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This Year's Theme:

Comfort, Care, Companionship

This year, GPAW is all about helping guinea pigs live their happiest, healthiest lives by focusing on how to handle stress.

Through the right comfort, care, and companionship, we can make sure our piggies feel safe, relaxed, and loved.

This newspaper is packed with guides, top tips, fun facts, and activities to help you create a stress-free environment for your squeaky little friends. Join us as we celebrate guinea pigs and explore how to give them the life they deserve!

Find the hidden guineas for a chance to WIN!

LOOK CAREFULLY!

Each page of this newspaper has a hidden guinea pig. Can you find them all? Scan the QR code to enter your answers for a chance to WIN a trip to Northumberland Zoo to visit Hog Springs!

Scan here to learn more



What is GPAW?

Guinea Pig Awareness Week (GPAW) is a national week dedicated to celebrating guinea pigs and promoting their health and welfare.



Now in its 5th year, GPAW helps owners and animal lovers understand how to give these gentle pets the best care possible.

Endorsed by the British Veterinary Association and the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, the week focuses on the five key welfare needs of guinea pigs: diet, environment, health, behaviour, and companionship.

We're proud to be working with our charity partners, Blue Cross, Raystede, RSPCA, Woodgreen, and Guinea Pig Welfare UK, to share expert advice, practical tips, and fun activities for both guinea pigs and their owners.

Whether you're a seasoned guinea pig parent or learning about them for the first time, GPAW is the perfect chance to discover how to make your guinea pigs' lives happier, healthier, and full of companionship.

GPAW Supporters:



Also supported by:

GUINEA PIG Magazine

Handle with Care:

A Gentle Guide To Picking Up Your Guinea Pigs

Guinea pigs can be fantastic pets for the whole family, but because they're naturally cautious animals, handling them in the right way is essential to keep them happy and safe.

Most guinea pigs will try to wriggle free or dash for cover when you reach in to pick them up and that's perfectly normal. Even tame guinea pigs will always see humans as potential predators, so it's important to build trust through calm handling, patience, and consistency.

For families, handling can be a wonderful way to bond with your pets, but children should always be supervised. Encourage little ones to sit on the floor with a blanket over their lap while holding guinea pigs, rather than walking around with them in their arms. This prevents accidents and makes the experience safer for both piggies and people.

And don't forget, a sturdy carrier is a must-have. Whether it's for vet trips or simply while you're cleaning their enclosure, a hard plastic carrier lined with hay and bedding is the safest way to transport your guinea pigs. 🐹



The Right Way To Pick Up Your Guinea Pigs



Step 1: Say hello first

Always let your guinea pigs know you're there by speaking softly and moving slowly. Quick movements can be scary!

Step 2: Offer your hand

Allow your guinea pigs to sniff your hand before lifting, it helps them understand you're a friend, not a foe.

Step 3: Guide, don't chase

Calmly guide your guinea pig towards a corner with one hand near their chest and the other near their bottom.

Step 4: Support the tummy

Slide your hand gently under their belly so they feel safe from beneath.

Step 5: Add a steadying hand

As you lift, place your other hand across their back for security.

Step 6: Hold close and secure

Keep your guinea pig close to your chest, one hand under their bottom, one across their back. This prevents wriggling and sudden jumps.

Together, these tips will help your guinea pigs feel calm, supported and safe every time you interact with them, making lap time a positive experience for everyone.

Guinea Pig Health Check

Unlike dogs and cats, guinea pigs don't need regular vaccinations, which means they often don't see a vet unless something's already wrong. Because guinea pigs are prey animals, they're experts at hiding signs of illness. That's why regular home health checks are so important.



Prevention is always better than cure. A simple weekly check can make all the difference to spotting problems early - and that can mean the difference between a speedy recovery or serious illness.



Dr Suzanne Moyes MVB MRCVS,
Burgess in-house vet, explains:

So, what should you be looking for? 🐹

Eyes, Ears & Nose

- ✓ Bright, clear eyes
- ✓ Clean ears and nose with no discharge

If you notice any discharge, cloudiness, or head shaking, book a vet visit. Ear mites or infections need prompt treatment.

Skin & Coat

- ✓ Shiny, healthy fur with no bald patches or scabs
- ✓ No signs of excessive scratching

Parasites like mites, lice, and even fungal infections (such as ringworm) can cause itching, scabs, or hair loss. If you spot problems, treat all guinea pigs in the group and clean their environment thoroughly.

Teeth

Guinea pigs' teeth never stop growing!

- ✓ Check weekly for overgrowth, breaks or looseness
- ✓ Ensure unlimited access to good quality feeding hay to help wear teeth down naturally

Overgrown teeth can make eating painful, which leads to serious health issues.

Feet & Nails

- ✓ Check for red patches, swelling or sores (especially on the soles of feet)
- ✓ Trim nails every 4–6 weeks to stop them curling

Hard surfaces and wire flooring can cause sore feet, a painful condition called bumblefoot. Always provide soft bedding like meadow hay.

Diet & Digestion

- ✓ Eating normally and producing plenty of droppings every day
- ✓ Fresh hay available 24/7 (around 85–90% of their diet)
- ✓ Daily dose of Vitamin C (guinea pigs can't make their own!)

Scurvy is a risk without enough Vitamin C, leading to painful joints and poor skin. Protect your piggies with high-quality guinea pig nuggets and leafy greens like parsley or dandelion.

Parasites

- ✓ Watch for scratching, rubbing, head shaking, or scabs
- ✓ Treat affected guinea pigs and their companions
- ✓ Clean all housing, tunnels, and toys

If something seems off, don't wait, guinea pigs can go downhill quickly. A check-up with a small animal vet can make all the difference.

Make Your Guinea Pig a Cosy Hideout

Guinea pigs love having cosy spaces to hide and explore, it helps them feel safe, calm, and happy. With just a few simple materials you probably already have at home, you can make a cardboard tunnel or fleece hidey to create the ultimate stress-free zone for your guinea pigs!

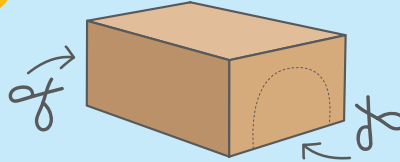


What you'll need:

- Cardboard boxes or tubes (unused and clean)
- Fleece scraps (washable, non-fraying)
- Scissors (adult use only)
- Non-toxic glue or tape
- Optional: hay for padding

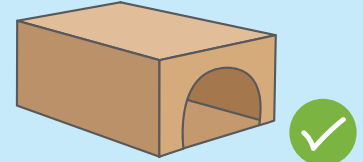
1. Cardboard Tunnel:

1



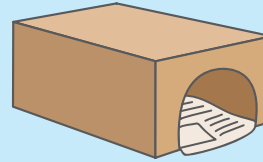
Cut a cardboard box into a tunnel shape with entrances at both ends.

2



Ensure edges are smooth and safe - no sharp corners or staples.

3



Line the inside with newspaper or fleece for comfort.

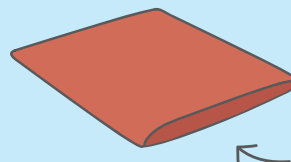
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Place in your guinea pigs' run or enclosure and watch them explore!

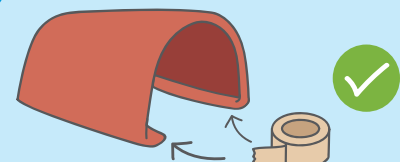
2. Fleece Hidey:

1



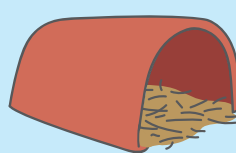
Take a piece of fleece and fold it into a small "tent" or roll it into a cylinder.

2



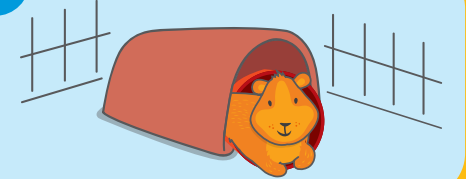
Secure the shape with non-toxic tape or tuck the ends under to create a stable hideout.

3



Add a small layer of hay inside for extra comfort.

4



Place in a quiet corner of the enclosure for your piggies to relax.

Top Tips

- Make sure the hidey is stable and can't collapse on your guinea pigs.
- Always use clean, pet-safe materials - avoid anything that could be chewed and ingested.
- Rotate hideys or tunnels to keep your guinea pigs' environment interesting and stimulating.

Creating a cosy hidey is a simple, fun way to keep your guinea pigs calm, happy, and entertained, and it's a project the whole family can enjoy!

Creating a Cosy, Calm Space for Your Guinea Pig

Here's a step-by-step guide to setting up the perfect stress-free guinea pig environment

Step 1: Space to Stretch

Forget the idea of a "small hutch." Guinea pigs need far more room than many people realise. Think of the hutch as their bedroom, somewhere to sleep, but make sure it connects to a much larger run for exploring, exercising, and foraging.

Top Tip:

For two piggies, aim for at least 5ft x 2ft as an absolute minimum, but bigger is always better.



Step 2: Shelter and Safety

Whether indoors or outdoors, guinea pigs need draught-free, predator-proof housing. Indoors, avoid radiators, direct sunlight, or draughty windows. Outdoors, shelter them from wind and rain, and bring them inside if the temperature drops below 15°C.

Did you know?

Groups of four or more guinea pigs thrive in converted sheds or Wendy Houses for extra space and security.



Imagine living in a noisy, brightly lit place with nowhere to retreat when you feel overwhelmed. That's what life can be like for guinea pigs without the right home environment. Because they're prey animals, piggies instinctively seek safety, shelter, and peace and their housing needs to reflect that.



Step 3: Cosy Hideouts

Guinea pigs don't feel safe in the open. Provide at least one hideout per piggy, wooden tunnels, cardboard boxes, or fabric snugs are perfect. Place them in different spots around the run so your guinea pigs always have somewhere to dash if they feel startled.

Step 4: Bedding Basics

The wrong bedding can cause health problems. Avoid sawdust, wood shavings, and straw, these can be dusty or even dangerous for eyes and skin. Instead, line their space with newspaper, a soft paper-based litter, and lots of sweet-smelling meadow hay for tunnelling and sleeping.

Step 6: Foraging Fun

Enrichment is essential to stop boredom. Hide nuggets or forage mixes in cardboard tubes, scatter hay around, or create "hay kebabs" with willow sticks. The more interesting their environment, the more relaxed and happier they'll feel.

Step 7: Keep It Clean

A clean home is a healthy home. Spot-clean daily, replace bedding weekly, and do a full deep clean every month. Always use pet-safe cleaning products and make sure everything is completely dry before piggies go back in.

Step 5: Outdoor Adventures

On warm, dry days, guinea pigs love grazing on grass in a secure run. Always provide hideouts in the run so they never feel exposed. Remember, never put them out on damp grass and always supervise.



Spotting Signs of Stress in Guinea Pigs

Just like us, guinea pigs can feel anxious when life gets a little too noisy, busy, or unpredictable. Because they are prey animals, guinea pigs are masters at hiding how they really feel. This natural instinct helps protect them in the wild, but it also makes it harder for owners to spot when something isn't quite right.

Creating a stress-free environment is one of the most important things we can do to support their health and happiness.



When to Ask a Vet

Sometimes, stress can be linked to an underlying health problem. If your guinea pig stops eating, becomes very withdrawn, or shows sudden changes in behaviour, it's always best to speak to your vet. Catching problems early not only helps their health but also gives you peace of mind.

What Makes Guinea Pigs Anxious?



Change is often at the root of stress. A house move, new people or pets, or even a sudden shift in routine can unsettle them. Loud noises like fireworks, vacuum cleaners, or banging doors can also cause alarm. And if their housing doesn't give them enough space or safe hideouts, anxiety can quickly build up.

Spotting the Signs

While it can be difficult to tell when a guinea pig is feeling stressed, their behaviour gives us valuable clues. A guinea pig that hides away more than usual, freezes in place, or suddenly becomes irritable with their companion may be telling you something is wrong. Other signs can include eating less hay, chewing cage bars, or teeth chattering.



Did you know?

A guinea pig that leaps and twists in the air is showing the complete opposite of stress. This behaviour is called "popcorning" and is a sign your guinea pig is happy!

Helping Your Guinea Pig Feel Calm

The good news is that small changes can make a big difference. Start by giving each guinea pig at least one hideout of their own, a place they can retreat to whenever they feel unsure. Position their housing in a quiet part of your home or garden, away from TVs and washing machines.

Feeding a consistent diet also helps. Sudden changes to food can upset both their tummy and their sense of security, so make sure fresh hay is always available, with veggies given at the same time each day. And when it comes to handling, patience is key: approach slowly, support their body properly, and allow them to decide how much contact they want.



Is Your Guinea Pig in Good Company?

Step One: First Impressions Matter

Just as you wouldn't move in with a stranger on the first day you meet them, guinea pigs need time to get used to each other. Start by placing their enclosures close together, so they can see and smell one another without direct contact. During this stage, "scent swapping" works

wonders. Exchange toys, tunnels, or bedding so each guinea pig gets used to the other's smell in a safe, non-threatening way. While they're near each other, reward them with favourite snacks. This way, new smells become linked with good experiences.



Step Two: The Meet & Greet

Once your piggies seem calm around each other, it's time for a proper introduction, but make sure it's on neutral ground. Never introduce a newcomer in your existing guinea pig's home, as this may trigger territorial behaviour. Create a safe, welcoming space filled with hay piles, tunnels, hideouts, and scattered treats. This keeps them busy, curious, and

less focused on each other as "rivals." Watch their body language carefully: chattering teeth, lunging, or constant chasing means they need more time apart before trying again. Many guinea pigs bond quickly, if they are getting along, there is no need to separate them.



Step Three: Reading the Signs



- Popcorning - those joyful leaps into the air!
- Wheeking and chatting - excited squeaks that show comfort.
- Grooming - mutual cleaning is a sign of trust.
- Piggy trains - following each other nose-to-tail around the enclosure.
- Resting together - lying side by side after playtime.

On the other hand, signs that more time is needed include:

- Teeth chattering
- Aggressive chasing
- Nipping or frequent squabbles
- Hiding from each other constantly

If you spot negative behaviours, don't despair. Simply go back a stage, continue scent swapping, and try another introduction in a few days.

Step Four: Keeping peace in the group

Already have a herd? The same principles apply, but with more piggies you'll need more space. The RSPCA advises that guinea pigs naturally form a "pecking order." To reduce the risk of bullying, always provide multiple food bowls, water bottles, and plenty of hiding places so lower-ranking piggies can retreat without conflict.

Converted sheds, Wendy houses, or large indoor enclosures work well for groups, allowing every piggy to find their place while still being part of the team.

Step Five: Where to find a friend

If you're looking for a companion for your guinea pig, rescue centres such as Blue Cross, RSPCA, or Woodgreen can help match personalities. Staff can advise on the right pairing and ensure your new guinea pig is healthy and neutered if needed. For guinea pigs, companionship isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. With patience, planning, and a watchful eye, you can help your guinea pigs form bonds that provide comfort, reduce stress, and bring joy to their daily lives.

Why companionship is the secret to a stress-free, happy guinea pig. If you could ask a guinea pig what makes them happiest, the answer would almost certainly be "friends!" Guinea pigs are highly social animals who naturally live in groups.

That's why experts, including the RSPCA, recommend always keeping guinea pigs in pairs or small groups. The companionship of their own kind not only provides comfort and security but also allows them to express their natural behaviours.

But what if you've got a single guinea pig and want to bring home a new friend? Successful introductions take time, patience, and understanding. Here's how to help your piggies build a bond that lasts a lifetime.



Guide to bonding guinea pigs

Guinea pigs are social animals, living in herds for companionship and safety in the wild. They really thrive when they have one or more companions to snuggle up to, run around with and talk to. When introducing guinea pigs, it's very important this is done carefully to minimise stress and the chance of getting an injury.



Suitable combinations

- Two or more sows (female guinea pigs).
- Two boars (male guinea pigs) – this can be tricky! Mixing two single boars together can take multiple introductions to single males before a good match is found. If you have a pair under one year old, there is also a risk that they may start to fight as they mature. This could lead to them needing to be separated.
- A neutered boar with one or more sows.

Choosing a space for introductions

When introducing guinea pigs, it's important that this takes place in neutral territory which does not contain the smell of any of the guinea pigs. This is to prevent them from becoming territorial which could then lead to a fight.

A good place to start introductions can be in an outside run. This will give them plenty of space and moving the run onto a patch of fresh grass will be neutral, as well as providing a good distraction in the form of food! Depending on the time of year and the weather, it may be better to introduce your guinea pigs in a more sheltered space. This could be a large area sectioned off in a shed, or even an indoor room. Your chosen area should also:

- be safe from predators
- not be somewhere you use regularly, like a bathroom or kitchen, so you won't disturb the guinea pigs

Preparing to introduce

Prior to introductions, you will need to make sure everything is set up ready and that the space is neutral by:

- cleaning the mixing area with pet-friendly disinfectant
- adding new or clean open-ended tunnels and hides with multiple entrances (at least one per guinea pig, or more if you are able to add them in)

- scattering plenty of hay throughout the mixing area, or placing it in multiple piles around space and under hiding spaces
- scattering their pelleted food and any tasty forage or greens around the floor
- placing a couple of water bottles or ceramic bowls filled with water into the mixing area

Do not put any bowls of food or hiding spaces with just one entrance into the mixing area. This is to stop the guinea pigs from becoming territorial or from becoming 'trapped' in a hiding space by another guinea pig, which could then lead to a fight.

Watch our video on the different behaviours you're likely to see in the mix.

Starting the bonding process

Once the space is ready, you can start the introductions. It is best to:

- do this when you can closely monitor them for a couple of days – over a weekend works well
- start the mix in the morning so you have the whole day to monitor them

Make sure you have a towel ready to step in and separate the guinea pigs if a serious fight starts.

When you're ready, place the guinea pigs in at the same time. Allow them to explore their new surroundings and approach each other in their own time.

Signs your guinea pigs may accept each other:

- Happy gentle squeaks
- Feeding close to each other
- Grooming each other's faces
- Calmly following each other

Signs your guinea pigs may not accept one another:

- Chattering of teeth
- Rearing their heads up at each other with open mouths (raising their head

over the other guinea pigs to show dominance)

- Regularly walking to the side with their rump in the air
- Fur standing on end

Signs you should separate your guinea pigs immediately:

- Attacking the face or rump
- Signs of injury or blood – contact your guinea pig friendly vet so they can be checked over

Behaviours likely to be seen when mixing a group are very similar to introducing a pair. The group should be watched carefully to ensure that an individual is not being bullied or becoming a bully.

Leaving them overnight

If you are mixing indoors and everything is going well by the late afternoon/early evening, leave them in that space together overnight. By separating them, you will need to start the mix from the scratch the next morning.

If you are mixing outdoors, make sure their main living space has been thoroughly cleaned. Move their hiding spaces and hay from the mixing space into their normal living area – this will help them to settle as it will smell like them. Keep a close eye on them to make sure they settle into the new space before leaving them together overnight.

The next day, check the guinea pigs over thoroughly for any injuries that may have happened overnight. If you notice any signs of injury, contact your vet so they can have a closer look.

If you would like more information or further advice on introducing your guinea pigs, visit our website
<https://woodgreen.org.uk/pet-advice/>

Our Best Friends Gallery

Guinea pigs are social animals who thrive in the company of their own kind. From sharing snacks to snuggling up in their favourite hidey, life is always better with a piggy pal. This gallery is a celebration of those inseparable guinea pig friendships.

**Share your
piggies' bond!**

Do you have a pair or group of guinea pig besties? Send us your photos for a chance to be featured on GPAW social channels during Guinea Pig Awareness Week. Let's showcase just how special guinea pig friendships really are! Share your favourite photos with us on social media using **#GPAW** and join our community of guinea pig lovers.



Bubble & Squeak



Mav & Mo



Moo & Angel



Turnip, Angel, Dottie & Pigglet



Ed & Nedd



Oreo & Mister Pigg



Piggy Profiles: Rescue Spotlight: Cavy Corner

About Cavy Corner

Founded in 2008, Cavy Corner Guinea Sanctuary is a volunteer-run, multi-award-winning rescue based in Doncaster. They rehabilitate and tame guinea pigs ready for adoption into 5-star forever homes. Elderly or ill cavies remain as permanent residents.

Volunteers from all walks of life support with feeding, cleaning, rescue missions, vet trips and more – making Cavy Corner a safe haven where guinea pigs can recover and thrive.

How you can help:

- Donate to support the rescue's work
- Send supplies
- Volunteer your time
- And most importantly: Adopt – don't shop

Story shared by Sue Tate, Founder, Cavy Corner Guinea Sanctuary



Real-life stories of guinea pigs who found safety, care and a second chance.

Unicorn's Story: Left Behind, But Not Forgotten



A cyclist on a lonely North Yorkshire road spotted something unusual as he passed a layby. Turning back, he found a guinea pig that had been dumped.

He caught and tucked him safely into his jersey, riding to the nearest house – some distance away – where the resident placed the guinea pig in a cardboard box and brought him to Cavy Corner.

The little guinea was extremely thin

and had a bulging eye. A vet check revealed he had no sight in that eye, and pressure testing showed dangerously high readings (as high as 91mmHg, compared to the normal range of under 10mmHg). He was immediately started on drops to reduce the pressure, with the hope of avoiding removal of the eye.

Sadly, it's possible he was callously dumped because of this issue – something rescues sadly see all too often. Abandoned guinea pigs cannot cope in the wild, facing traffic, predators, and exposure. Despite all he's been through, this guinea pig has remained friendly and calm. Cavy Corner named him Unicorn, and he remains in their care, undergoing treatment.

Georgia's Christmas Wish

Eight-year-old Georgia had asked her parents for guinea pigs for Christmas. After a long chat with her mum and dad, it was agreed that pets as presents is not in the best interests of animal welfare. On Christmas Day, instead of guinea pigs, Georgia received a cage, accessories, and vouchers from Santa with a note explaining that if she was still committed, she could attend a Cavy Corner Care Class after Christmas to meet rescued guinea pigs.

Georgia was delighted. She had



already done her research, and the family attended the class together, learning about safe handling, diet, health checks, and the importance of hay.

In January, Georgia's wish came true when she adopted two guinea pigs, Bruce and Bruno, giving them a loving forever home – and learning a valuable life lesson that pets should never be given as surprise gifts.

Spot the Difference

Can you spot all 8 differences between these two guinea pigs and their environment?
Look carefully at the toys, tunnels, bedding, and even the guinea pigs!



Did You Know?

Guinea pigs can't make their own Vitamin C, so they need it in their food every day!

A guinea pig's teeth never stop growing, which is why hay is so important.

Wild guinea pigs live in groups of 5-10, and they chatter to communicate.

Guinea pigs "popcorn" when they're happy, jumping straight into the air!

They have almost 360-degree vision, but they can't see directly in front of their nose.

Guinea Pig Joke Corner

Q: What do guinea pigs sing at karaoke?

A: Wheek Me Up Before You Go-Go!

Q: What do you call a guinea pig that raps?

A: Lil' Squeaky.

Q: Why are guinea pigs terrible liars?

A: Because they are wheek under pressure!

Q: What is a guinea pig's favourite game?

A: Hide and squeak.

Q: What do guinea pigs do on Valentine's Day?

A: Hogs and kisses.

Q: How do guinea pigs stay in shape?

A: Pig-lates!

How to Take Part in GPAW

Join in the fun and help celebrate guinea pigs during Guinea Pig Awareness Week!

There are lots of ways to get involved:

- Visit our website for expert tips, activities, and resources for your guinea pigs.
- Download the GPAW pack, filled with posters, activities, and info to help you care for your piggies. Scan the QR code to download yours!
- Share on social media! Post your favourite guinea pig photos and tag us to show how you're taking part. Don't forget to use #GPAW2025 so we can see all the squeaky fun!
- Take part in challenges like our find the guinea pig game or colouring activities!

Getting involved is easy and it's a great way to show your guinea pigs some extra love while helping raise awareness about their care, comfort, and companionship.



Want to learn more?

Visit the GPAW website for more expert advice, downloadable care packs, and campaign materials to support better guinea pig welfare.
guineapigalliance.com/

Instagram Facebook @burgessexcels

Scan here to learn more



GPAW Supporters:



A Big Thank You from Team GPAW!



A huge thank you to everyone helping to make GPAW special this year!

By taking part, sharing tips, or simply spending extra time with your guinea pigs, you're helping improve the lives of these gentle, social pets. Your support makes a real difference, from keeping guinea pigs healthy and happy, to helping raise awareness about their welfare.

Together with our partners, Blue Cross, Raystede, RSPCA, Woodgreen, and Guinea Pig Welfare UK, we're proud to celebrate Guinea Pig Awareness Week and all the wonderful people who care for these squeaky little companions.