

## April Lodge Guinea Pig Rescue

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Daily opening hours: 10am–Midday



## Jeepers Squeakers!

March 2017 newsletter

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2017! We cannot believe how much has happened here at April Lodge since we last sent out an edition of Jeepers Squeakers. For a start, our new extension is in full use and we have filled it with guinea pigs that need us. Here, we'll tell you all about it, give some guidance and key tips on how to bathe your piggies (hint: singing helps!), dedicate a section to guinea pig health, update you on some of our current residents, and more.

### Our new extension

So, when we last updated you, the walls of our brand new extension were mostly up, and the new building was weather-tight. But it's a different story now! We have a kitchen, hay store, laundry room and, of course, lots and lots of guinea pig hutches in there. The building being fully functional has allowed us to get back up to full capacity, looking after around 70 guinea pigs at a time.

We are still in need of a washing machine, condenser tumble dryer, larder fridge/freezer and a microwave. So, if you have any of these spare, or want to donate towards them, we would be very grateful indeed.

Here are just a few pictures of the building in full use...



Our wonderful supporters and donors made this possible, so to those of you out there – a big thank you!



## Giving your guinea pig a bath

Now, while it might be tempting to put off bathing your guinea pig (because you have visions of bubbles everywhere and an angry guinea pig!), it isn't advisable. Guinea pigs should be bathed approximately once every three months, especially if they are long-haired. Baths are an important element in keeping your guinea pigs clean, healthy and parasite-free. And, some guinea pigs even like it!

So, here's how to go about it...

1. Prepare everything before you start. You will soon realise why this is important if you have not done so! You should use a baby bath or a sink, and you need the shampoo mix, a large jug, lukewarm water (perhaps in a giant saucepan or a washing up bowl), towels (two or three) and a carrier lined with a towel on hand. Don't face the carrier towards the sink, as your piggy will likely try to run into it if they want to escape. Then, put a tea towel in the bottom of the sink, so that your guinea pig doesn't slip around, but make sure the water can drain away. In a separate area, have a hair dryer and comb or brush ready.
2. You're now all set, so get your guinea pig!
3. Place her gently into the sink, and hold her still (with your hands near her head). She might wriggle a bit, but keep her secure, and just gently reassure her with your voice. Whatever you do, don't take your hand off her, leaving her in the sink on her own. Trust us – guinea pigs can jump pretty high when they want to!
4. Our volunteer Jo, pictured here, swears by singing to them as you perform the next stages. So, with your best singing voice and your free hand, use the jug to gently pour warm water over your guinea pig. Do this from the neck downwards, and do not pour water directly over their face. It should not go into their ears or eyes. You can, however, work the water up around her face and chin, as long as you're gentle. Keep doing this until your guinea pig is wet all over.
5. Get the shampoo mix and lather it from the bottom end of your guinea pig upwards, being very careful around the ears and eyes. You should be able to hold her with both hands as you lather, so she feels secure and safe.
6. If you're using an anti-parasite shampoo, keep it on and wrap her in a towel. Put her in the carrier, and leave her for 15 minutes. If you're not doing this, you can move straight to the next stage.
7. Remember to keep singing, of course, and use the jug to rinse off all the suds. Make sure they're completely gone, and then wrap her in a towel.
8. Now, roughly dry your guinea pig, and then start using the hair dryer. If you can get her on a work surface of the right height, you can let her burrow under your arm as you dry her. Make sure you're not using too high a heat, or blowing too close. Brush her at intervals as you dry.
9. Make sure your guinea pig is dry before they go back into their hutch. Ideally, they will be going back into a clean, fresh hutch. So, there you have it – clean guinea pig in clean hutch!



### Guinea pig health: Ellie

Here at April Lodge, we see a lot of guinea pig problems. One of our current residents proved a particularly interesting case, so we thought we'd share her story with you here.



Prior to her transfer to the charity, Ellie used to attend our welfare clinic along with her companion Daisy. However, it seemed that there was often uproar between them, with Ellie having violent mood swings and regularly showing aggression towards Daisy. We referred Ellie to a vet for them to administer hormone injections, which is a method of calming a girl like Ellie down a bit.

However, even after a hormone injection, Ellie was soon being aggressive to Daisy again. Ellie's owner decided to transfer Ellie to the charity, and booked a MatchPig introduction for Daisy. On arriving with us, we tried to pair Ellie with a neutered boar – but she was as aggressive as ever. She was finally put on a course of hormone injections, with the upshot being that she was no longer moody and angry all the time, and has settled down well with neutered boar Theo.

Ellie had not shown any of the normal symptoms of a hormone problem, such as overheating, crusty nipples, cystic ovaries or bilateral hair loss. It seems, though, that it was the issue. Ellie is now a big, happy girl, living with Theo and waiting for their forever home. You can see her above having a chin rub from one of our volunteers – relaxed and content!

### Guinea pig health: Nibble



One of the most unusual problems we have seen recently was with our big boy Nibble. He and his friend Munch had been fostered by a volunteer of ours, but Nibble came back in with a case of rhinitis just a few months later. Rhinitis is an inflammation of the lining of the nose. In guinea pigs, the most common cause is bacterial infection. Guinea pigs are obligate nasal breathers, meaning that they cannot breathe effectively through their mouth. So, if the nasal passages become severely blocked with mucus and pus, or badly swollen, they simply cannot breathe. It was therefore vital that we sorted the problem ASAP!

Nibble's symptoms were that he was sneezing and snuffling, and, when Val listened, his breathing was slightly laboured. Also, his nose smelt very odd – like an infected snotty smell. Despite this, though, there was no actual snot to be seen! It seems that the snot was just stuck in his nostrils in one mass.

Val and Flo (one of our youngest volunteers) carried out the treatment. It involved Nibble being gently,

yet firmly, wrapped in a muslin to stop any wriggling, then held with his head down. Val then had to drop medicine into one nostril at a time, and he had to stay gently upside down for a while to ensure the treatment didn't dribble out.

Together with oral medication, the snot slowly started moving. He still snuffled and sneezed for a while but, crucially, the mucus was coming out and the smell subsided until he was much better!



### Guinea pig health: Finding a vet

To find a vet that is experienced in the healthcare of guinea pigs is not as easy as you might think. As far as we know, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons does not provide specific training in guinea pigs, which you may be surprised to hear, especially as they are such a popular pet. A few years ago, veterinary students could attend an optional lecture on exotics, where guinea pigs were mentioned. We are unsure if this is still the normal practice.



Second to finding a vet experienced in cavy care would be a farm vet, as long as he or she is familiar with the dosage of medication and anaesthetic on this small species. The reason we believe that a farm vet may be the answer is that a guinea pig is more 'in line' with horses, cattle and sheep than cats and dogs.

The vets we are familiar with who are experienced with guinea pigs are as follows:

- Jeremy Stattersfield at Burnham House Veterinary Surgery, Castle Street, Dover
- Mark Rowland at Trinity Vets, Hermitage Lane, Maidstone
- Clive Munns at Montgomery Veterinary Clinic, Smeeth, Ashford
- Helen Groves-De Milleret at Barton Veterinary Hospital, Canterbury

Guinea pig owners should be aware that you have the right to request a specific vet by name, so don't be afraid to ask for the one you want to see.

Remember that we have a medical page on our website ([www.aprillodge.co.uk](http://www.aprillodge.co.uk)) that lists common symptoms, possible problems and remedies. And don't forget that, for guinea pigs from April Lodge, we offer welfare checks and advice for free. Read on to find out about our welfare clinics. You can reach us by email on [aprillodgeguinea@aol.com](mailto:aprillodgeguinea@aol.com) or call us on 01304 617075 if you think we may be able to help.

### Guinea pig health: Welfare clinics for adopted and fostered guinea pigs

At April Lodge Guinea Pig Rescue, we operate a welfare clinic run mainly by Val Savage, who is the founder of the charity, and who has completed several residential courses at the Cambridge Cavy Trust since 2007. A full welfare check includes weight, teeth, eyes, ears, genitalia, vet-approved oral routine worming and heart/respiration, as well as trimming nails, doing skin slides, and giving advice.

We are not able to supply prescription-only medication, but we have found there are often suitable alternatives, or we may suggest which prescription-only medication has worked successfully for the charity guinea pigs for many years.

For ex-rescue guinea pigs from April Lodge, there is no cost for the welfare checks, which are normally at least four times per year. This counts for both fostered and adopted guinea pigs that came from us.

### Guinea pig health: Private welfare clinics

Val is now also running new welfare clinics for private pigs. By private pigs, we mean those not adopted or fostered from April Lodge. If you have read the sections above, you will know that Val knows her stuff when it comes to guinea pigs. She has extensive experience in guinea pig welfare, having run the April Lodge clinic for 13 years, in which time she has helped over 2,000 pigs!

Welfare clinics for private pigs are starting soon and will be on Fridays from 6pm until 8pm, and Saturdays between 12pm and 2pm. A check is £5 per guinea pig, and includes an all-over check, nail trim, microscopic slide to check for lice, ear clean, teeth check and more. For more information, just text or call Val on 07790 684 888, and she will be happy to help.



## Upcoming events

We always have an array of exciting events in the calendar. Here are some of the ones coming soon:

- **Chilli and Quiz Night in Woodnesborough Village Hall**  
Saturday 29th April, 7.00pm to 10.00pm, Woodnesborough Community Hall, Elmwood Park, Off The Street, Woodnesborough, CT13 0FB. Tickets are £10 each, including veggie chilli with jacket potatoes and cheese. Tables can sit up to ten people, and there will be a raffle. Contact April Lodge for your tickets.
- **Grand Opening of the new extension**  
This will be held at April Lodge. The details will be firmed up soon, but it will likely be in June, with stalls and cakes.
- **April Lodge Open Day**  
Sunday 6th August, featuring 'Piggy's Got Talent'! More details to follow.

## Volunteers needed!

Being a volunteer at April Lodge is a hugely rewarding experience. We have volunteers of all ages, with the element in common being a love of guinea pigs! We work hard, but we also make time for a cup of tea and, of course, there are a lot of guinea pigs that need to be cuddled. Duties include a huge variety of things, from moving the runs, putting the piggies out to eat grass, preparing their vegetables, topping up their food, filling water bottles, cleaning and disinfecting hutches and brushing and stroking, to name a few of the tasks. All of our volunteers find it truly rewarding, and you get to meet some great new people.

"I started volunteering at April Lodge over six months ago now, and cannot believe how much it has brought into my life. I love my three hours a week there, I have met some really wonderful new people, and I have two of the charity's guinea pigs on long-term foster, and I absolutely adore them. I cannot recommend it highly enough. You can see a pic of me having a sneaky cuddle on the right!"

Lizzie Sabin, April Lodge volunteer



We're in specific need of people on weekday mornings. In particular, Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays (9am until 12pm). If you think you could spare some time, please do get in touch and ask for a volunteer form.

**New welfare clinics now available for pigs that were not adopted or fostered from April Lodge: Fridays from 6pm until 8pm, and Saturdays from 12pm until 2pm. See above for more details.**

## Until next time...

Thanks for reading! This edition of Jeepers Squeakers was put together by Lizzie Sabin, with contributions from others, including Jo Lockett and Val Savage. The next edition of Jeepers Squeakers is due out in June. Please email [aprillodgeguinea@aol.com](mailto: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, just text the word 'Stop', along with your email address, to 07790 684 888.

