

# Making friends with your Guinea Pig...



## Form a bond that will last a lifetime.

Guinea pigs make wonderful pets, they are cute, quirky and make the sweetest noises, but they are naturally nervous. It is very important that guinea pigs are well socialised from an early age so that they grow up to be happy, confident little piggies. Most guinea pigs think of their tummies first and foremost, so they are easily won over with their favourite treat. This method can also help even the most nervous of adult piggies.

## The piggy must always be the 'winner'.

When socialising any guinea pig it is important to remember that it is the piggy who must benefit from every interaction- not you. They must never feel trapped or harassed, it must always be positive. That is where food comes in! Always offer a piece of their daily food ration or a little treat. This builds up the association that human = 'food provider'. This is a very important title to hold as you become the centre of their universe! To start with, offer a piece of food every time you approach the cage. Say 'hello' or whatever greeting you want to use and offer a piece of food. If the piggy is too shy to take it from your hand just set it quietly in front of its nose. As this process is repeated over the coming days you will notice that the piggy associates you with something nice and may even start to anticipate you coming over. If you are lucky you will get a bit of squeaking and 'pop corning' with excitement.

## Getting your piggy used to daily handling.

Handling is an important part of interacting with your guinea pig. We all want to pick them up and give them kisses, but this can be scary for a nervous piggy. Building up to this point is very important and requires a bit of patience. Once your guinea pig is anticipating the food treat you are going to provide you can move on to teaching it that handling and cuddling is nice and that cuddles also equal food. Once a day gently scoop your piggy up in your hand, making sure that both the front and back ends are secure, set the piggy on your lap for just a few minutes and offer a tasty treat. The first few times your piggy may not eat its treat until it has returned to the cage. This is normal and is just down to nerves. After a few days your piggy should be quite content to sit in your lap and munch on a few snacks!