

April Lodge Guinea Pig Rescue

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Daily opening hours: 10am–Midday



Jeepers Squeakers!

June 2017 newsletter

Dear Readers,

We can't believe it has been three whole months since we updated you last! Summer is in full swing, and we have lots of guinea pig stories and news to share with you. First, though, we want to tell you about the success of our recent quiz night. Jo L cooked a wonderful meal for all who attended, Rachel L ran the quiz, and between the ticket sales and raffle we raised £386, which is fantastic news for the Lodge! It goes a long way towards covering daily expenses and our ever-present vet bills. Read on to hear about our next events, including our upcoming sponsored walk. We'd be thrilled if you want to get involved!

We know you love to hear about our guinea pig residents, so we're going to start off this edition of Jeepers Squeakers with some of our top piggy stories. So, here goes!

Cherry and Bow



Recently, we came across a problem that we have never seen before! It was a dental problem, to be exact. We had two lovely girls in, Bow and Cherry, but, across the course of six months, Bow's teeth completely confounded us, as well as our specialist vet. We had x-rays and examinations carried out, but nobody knew what the problem was. Basically, her upper incisors kept breaking off and then growing at funny angles. The lower incisors were doing strange things as well, growing in the wrong directions. She could only eat each veg properly if it was peelings or if it was made into matchstick shapes.

We are very lucky, in that The Excellent Adventure Sanctuary (TEAS) in Northampton were able to step in. They are experts in dental problems, and were able to take Bow on, along with her healthy companion Cherry – as they have a great policy of not splitting up bonded pairs. With this plan in place, Val made the long trip with them from Eastry to Northampton, and they're now happily settled and in the best hands.

TEAS rely entirely on donations (as they don't re-home pigs), and we want to thank Debbie and everyone at the sanctuary so much for taking Bow in to receive the best possible care from their dental vet expert, and for taking Cherry as Bow's companion. The work they do is truly incredible.



Clover's retirement

Lovely little Clover came to us a month or so ago. She is five years old, had never had a companion and had not seen grass before. On top of this, we found that she had an inoperable lump. In cases like these, we just try to make sure that the time the pig has left is good time. As such, Clover has gone to our retirement home for piggies in Herne Bay. She has fitted into the gang of old lady guineas there very easily, and now has space, grass and friends – for the first time in her life! Clover is a really lovely pig – curious and friendly. We're just pleased that we can give her a happy retirement for at least some time. The picture here shows her and her friends; Clover is the one in the top right corner.



Chompy and Luna

Chompy and Luna are two lovely smooth-haired girls who turned four this April. When Luna came in, she was impossible to handle, but is a dream now after her rehabilitation with us. They're lovely pigs and will make someone wonderful pets. However, Chompy most certainly lived up to her name and was in need of losing some weight! We knew that if she didn't slim down, her heart might start to struggle. She weighed over 1.5kg, which is far too big for a sow. It must have been quite a strain for her to move herself about.

We also noticed that neither of them had much joy about them. While Luna was a normal weight, neither of them wanted to play or explore. When out in their run, they would rather just sit in the carrier than play or run on the grass. You cannot really put a guinea pig on a diet, so the answer needed to be some exercise – but we just couldn't get them moving! We took matters seriously, and Chompy and Luna went home with one of our volunteers, Jo L – we call it Boot Camp! At Boot Camp, they live in a big indoor pen, and go out on the grass every single day. Jo started off by experimenting with different times, to see if she could tap into their energy peaks.

Slowly but surely, they both started getting more active. In just over a week, while on the same type and amount of food, Chompy had lost over 100g! She had started to graze on the grass and move about more. Luna hadn't really needed to lose much, but had lost 50g, which was no bad thing really. Both of them now have more of a skip in their step. Chompy's weight plateaued for a bit, and she is now losing a little more, although at a slower rate now that she has made the initial drop. So far, she has lost 114g in total, which is great news.

If you're interested in taking on these girls and giving them a good home, read our section on fostering below in this newsletter.



Horror stories

There are many reasons that guinea pigs end up at April Lodge. Many of them are completely understandable – a family breakup, a companion pig having died, allergies, pigs fighting, or problems between the pigs and other pets (especially dogs). The owners are sad to give them up, but know it is for the best, and we are happy to help out.

However, once in a while, we have guinea pigs come in that have been through pure horror and abuse. Recent tales include them being used as dog bait in a local park, and baby pigs having been thrown off trains, some of them eaten by foxes and some electrocuted. In many cases, we're able to rehabilitate these guinea pigs and find them loving homes, but all too often they don't make it as far as us. So, we urge you, if you know anyone struggling to look after a pet, let them know that rescues will help! Even if they go to a vet, the vet will find us or another rescue that can help. We'd far rather people came to us than resorted to unthinkable actions.

So, we hope you have had your fill of recent piggy stories. We'll bring you more next time. Now, we're going to move to a note on fostering, a bit of health advice and some news on our upcoming events.

Long-term foster

Here at April Lodge, we always have guinea pigs looking for new homes. When the pigs come in, we spend time assessing and rehabilitating them. Some need baths for mites or mange, while others might need some handling to get them happy around people again. Once they're ready for a new home, we separate the guinea pigs into two categories: those for adoption, and those for long-term foster care.



Those for adoption are the younger and fully healthy guinea pigs. Once they have been adopted, they come back to the Lodge for three-month health checks (at no cost), but any vet fees will be covered by the new owners.



The guinea pigs for long-term foster care are those that are older (usually over four), or that have an existing health problem that needs treating by the carer on a regular basis. For example, they may need meds once a day, or an impaction clearing a couple of times a week. These guinea pigs are fostered for life, but they still belong to the charity and April Lodge covers any vet fees, as long as the guinea pigs see the recommended vet. In addition, they will need to be brought in for three-monthly health checks.

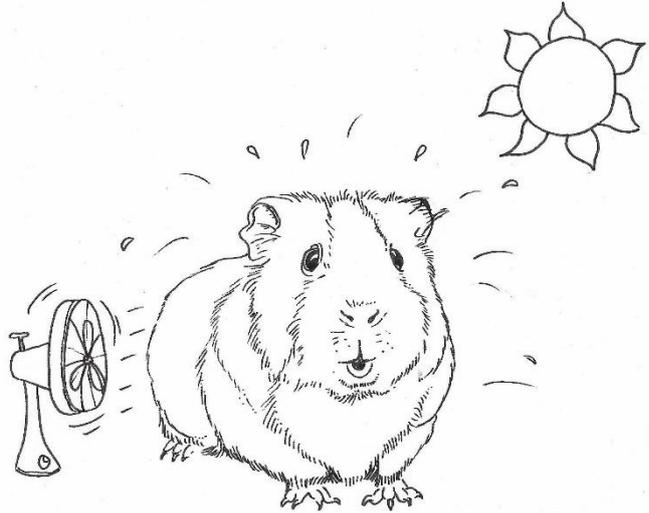
We're always in need of long-term foster carers: people who have experience of guinea pigs, and can house the pigs inside. Above, we show Sam and Ralph – two boys waiting for a fosterer – and next to this we show Luna (of Chompy and Luna from above). Both pairs of piggies are in need of long-term fosterers. Call us if you think you can help!



Hot weather alert!

While the summer may be good news, it does bring about certain challenges for guinea pig owners, as heat is a real problem for guineas – it can lead to heat exhaustion or even death. Knowing what you're doing is vitally important, and really can make all the difference. So, given that it's hotting up now it's June, we share some tips here.

- Move outside hutches into a sheltered area. Wooden hutches can reach temperatures of 10 degrees higher inside than outside, especially if in full sun. This can literally cook the guinea pigs alive. Please make sure that both the hutch and run are well shaded. Avoid plastic hutches, as they get even warmer.
- If the guineas are in a conservatory or similar room, please be aware that the temperatures in their hutch will be even higher than in the main room.
- Make sure your guinea pigs have an unlimited supply of fresh water, both in their run and in their hutch.
- Freeze ice packs or plastic bottles filled with water, and these can be wrapped in tea towels and placed in the cage/hutch if it gets really hot. Your piggies will lay against them to cool down. Ice pods are also available, which you freeze and then put in the hutch.
- Remember that the sun moves round during the day, so change the position of the hutch to ensure your guinea pig is sheltered.
- Consider putting your piggies out after the sun has gone down, not forgetting to get them back in later!
- Long-haired or older guinea pigs are more susceptible to blowfly strike during the summer. This condition is more common in older piggies, and ones with long hair, and is often fatal. It is therefore crucial that you keep long hair trimmed and bottoms clean. Putting a dab of citronella around the rump area, or a product called rear guard, will help to protect your guinea pig against blowfly.



If it is too late and your guinea pig is already suffering from heat exhaustion, he or she will not be able to stand. They will be lying on their side, panting. You should wrap your guinea pig in a cold, water-soaked towel for a short while, usually until they are able to stand again and respiration returns to normal. Do not use freezing towels, as the temperature needs to be brought back down slowly to avoid a trauma-related heart attack. Do not give them a drink at this stage, as the heat may have caused a swallowing abnormality and there is a small possibility they could drown. Keep your piggy in cool surroundings and, when they have recovered, carefully and slowly syringe water in or use a drip-feed bottle. If there are no further problems, try to re-hydrate him or her as much as possible later. If you see any of the symptoms of heat exhaustion, please do call us for advice and we will be happy to help. Urgent action will be needed. There is further information on this page: <https://aprillodge.co.uk/emergency-medical-guide/heat-exhaustion/>

On a lighter note, we'd like to thank Sarah from Yellow Chicken House (@YCH_Cards) for the wonderful drawing of a guinea pig in the heat, which we use at the top of this page.



Events coming soon

We have lots of events coming up, all of which we'd love you to get involved in!

Sponsored Walk, Sandwich, Sunday 16th July, 10am

We leave from Sandwich Quay at 10am and the walk is approximately 2 miles (mostly rural). Supervised children and dogs are welcomed, and we will plan in some refreshments for afterwards. Registration and sponsorship forms are available from April Lodge Guinea Pig Rescue. Call in any day between 10am and 12pm to sign up, or call for more details.

April Lodge's Annual Open Day and Fun Show, Sunday 6th August, 10am-3pm

This is held in the meadow adjoining April Lodge, giving us plenty of room, and entry is via a donation. The day includes piggy photography, stalls, a tombola, the sale of new and used piggy equipment, and much more. All proceeds go to the charity. For more info, see Facebook closer to the date.

Race Night, Manston Village Hall, Saturday 7th October

The details are to be confirmed, but we will be holding our annual race night in October. More to follow in due course.



We will leave you with some pictures of last year's Open Day, where we had an agility arena, free welfare checks and much more. Please do join us this year!



Until next time...

Thanks for reading! This edition of Jeepers Squeakers was put together by Lizzie Sabin with contributions from others. The next edition of Jeepers Squeakers is due out in September. Please email aprilodgeguinea@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, just text the word 'Stop', along with your email address, to 07790 684 888.

