

## April Lodge Guinea Pig Rescue

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Daily opening hours: 10am - Midday



## “JEEPERS SQUEAKERS!”

*September 2016 Newsletter*

*By Val Savage Rha/Founder/Clinician*

Hello and Welcome to old and new!

This edition includes news on our proposed replacement building, our August Open Day, profiles of charity volunteers, medical appraisal, handling tips and details on our forthcoming fundraising event a Halloween Race Night!

### REPLACEMENT BUILDING

This is for the replacement of the smaller, drafty and rather shabby part of the shelter which was originally a concrete panel garage and is about 50 years old. Although it's the quieter part of the charity so good for newcomers to settle down, no doubt there are mice which come and go through the various gaps and mouse urination is detrimental to guinea pigs so it really does need to be pulled down and a proper building erected in its place.

But after many months trying to find an architect to draw up plans, then the inevitable discussions over the detail of where doors and windows should be, then submission to Dover Council – we finally got the green light in July that we can go ahead and knock down this old part and re-build it in line with the plans so it's larger, better insulated (against summer heat as well as winter cold), with more organised storage and altogether better facilities for the piggies in need.

The cost will be approx £25,000. Gulp!! But every fundraising event we do now is going towards this. As well as all donations, large or small. These are immediately being paid into a high interest account until we need to release funds.

We can also try for grants from organisations which offer these to deserving charities. Usually these are for smaller amounts and there are no guarantees of course as thousands of charities will also apply but nevertheless, we'll have a go.....

We anticipate building works to start after the summer rush but before the winter hits. The piggies currently housed in this part will go to our short term foster carers into whatever space we can find for them whilst the old building is demolished, septic tank is installed and then the new building erected. Luckily our builder has agreed favourable payment terms but nevertheless, we still have a long way to go

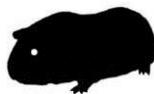


## OPEN DAY 2016 – the results

The sun shone, the crowds came, guinea pigs competed in the Fun Show and the Agility Arena and at last count you helped us raise over £3,000 – with more dribbling in thanks to Dawn Ash who raised funds by having all her hair cut off. Her Virgin Money Giving page remains open for a little longer if you'd like to donate.

So many thanks to everyone who attended and contributed. The money raised will go towards the cost of our badly needed replacement shelter.

The photos tell the story.....



## VOLUNTEERING STORIES

*by Lorraine Wyatt - in her own words*

As everyone knows, volunteering can be immensely rewarding. I can certainly vouch for this since I began volunteering at April Lodge. I lost my mum in January and was in a very dark place in my life. I needed to get out of the house and decided that I wanted to offer my time helping others. After filling in application forms for both the RSPCA and Dogs Trust with no response I was feeling let down and wasn't holding out much hope when I decided one morning to visit April Lodge. Within a few minutes I was cleaning and making up cages, washing drinking bottles, sweeping up and cuddling piggies. In fact, I returned home several hours later rather sweaty which was something I really wasn't expecting!



I regularly volunteer now at April Lodge and find it extremely therapeutic. Every time I volunteer, I learn a bit more about guinea pigs and a bit more about myself. For me, volunteering at April Lodge has been a life saver.

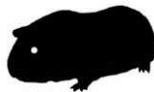
*Audra Lamoan*

Audra is in her 3rd year of volunteering now and although runs her own business...keeps Fridays free for clearing out the cages, bathing, feeding and other chores. Audra happily sits on the committee and manages our Twitter account and we have nearly 600 followers currently. And she uses social media to drive our profile when we do events like her annual sponsored walk, our Open Day and race nights etc.



Audra's passion for all animals runs deep and so she feels she is doing her part looking after and raising funds for helpless creatures like guinea pigs and even has 2 on holiday with her currently! I'm sure we'll have to convince her to bring them back! In the time she has spent at April Lodge she has raised nearly £2,500 on the sponsored walks and helicopter raffle alone but loves the fact that she learns so much from being hands-on every Friday. She learns a lot from Val in the clinic especially and each week she features Val in 10 second video clips on how to take care of your piggies' ailments!

Audra highly recommends you spare a day to help animals in need of rescuing...it's the greatest feeling on earth!



## HANDLING – it only takes a week

To turn terrified, screaming, un-handled guinea pigs into sweet, compliant, furry cuddle lovers.

Most of the pigs admitted to us are un-handled and many scream blue murder when they are first picked up or held. One of the reasons they are handed over, we are told, is that “the children can’t catch them”.

Yet it doesn’t need to be like this and it usually only takes one week to calm them down and make them the cuddly pets they should be. If you can’t get them out of their cage, how will you be able to check to see if they are ok, if they have a hay seed in their eye or a soggy bottom or their nails need clipping? Learn to handle them and they will reward you. You get out what you put in!



### Hints and tips

1. With full grown piggies, it’s best for an adult to get them out. Little hands may well struggle with guinea pigs that on average weigh 1kg or more. Too often we have witnessed small children grab guinea pigs, squeeze them too hard and even hold them upside down. No wonder they wriggle under those circumstances (and sometimes get dropped which can result in injuries - or worse)
2. Talk to them. You may feel silly but the sound of your voice calms them and alerts them that you are approaching. (This is also very useful for bathing – but that’s another lesson). Guinea pigs are naturally preyed upon so their default reaction is to run and hide if they feel they are about to be attacked/eaten (yes – by you)
3. Use a log arch or similar to gently back them into a corner of their hutch. You want to avoid a back and forth chase scenario across their hutch or cage which will upset them and you and them again as they will feel your stress.
4. Once cornered gently, you should be able to quickly scoop them up in one hand and then use your other hand to cup their bottom so they aren’t left dangling. Once in your arms or on your lap they will be calmer. It’s the initial catching that can stress them more than actually being held.
5. Use a towel to wrap them gently. This makes them feel secure and also means it’s difficult for them to dart away. Don’t wrap them too tightly and an adult should always be present as little hands often struggle to judge the amount of pressure required to hold a guinea pig securely yet without squashing them. Make a barrier with one forearm and use the other hand to gently stroke and control them whilst on your lap.

Do this AT LEAST! once a day and within one week, your piggy will be a new, more compliant pet ready for cuddles.



## MEDICAL ADVICE

by Val Savage (Rha)

This column is to be used only as advice and not to replace the professional opinion of a veterinary surgeon with specialist experience of guinea pigs (classed as exotics).

### Paralysed Hind Legs.

Unless there are symptoms of a stroke, i.e. the guinea pig in a collapsed state with nystagmus in the eyes where the eye is jerking from the corner outwards or there is evidence of an injury, or the inability to use the hind legs has been a while progressing, we have found the administration of Osteocare to have good results.

It is thought that this condition may be caused by a calcium absorbency problem so this often-successful remedy is a short over-load of calcium rather than see the guinea pigs lose the use of his hind legs.

Where there is a sudden general weakness in the hind legs, swaying on the hind legs or they have become totally immobile or are being dragged around in a lifeless state, we would administer 1 ml (that is a whole 1ml syringe full) of Osteocare twice daily 12 hours apart for two days followed by 1 ml of Osteocare daily for three days.

This medication is available in most chemists and is often available "off-the-shelf" in some supermarkets. Shake well before use.

Further information on this condition is available on the website Peter Gurney's Guinea Pig Health Guide



## HALLOWEEN RACE NIGHT

Put the date in your diary for our next fund-raiser on Saturday 29 October – our Halloween Race Night.

Last year it was fully booked and raised £500. This time it's guinea pigs racing around the track (wooden ones of course!) to cries of encouragement from the scary crowd! (with a prize for the best spook). It all starts on the roll of a dice to find the champion runners. If you bid for a racing guinea pig in the pre-race auction and he wins, then that's an added cash bonus.

The tote calculates cash prizes based on the value of each bet but the odds are good at around 6-1 (approx. 6 pigs in each race). We have seen prizes of up to £50 being won, so come along and enjoy the night. Tickets currently sold are 52 with 48 left so it's a popular and fun event.

**APRIL LODGE GUINEA PIG RESCUE**



**HALLOWEEN RACE NIGHT**

Manston Village Hall - Saturday 29th October 2016  
Bring your own food & drink  
Tote. Big Cash Prizes.  
**First Race 7.30pm**  
Prize for Best Spook

Ticket - £5



Our next newsletter is due in December. 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.