

April Lodge Guinea Pig Rescue

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Daily opening hours: 10am - Midday



“JEEPERS SQUEAKERS!”

December 2016 Newsletter

By Val Savage Rha/Founder/Clinician

Dear readers,

For the last newsletter of the year we would like to focus on our mounting problem of finding loving homes for those older guinea pigs in our care and explain about “the package” that we offer potential fostercarers. It's becoming a true problem which is why this issue devotes so much space to it.

LONG TERM FOSTERCARE – HOW IT WORKS

We normally have places for up to 60 guinea pigs at the shelter. Most people are interested in younger guinea pigs in which case the older ones get overlooked. We also operate a guinea pig retirement home in Herne Bay for up to 18 residents - but it is always full. Any overspill stay at the shelter. So now 75% of our enclosures in the shelter house older guinea pigs and we don't have enough space in the shelter for the next lot of neglected and unwanted piggies desperately needing our help.

We're positive that people overlook the idea of fostering guinea pigs aged 4+ because they're unclear on the benefits and how the scheme works. So put quite simply.....

The benefits for you:

1. The guinea pigs are **FREE**
2. There are **NO VET BILLS** - ever. **BUT**....any treatment must be done with our vet. The charity pays for this
3. Any medication required is **FREE** and provided by the charity
4. **FREE** welfare checks every quarter or whenever there is a problem - for life
5. You are entitled to **HALF PRICE** boarding fees
6. You get **10% DISCOUNT** on anything bought in our shop

What long term fostering is not:

- It's not borrowing the guinea pigs as a trial to see if you like them
- It's not taking them off our hands to help us out
- It's not like short term fostering to handle them or nurture them to good health (this is done by our approved volunteers only)

The average life span of a guinea pig is 6-7 years. Oddly we have guinea pigs on foster that are up to 8 years old. This may have something to do with the veterinary care which is financed by the charity and the free welfare checks in our clinics at either Eastry, Herne Bay, Maidstone or Gillingham. In effect all our fostercarers have to do is the “looking after”. Although their health may be compromised as they age, these piggies still deserve lots of TLC and cuddles.

As a guide to vet fees which you would have to pay yourself if you adopted younger pigs rather than fostered older pigs from us, take a look at these typical costs below.

General anaesthetic	£60 - £80
Abscess treatment	£50 - £100
Congestive Heart Failure treatment	£40 - £50 - ongoing and usually life-long
Bladder stone removal	£250 - £300
Kidney Infection	£100 - £120
Xray	£120
Rehydration	£60
Eye treatment	£45
Dental work	£80 - £120
Bumblefoot	£70
HRT	£55 plus usually further treatments required
Fungal Infection	We heard of a vet asking £100 for a consult and 52ml of shampoo!
Lice Infestation	£50

And a lady in North London paid £120 for a hayseed to be removed and a tube of eye ointment, so a lot also depends on your location.

So here are some words from a few of our current fostercarers. The reasons for fostering are many and varied but they all have one thing in common - once they have fostered they do it again and again. They all say it is an emotionally rewarding experience as well as a weight off their mind knowing they have full no-nonsense back-up from us.



Our introduction to April Lodge began with a visit to an open day in 2013. We had been discussing pets and bought a cage in the auction and then had a cuddle with 2 piggies up for fostering, which was our undoing - that and their story. We are now on our 5th and 6th animals (Max and Tommy). It has been a great time. Brian and I have enjoyed their different personalities. We try to give them as good a life as we can. They watch TV at night on our laps, have an outdoor run in the summer and take over the conservatory in winter. Val and the team are always there to support us and the piggies. We have learned a lot, not least how to treat ailments. The fun far outweighs the sadness of losing them.

Maxine

I myself have two 4yr olds on long term fostercare (Bagel and Chuckles) as the thought of a £400 vet bill scares me....but hooray! The charity will foot the bill should they ever be in need. My piggies attend the charity welfare clinic (at no cost) as often as I want and there was no adoption fee AND for whatever reason I can return them to the charity any time I wish and don't even have to give a reason (not that I would as I love "my" piggies!)

Val

We first fostered a Guinea Pig almost by accident. A friend of ours who had several guinea pigs had recently taken in an elderly piggy called Spike from April Lodge. Sadly our friend became quite ill and it became more difficult to care for all of them. Rather than return Spike he asked if we could take him in. And so we took in Spike and quickly learned all about their needs and ways. We became very attached to Spike and we had him for two and a half years and he lived to a good age of around eight.

A year on and we moved house and decided to take in another foster piggy. Val had two elderly boys looking for a comfortable retirement. Bill was nearly eight and was left at April Lodge as unwanted and Booty was six and had been mistreated as a youngster and never had a proper home. Bill was a sleek slippery character whilst Booty was a black long haired piggy, a little clumsy and reminded us of a large black steamroller. Sadly due to their age and some health issues we only had them a little over a year but during that time it was great to have them around us all the time.

Moving on a few months and Chaos turned up at April Lodge. He arrived with two others and was nervous, sometimes aggressive towards other piggies and had a noticeable head tilt - probably due to an untreated ear infection. He was around 9 months old and in need of a permanent home with lots of care and attention. We took him in, and initially he was very hard to hold however as days and weeks progressed he went from a nervous and frightened young piggy to a happy and sociable boy. His head tilt is greatly improved and he loves attention, being held and running around free. He recognises sounds such as the fridge door and back doors - meaning foods, and squeaks happily for his morning breakfast each day. He now has a permanent home with us and has regular three monthly checks (service and pedicure!) with Val.



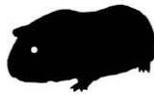
Bernie

For the last three years we have had long term fostercare piggies, taking on those that are either four years plus or needing daily medical care. We know that we have full support from Val and her strong team of dedicated volunteers. Whenever there have been any concerns regarding health or medication we are safe in the knowledge that help and advice is at the end of the phone. One of our piggies, Hermione, is on life-long meds twice a day. She is an absolute pleasure to care for and takes her meds beautifully and even stands on her hind legs to accept it! All of her medication and vets bills are completely covered by April Lodge as with the two other long term foster care piggies. When we first took on these foster care piggies we were unsure of how we might cope with what we thought might be poorly patients, however the amount of work needed to care for the newest members of our family has proved to be so small as to make no difference at all and the amount of joy and happiness they give us is huge. When friends come to visit they can never tell which are the supposedly poorly piggies as they are all so full of life, and each has their own special personalities. If you are thinking of offering a home to some April Lodge piggies please don't overlook the chance to enjoy the company of these gorgeous creatures.

Angela

There are a few things we ask of all our long term fostercarers though. But if you are happy you can meet our requirements and are interested, please get in touch.

Our criteria	Why we ask this
You must live within a 25mile radius of the charity	So that in a medical emergency, you can bring the piggy to us or our vet quickly
You must have recent experience of keeping guinea pigs	You will be better placed to spot the signs of a sick guinea pig and can handle them better than novices
They should ideally live indoors	You will be able to keep a much closer eye on their health and listen out for signs of abnormalities. And they will be easily at hand for medicating.
Any vet treatment MUST be with our approved vet	Guinea pigs are classed as 'exotics' and most vets don't have enough experience in this species. Our vet is an exotics specialist, knows the charity and treats all our guinea pigs. He is well known in his field



HOW I BECAME ATTACHED TO APRIL LODGE GUINEA PIG RESCUE

By Corinne Davey



When my partner left me and our guinea pigs (Ben and Jerry) six years ago, I found myself constantly coming over to Val's for advice about their well being and care as I wanted only the best for them.

Val was very good to me and sympathetic towards what I was going through so when Ben became unwell it was natural for me to bring him to Val. Also, they were both used to her as I boarded them at the rescue when I went away. They loved it at the rescue and all the sounds of the other guinea pigs. It turned out they were both unwell with different ailments and Val suggested that they went to live with Susan - a wonderful, caring and compassionate carer from the rescue. I was working long hours and both my 'boys' were looked after so

well and Susan administered all the medication that they both required.

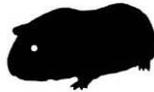
Sadly they both died at different times but in Susan's arms. I knew then that I wanted to do as much for April Lodge Guinea Pig Rescue as I could. So I started to fund raise. Working at Debenhams gave me a good following from my work colleagues and the Guinea Pig race night soon became a popular event and I was able to raise substantial sums of money.

Unfortunately I am at the end of my working career, and I will be retiring early next year in 2017. So I am therefore standing down from the Guinea Pig race nights.

SECRET SANTA 2016



We are totally thrilled to be part of this again and were kindly asked to nominate 23 'sets' (that's pairs or singles) of our most deserving guinea pigs to receive Secret Santa Christmas presents from absolutely lovely strangers around the UK who just want to send some seasonal joy to little piggies. Lucky things, they clearly can't wait, particularly Daisy, who is going to sit here wide awake until Santa has visited her.....!



FINALLY.....A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Our new extension – from a pile of rubble to the final coat of paint. Thank you to everyone who helped turn this into a reality.



Our next newsletter is due in March. Please email aprillodgeguinea@aol.com if you have "anything to say", would like any issues addressed or would like an article placed.

If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter please email aprillodgeguinea@aol.com