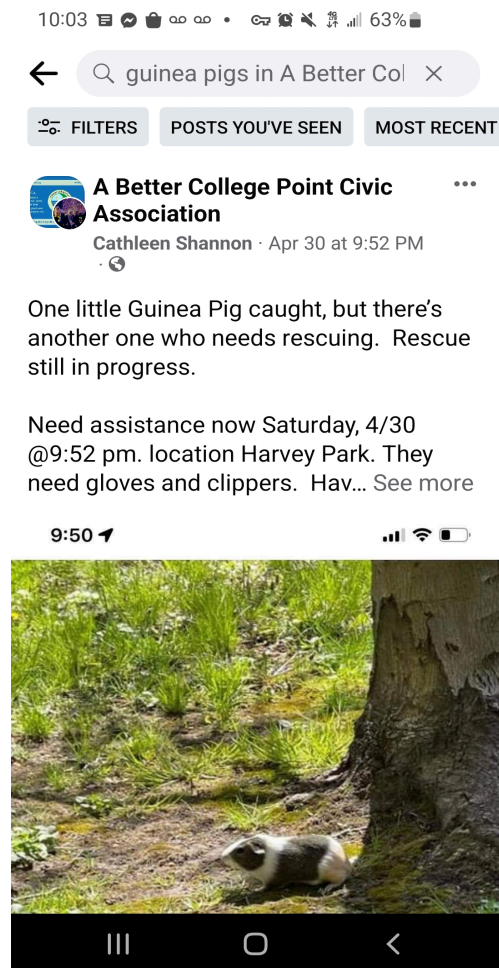
## PLEASE READ AND SUBMIT TO CITY COUNCIL

**Jennifer Shannon**  
20<sup>th</sup> Ave  
College Point, NY 11356

### Testimony 2 of 3

The other two Guinea Pigs I have, Scarface and Harvey (both male), were dumped in a park on or around April 30<sup>th</sup> 2022. They were about 4 months old, their age was estimated by a vet. I saw a post about them in a Facebook group and gathered a team to go get them, we spent about 4 hours trying to rescue the terrified Guinea Pigs that were being stalked by a feral cat. We had to continuously chase the cat away. I work with a rabbit rescue so I had some basic knowledge on how to catch them. One of the Guinea Pig's ears was ripped in half and needed medical attention (hence the name Scarface). These two Guinea Pigs would have died an unnecessary terrible and painful death if they were not rescued.

See screenshots below and on the next page.





👍🥰 5 >



32w Like Reply

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**Jennifer Shannon**  
Guinea pig number two was rescued

32w Like Reply

2 👍



**Jennifer Shannon**



10:08 [icons] 61%

👍🥰 5 >



Reply



**Jennifer Shannon**  
This one's already at my house rest and comfortably

32w Like Reply



**Jennifer Shannon**



32w Like Reply 1 ❤️

Taire Cuevas Jennifer Shannon OM...



**Jennifer Shannon**  
They will need vet care anyone that wants to donate please let me know. Any bit will help.

*Jennifer Shannon*

Rules

Write a public comment...





## PLEASE READ AND SUBMIT TO CITY COUNCIL

Jennifer Shannon  
20<sup>th</sup> Ave  
College Point, NY 11356

### Testimony 3 of 3

I try to shop at the Petco 133-11 20th Ave, College Point, Queens, NY 11356. I was able to shop there more regularly when I had a rabbit. I run in there now only when my online order is running late. I am no longer able to shop there regularly because they never have the basic supplies a guinea pig **must** have.

1. Vitamin C
2. Water bottle
3. Water bottle holder
4. Proper Guinea pig living environment
5. Guinea Pig carriers

If you talk to the employees, they are super nice. However, they have very basic knowledge about guinea pigs. My experience when discussing guinea pig care has been disappointing.

Question: What is their diet?

Answer: Pellets and hay

Question: What would I take the piggy home in?

Answer: We can put him in a box.

Question: Do you have carriers?

Answer: No, we only have what they send us.

Response: Why wouldn't they send small carriers if you sell small animals?

Answer: Don't know.

Question: Should I buy two guinea pigs?

Answer: You don't have to.

**(Side note: They are herd animals and like to be with other Guinea Pigs. Switzerland has made it illegal to buy and keep only one Guinea Pig)**

Question: Is there anything else I should know?

Answer: No that is about it.

Very basic things are not explained such as:

- They need for leafy greens twice a day
- Certain vegetables should be avoided
- Nail trimming should be done every 6 weeks
- One Guinea Pig needs at least a 24" by 47" living environment and the size gets bigger with each additional Guinea Pig
- Floor time should be given for at least 1.5 hours every day
- A person should buy 2 guinea pigs and if not lots of attention should be given to a single guinea pig
- Guinea pigs should see an exotic vet once a year.
- Guinea Pigs should be weighed weekly to watch for illness

I ask that you please put an end to the sale of these small animals in stores as soon as possible The sales are not regulated and animals are suffering because of irresponsible stores such as Petco.

*Jennifer Shannon*

My name is Jessica Hollander and I am a Brooklyn resident, business owner and volunteer with Voters For Animal Rights. I am here to testify in favor of Intro 4 and I'd like to thank Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala for introducing the legislation, as well as Speaker Adams and Chairperson Schulman for holding this hearing.

The idea of buying and selling animals of any species has never sat right with me. I do believe that there will come a time when humanity looks back on the breeding and trade of other species as fundamentally unethical, for a litany of reasons, but primarily because where there is money involved, there is invariably abuse and exploitation, and in this case abandonment and neglect.

I am continually in awe of Animal Care Centers and the tireless network of animal rescuers throughout New York City and I do think that it's time the government aided them by protecting future animals from being purchased and then abused or abandoned.

So I ask the council to please vote yes on the bill to ban the sale of guinea pigs, and to take this one small step in the direction of thoughtful stewardship of the very valuable lives of other species and in this case, vulnerable guinea pigs.

Dear Council Members:

My name is Joyce Glass, Esq. and I am an animal welfare attorney in New York and Connecticut. I am writing in support of the passage of the bill to ban the sale of Guinea pigs in New York City pet stores. As you have been educated, there were an overwhelming amount of guinea pigs purchased in the last several years from pet stores, now being turned into shelters or even let loose in parks or in backyards. These were impulse buys that turned into unwelcome responsibilities. In every case the animal and the shelters/rescues feel the impact.

In 2014 the New York City Council voted to prohibit the sale of rabbits in pet stores for these same reasons. It is time to be the voice for guinea pigs as well in this arena.

I urge you to pass this necessary legislation.

Thank you.

Joyce Glass, Esq.  
joyce@jmgpclaw.com

**From:** [Lacey Levitt](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pass Intro 4  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 12:07:59 PM

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CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Forward suspect email to [phish@oti.nyc.gov](mailto:phish@oti.nyc.gov) as an attachment (Click the More button, then forward as attachment).

Please pass Intro 4, legislation to stop pet stores from selling guinea pigs. New York shelters are already overwhelmed with guinea pigs. Passing this bill will help save animals' lives.

Thank you,

Lacey Levitt, Ph.D.

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Laura Leopardo and I reside in Brooklyn. I am writing to request that you pass Intro 4, the bill to ban the sale of guinea pigs in NYC pet stores.

Sales of guinea pigs shot up at the height of the pandemic lockdown as people turned to buying pets to combat loneliness, but now they don't want to, or have the time to devote to taking care of them anymore. Many are now being abandoned to shelters, or worse yet, let loose in our parks or streets to fend for themselves. These little sentient beings cannot survive on their own and will, therefore, suffer by starving or becoming the victim of a predator. Animal shelters are struggling with the sheer number of guinea pigs being ditched. New York shelters have taken in around 600 guinea pigs this year alone. They are often impulse buys before people realize the amount of care, responsibility and attention owning one actually requires. In addition, it's difficult to determine the sex of a guinea pig, so oblivious owners often pair a male and female thinking they're single-sex and end up with an entire litter, and we are now seeing the consequences of this. Please do the humane thing and pass Intro 4.

Thank you very much,  
Laura Leopardo

Guinea pigs are meant to be loved, cared for, and properly monitored with a correct living habitat that not only includes the proper temperature needs, but enough space to safely move around and hide. They need to be fed the proper diet that not only includes hay and pellets, but fruits and vegetables. Guinea pigs are highly intelligent creatures, but they require the proper care and home, therefore they cannot survive on their own in the outside world. I had one of my own and his name was Pancho. He responded to his name and knew commands such as “come,” “hide and seek,” “run,” and “cuddle.” He also called out demanding for attention when he received love 24/7, so they require around the clock attention except for when they are napping. He had a big cage that had hiding spots and a big open space so that he may run around in for when he got the zoomies. He also had a favorite furry blanket that he cuddled in, and Guinea pigs cannot find that in a park. They are loving creatures and deserve the proper homing and shelter, not to be abandoned and left to fend for themselves. It's inhumane to abandon animals who rely on humans to care for them, we need to do better and create a safe space for Guinea pigs and other animals who suffer from this as well.

MARCY MENDEZ

**From:** [MARGARET LEE](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] In support of Intro 4 - Margaret Lee  
**Date:** Sunday, December 18, 2022 2:43:19 PM

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My name is Margaret Lee. I'm an animal advocate resident of NYC and I'm here today for Guinea Pigs in support of Intro 4 prohibiting the sale of Guinea Pigs as pets. The passage of this crucial Bill will help us become a more compassionate community.

Guinea Pigs are misunderstood in many ways. Their docile, sensitive nature has led them to be viewed as 'starter pets' for children, with both parents & children not realizing the complexity, commitment and cost of their care. Often bought on a whim from pet stores, when the challenges of their upkeep emerge, they end up being abandoned in parks where their chance of survival is Zero & where they're fated to have a tortuous death of starvation, thirst, freezing, predation. They are also frequent victims of cruelty, with the crimes against them largely unknown, unreported, uncared about. Oftentimes too they're left at overwhelmed Adoption Centers where their chance of adoption is slim. They are among the most abandoned, abused animals with virtually no social protection.

Given their sensitivity and vulnerability, even in especially caring homes, there are many problems associated with their care. Meeting the Guinea Pig's nutritional requirements, maintaining favorable temperatures, low household noise levels, constant supply of Timothy hay, daily cage cleaning, regular vet visits for nail trimmings...these are just a few of the demands a family would have to meet to adequately care for these sensitive creatures.

Sadly, even before reaching a home, pet stores themselves fail to meet these needs, with negligence and abusiveness being pervasive.

Guinea Pigs are prone to respiratory ailments, including pneumonia. These conditions require costly veterinary care plus careful administration of medications. Such treatment is not addressed in pet stores, and when bought by hapless families, the unexpected cost is often what leads to park abandonment, or critically overwhelmed adoption centers.

As prey animals Guinea Pigs startle easily. Their swift errata reactions frequently lead to sudden traumatic death when children unthinkingly drop their fragile pet. Just recently, when speaking to a childhood friend about the urgency of Intro 4, she told me she is still haunted by the death of the Guinea Pig she accidentally dropped when both she & her pet were suddenly frightened.

NYC has pitifully poor legal avenues for protecting small animals such as Guinea Pigs - or any animals large or small for that matter. But Guinea Pigs are especially prone to being ignored, forgotten, their cruel deaths unknown, unreported. A lot of sadness can be avoided by passage of Intro 4. Please let's get this done.

Kind regards,  
Margaret Lee  
NYC



My name is Nathan Semmel. I am an organizer with Voters For Animal Rights and a District 7 resident here in Manhattan.

In 1974, I was 4-years old when my parents surprised me with a guinea pig they bought from a Manhattan pet store. I named him Tigger after the character in Winnie the Pooh. Tigger was the first of many animals in my life and I adored him. Tigger was also the last animal we ever bought. Fortunately, my parents learned that guinea pigs - like cats, dogs and rabbits - are available for adoption at animal shelters, and that buying them from stores only perpetuates breeding, including from awful commercial breeding mills. They passed that lesson on to me. And why buy from a pet store when there is an opportunity to help overburdened animal shelters and rescues, and *still* be able to come home with an adorable companion . . . or two?

Perhaps there wasn't always a need for legislation such as Intro 4. But there is now. 2020 changed everything.

Countless people made impulse purchases or innocently went to pet stores seeking animal companionship due to the pandemic. As you have heard, when those people could no longer care for the guinea pigs, or because they went back to work, or because their financial situation turned, they surrendered or dumped them. It has not stopped, and it has become unsustainable for our city's animal shelters and rescues, and unmanageable for their mostly volunteer staffs.

Now here I am, 48 years after Tigger became a member of our family, asking this Council to prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in pet stores. While times have changed, our affection for guinea pigs has not. But we can't continue as is.

So thank you, CM Ayala and the numerous co-sponsors of Intro 4. This is common sense and proven legislation. It is effective, humane, and it will make the lives of guinea pigs, other shelter animals and their employees so much better. Please support it.

NY, CT, CO  
US District Court,  
NY Eastern & Southern Districts

US Supreme Court  
US Court of Federal Claims



Law Offices Of  
*Nora Constance Marino*

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Great Neck, New York 11023

Telephone: 516.829.8399

[www.MarinoJustice.com](http://www.MarinoJustice.com)

Facsimile: 516.829.4699

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December 14, 2022

New York City Council

Re: Support of Intro 4 –guinea pigs

Honorable Council Members:

I write in support of a ban of selling guinea pigs in the City of New York.

The constant, unending breeding and selling of animals is not only cruel, it causes and creates a financial hardship for our city animal shelter system, as well as not-for-profit rescue organizations. Many people buy animals on a whim, having no idea what proper and sufficient care involves, or the cost of same. Many animals suffer because of this, being kept in tiny filthy cages most of their lives, being deprived of everything that is natural to them.

For others, they get dumped at shelters or rescues, creating financial hardships for these organizations, who are then forced to provide these animals with proper shelter, food, and medical care at their own expense.

There is no need to sell guinea pigs in our city. Our shelters and rescue organizations are already busting at the seams with homeless cats, dogs, rabbits, and other animals. The for-profit industry of animal sales only benefits the pet industry. It does not benefit the animals, it does not benefit our city, and it does not benefit society, as a whole.

Selling these animals is frankly immoral. These animals suffer horribly when confined in tiny cages without being provided proper care. Many are totally isolated, and lead miserable unnatural and lonely lives.

It is time for lawmakers to step up to the plate and be a voice for animals, a voice for morality. We must evolve. Please support and pass Intro 4.

Yours very truly,  
*Nora Constance Marino*

# The New York Times

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**Your comment has been approved!**

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with The New York Times community.

**Rhonda J Waggoner** | New York City

The bill being "considered" before city council banning the sale of guinea pigs (and hopefully all pocket pets) needs to be passed immediately. There is an utter lack of education that's provided when you buy/adopt from stores. I adopted Gus from Petco in 2017 (left abandoned in a bag at the store's door), and brought him home with a bag of food that turned out to be inappropriate for his age. I had no idea I needed to provide Gus with a species mate (legally required in Sweden), but after much searching I adopted Chip (brought up from Petco's basement), whom I hoped and convinced myself was an unbonded male. There was much chattering (they have 12 vocalizations) and some bonding, but Chip "suddenly" died last year. (Being prey animals, guinea pigs hide their symptoms and I didn't know what to look for.) Gus-my now elderly boar- didn't appear to grieve and we're together almost 24/7, with me struggling to provide chatter and companionship. Guinea pigs need much more space than a tiny little cage, require a strict temperature range, and shouldn't be left alone over 12 hours. Their feces can carry salmonella and they're not keen on the human touch. Vacations are largely out for me and the cost of care is huge. My guess is most guinea pigs die prematurely from loneliness, respiratory illnesses from sitting in their own urine and feces, and scurvy from lack of Vitamin C. Please ban the sale of these smart and sentient little creatures and help end this awful cycle of abuse.

12/12/2022

Sadie Lipe addressing the New York City Council Committee on Health on Intro 0004-2022

To the New York City Council Committee on Health,

My name is Sadie Lipe and I'm a concerned owner of 4 guinea pigs testifying in support of passing Intro 4. As a current guinea pig owner, I firmly believe passing Intro 4 will be a valuable, effective, and rewarding step in ensuring animal welfare, respect, safety, and health for all guinea pigs.

As a guinea pig owner, I have witnessed firsthand the ongoing issues that pet stores selling guinea pigs institute and perpetuate for prospective, current, and future guinea pig owners and the guinea pigs themselves. Our late guinea pig, Archie, was purchased from PetSmart and unfortunately died prematurely from dental disease. We came across Archie after he was returned to PetSmart after initially being sold with ringworm. Archie no longer had ringworm when we purchased him from PetSmart; however, at the early age of two, he began suffering from dental disease, dental abscesses, overgrown molars, and fatty liver disease. We spent upwards of \$3,500 in veterinary care and procedures to solve Archie's dental disease, but it wasn't enough, and he had to be humanely euthanized a short while ago. From the day we brought Archie home, he was not like our other guinea pigs. He was easily started, became easily stressed, lacked the social skills to live with others, and didn't eat nor instinctually crave a well-rounded diet as he should, albeit all the necessary dietary resources consistently and continuously provided to him. It is highly suspect that our only guinea pig purchased from a pet store had these issues and the others who were rescued or adopted did not.

Historically, pet stores have been the leading contributors when it comes to the exacerbation and perpetuation of the number of homeless and surrendered pets. We know this to be especially true in New York City given the recent news regarding the increase in the sale of guinea pigs from pet stores and the exponential increase in the number of abandoned, surrendered, and homeless guinea pigs. When reported, 61% of the guinea pigs surrendered were originally purchased from a pet store. Another glaring indication of these recent events is the fact that, as of December 1, 2022, 769 guinea pigs have been surrendered to ACC in 2022 alone. To say the correlation between the increase in guinea pig pet store sales and the increase in homeless guinea pigs isn't apparent would be disingenuous and willfully ignorant.

Additionally, New Yorkers have been abandoning guinea pigs in city parks, which is a death sentence to small prey animals like these. They cannot survive in the wild and will either starve to death or be attacked by predators, such as hawks and falcons. Since this past spring, there have been two incidents of people dumping their unwanted guinea pigs at the park. Since the first two incidents were recorded, more like these have occurred. By actively choosing to not

prohibit pet stores from selling guinea pigs, we are enabling reckless and neglectful behaviors such as these.

Even before the point of sale, pet stores set guinea pigs and prospective guinea pig owners up for failure. Visit a pet store and you'll see the poor example they set when caring for guinea pigs: They house them in glass or plastic display cases that are far too small for the number of square feet a single guinea pig requires (minimum 7.5 square feet); they improperly store and serve their hay and pellets — two dietary items essential to guinea pigs' health; they house too many guinea pigs in too small of a space; they inaccurately sex the guinea pigs, all the while selling them without neutering or spaying; they feed (and sell) food that contains grains, seeds, shellfish, legumes, and corn — materials guinea pigs should not be ingesting as they're harmful to their health and sensitive digestive tracts, and they place injurious toys like wheels inside the guinea pigs' display cases — wheels that are not meant for guinea pigs and only intended for hamsters, mice, rats, and gerbils. Spend a few minutes researching the proper way to care for guinea pigs and all the previously named actions taken by pet stores will be proven incorrect, unsafe, and dangerous. Yet, pet stores still proceed with these unhealthy and ill-advised actions and are not held accountable. The lack of education — both on behalf of the pet stores selling guinea pigs and the people who are purchasing them from pet stores — only inflames an already inundated and overwhelming issue.

We can't make redress and remedy nor positively impact these issues if our actions are constantly retroactive and retrospective. Passing Intro 4 will stop these issues at their source, and will allow animal rescues, shelters, and other nonprofits to reallocate and focus their efforts elsewhere, like identifying vetted homes to place the numerous guinea pigs that are *already* homeless into.

The problems instituted and perpetuated by pet stores allowed to sell guinea pigs isn't singular nor confined to New York City alone — this is an ongoing widespread problem. By standing in unison with its constituents and passing Intro 4, the New York City Council will set a precedent not only for this community, but for the rest of the country and the world. Passing Intro 4 will send a message that this community and its council cares for the hundreds of lives that have been deemed disposable. Be a voice for the voiceless and prohibit pet stores from selling guinea pigs. There is no shortage of guinea pigs. In fact, there are more than enough readily available for adoption that need to go to healthy and happy homes. It's unfair and inhumane to continue to allow these innocent and sentient creatures to suffer at the hands of human negligence. Their bodies are not commodities. Place their health and well-being over profits and pass Intro 4 that will prohibit the sale of guinea pigs at pet stores.

Thank you to the Committee for taking the time to read my written testimony. I hope that the Council takes it into consideration and the solutions I've suggested. Your consideration of these matters and solutions is extremely appreciated.

## **Testimony In Support of Intro 4: Stopping the Sale of Guinea Pigs in Pet Stores**

Dear Council Members,

I have worked in the animal control field for over 12 years. It has always been heartbreaking to see unwanted animals being dropped off continuously. The suffering is indescribable as these animals are alone, scared, hungry and, many times in need of medical care. There simply are not enough homes for these animals to go to. Shelters are consistently short of staff and struggle to care for all the different species of animals that pass through the doors.

Guinea pigs are the new craze. People do not understand their needs and when they are in pet stores for sale, the consumer many times makes an impulsive decision to purchase them. The pet store owner wants to make money on the sale and many times this is compounded by many other expenses such as the supplies that are needed to properly care for these animals. The bottom line is that what many people thought was an easy pet to care for turns into an unwanted burden and the pet is abandoned.

Shelters are overrun with these animals, at the expense of the animals' welfare and only adding to the profit of the pet store owner. There are many alternatives for pet store owners to supplement their incomes by selling supplies, food, grooming services, behavioral training and partnering with veterinary clinics.

As a society we have to start protecting the most vulnerable to the abuse and abandonment that we are seeing. People right now are strapped for money so that first thing to go is the pet. As a city we must control the extraordinary amount of animals that are part of our throw-away society. Please do not let the proliferation of unwanted guinea pigs continue to be sold by pet stores. Let's again be the city that embraces compassion.

Sheryle Trainer

34 Ave

Jackson Heights, NY 11372

To whom it may concern,

Over the past few years New York City has seen the number of abandoned guinea pigs skyrocket, with 600 surrendered to an already overworked and under-resourced city shelter system in 2022 alone. Those surrendered guinea pigs are better off than the ones abandoned in parks and public places, left to starve or be killed by predators on their own.

Aside from that, guinea pigs living in pet stores are often mistreated, kept in poor habitats, and medically neglected.

Please support Intro 4 and prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in NYC pet stores.

Sincerely,  
Sophie Ewh

I am in support of Intro 4 that would prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in pet stores in New York. There have been many guinea pigs surrendered to local shelters as well as guinea pigs who have simply been abandoned. These animals deserve better than to languish in a shelter or to be left to die in the park. Please pass Intro 4.

Dr. Tracy Doherty

###. W. 91<sup>st</sup> St.

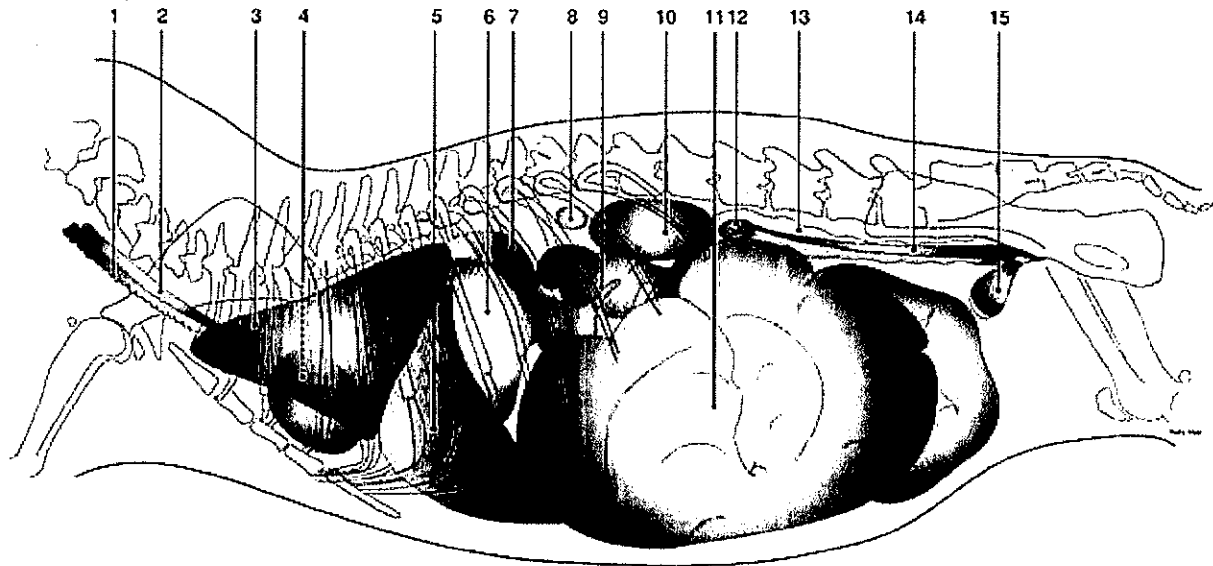
New York, NY

tadoherty@yahoo.com



## Why ban guinea pig sales (an exotics veterinarian prospective)

-Very difficult to Spay even for exotics specialized veterinarians ( deep body cavity, large gi tract, flank spay takes extra training, anesthesia difficult for nurses, difficult to intubate, place IV catheters) --> and cost for owners 600-800 dollars at least



-< 10 veterinarians in all 5 boroughs doing guinea pig spays. Even at hospital like Catnip and Carrots (limited to cats/ small mammals) they can't spay pigs. ACC not able to do spays/ anesthesia to keep up with shelter demand

- Post operative care difficult: many go into Gi stasis, when they stop eating/pooping their Gi tract shuts down and then can easily shut down/ die if not being managed by guinea pig savvy owners/ hospitals (NOT an outpatient surgery like with dogs/ cats). Some require ongoing force feedings every 8 hours for up to a week post operative ( even on normal routine surgeries)
- Difficult to identify gender in shelter and in pet stores→ frequent accidental pregnancies
- Prone to dystocias if giving birth after 6 months of age→emergency C-section (1200-2500\$)
- Highly prolific: Males can breed at 2 months, females 3 months sometimes over 4 babies per litter: hard to spay unless > 6 months old before ovaries fully mature. --> accidental births can lead to more accidental births
- Prone to ovarian cysts if not spayed: eventually does kill adult females, slow painful death, some as young as 2-3 years old.
- Require special diet/ care that pet stores are not capable of giving owners correct care info time and time again.
- Young frequently carry ringworm from stress of group shipping to stores
- Only 3 hospitals in the 5 boroughs have exotics exclusive practices, regular dog/ cat vet seeing guinea pigs is like dog/cat vet taking care of a horse. Room for misinformation/poor quality of care due to lack of local specialists in most areas.
- Not a great pet for children despite being sold as one. Skittish, not eager to be handled the way most kids want to handle a pet. Giving them even something as benign as half a banana can kill them
- They dont know they are " starter pets" and should not be allowed to be sold as such in stores

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 004 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: RISA WEINSTOCK  
Address: 11 PARK PL #805 NYC 10007  
I represent: Animal Care Centers of NYC  
Address: 11 PARK PL #805 NYC 10007

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Alexanne D'Agosto  
Address: Matthew Ave  
I represent: Self  
Address: See m AS Above

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Gwen Kaiser  
Address: Woodcock mtn rd  
I represent: veeries rabbit rescue  
Address: PO Box 2, Salisbury Mills NY 12577

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Corinne Schiff

Address: DOHMH 125 Worth

I represent: DOHMH

Address: 125 Worth

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexandra Silver

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 004 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maisy Sylvan

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: American Society for the

Address: Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

520 8th Ave., NY, NY 10018  
Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: NINA BREGENZER

Address: Jefferson Av, New York, NY 11221

I represent: private person

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Glynis Cleary

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Center for avian and exotic Medicine

Address: 582 Columbus Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Vivian Danna

Address: 110-11 Queens Blvd

I represent: All About Rabbits Rescuer

Address: 110-11 Queens Blvd  
For. Hills, NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: Dec 14, 2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Lee

Address: 28 Bond Street NYC 10012

I represent: Voters for Animal Rights

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SURIYA KHAN

Address: 10<sup>th</sup> St. Park Slope 11215

I represent: - myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elena Natale

Address: 1608 Berenley Rd. Brooklyn, NY 11226

I represent: Voters for Animal Rights

Address: 1608 Berenley Rd. Brooklyn, NY 11226

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Liz Cabrera Hiltz

Address: 575 Eighth Avenue 3rd Floor, NY, NY 10018

I represent: World Animal Protection

Address: 575 Eighth Avenue, 3rd Floor, NY, NY 10018

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joyce Friedman

Address: 108 St. Forest Hills NY 11375

I represent: VOTERS FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

Address: 108 ST FH NY 11375

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Allie Taylor

Address: Putnam Ave BK NY 11221

I represent: Voters For Animal Rights

Address: Putnam Ave BK, NY 11221

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/4/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexandra Lafata

Address: 100 West 110th St NY 10025

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Libby Post

Address: 150 State St Albany NY 12207

I represent: NYS Animal Protection Federation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12-14-22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cindy Stutz

Address: 1825 Madison Ave

I represent: Bunnie & Beyond Inc.

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BRIAN SHAPIRO

Address: 179 SHAKER RD ALBANY, NY

I represent: THE HUMAN SOCIETY OF THE U.S.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Hollander

Address: LEONARD ST 11222

I represent: VOTERS FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Angela Connell

Address: Grand Ave

I represent: PuppyLottyNYC.org

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Meagan Cicari

Address: 77<sup>th</sup> St Middle Village NY 11379

I represent: pppghittymixity

Address: same as above

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cindy Nunez Del Arco

Address: 37th Ave.

I represent: Voters For Animal Rights

Address: /

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 004 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/15/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BRIAN HACKETT

Address: Laurel Ct Wrightstown, NJ 08562

I represent: Animal Legal Defense Fund

Address: 525 E. Cotati Ave, Cotati, CA

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

94931

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Intro 4 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/14/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: NATASHA REZNIK

Address: WILLOUGHBY AVE, BROOKLYN 11206

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 41 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PILAR AMAYA

Address: HALSETT

I represent: MYSELF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms