



Rabbit Ritz Ramblings

Thirteen Little Guinea Pigs and Counting

One day in January 2006 a call came regarding some guinea pigs that had been badly neglected. My waiting list for unwanted rabbits was lengthy but, hey, how difficult can guinea pigs be and their situation seemed dire. I was told there were probably seven or eight altogether, but due to poor husbandry they all had ringworm so had to be handled with gloves and bathed in a special solution every three to four days. No re-homing (even if I had any homes) for a month.

I can cope I said... fast forward an hour and in I struggled from the car with THREE PET CARRIERS full of guinea pigs, all shapes, ages, sexes and sizes! Did the vets see me coming or what?

The poor little rescued guinea pigs were terrified. I quickly sorted out more cages. They had to be kept away from the harsh January weather and teased back to health. The fantastic vets had treated them and as usual I did the next bit.

Finally, I was ready to unload my little friends. Every space in the small utility room had a cage in it. Each cage had a fresh water bottle, large bowl of food, yummy fresh vegetables and an abundance of pure, green, hay. One by one, I gently lifted each piggie out and lowered them into their new, safe, home. The greasy scabs were clearly visible, many around the eyes and nose. The pigs themselves looked undernourished. They share an unusual characteristic with us humans, they cannot make their own vitamin C and have to rely on their diet. Without fresh fruit and veg they can develop bone abnormalities and their immune system can fail.

What happened next made me cry. All the pigs raced under the hay in their cages and I was met with... SILENCE. So uncharacteristic of the guinea pigs we all know and love, just what had happened to these little people? Why no squeaks and squeals and chattering and growling? Okay, put it down to fear and trauma but two days later there was still no sound.



Bill and Ben

On day three, however, a miracle happened. I opened my bedroom door and thought I heard a squeak. I went downstairs rubbing my sleepy eyes and stared in wonderment. In the boys' cage, containing seven, there was a ménage of colour and a cacophony of squeaks. The boys had emerged from hiding and SNOWBALL, the largest, whitest chap was perched on his bum, front paws up on the bars, scolding me for being late. The other

boys were a mixture of browns, whites, oranges and blacks, all with their own different personality. We had ELVIS and CLIFF who sported quite marvellous quiffs and were very vocal. My favourite, however, had to be the titchiest little browny black pig with the biggest ears since Dumbo.

He was no bigger than a mouse so I called him Mickey. Not only did he have the scabs but his eye was infected and a white colour and I was applying fucithalamic cream every day. He had the highest pitch squeak and would begin when he heard my bed creak in the morning. He also had small man syndrome and bossed the others about and even SAT in the food bowl to eat and have his pick of the food.

I had six girls too, some were pregnant, and I ended up with a few more but at least those had a better start in life.

I have to mention bath times. Melodramatic has to be the word! With water everywhere, squealing pigs, squealing me, bad language... and that was just the pigs! There are a few vets I'll get back for this one I thought. But, at the end of each session sat pigs, a little closer to recovery but furious with me, and holding my gaze with their beady stares. Elvis and Cliff soon restyled their quiffs and Snowball and Mouse could be seen plotting my comeuppance in the corner. There is no chance that I will ever contract ringworm because the medication ended up in my hair, up my nose and in orifices I didn't even know existed.

Thank you to wonderful people who gave them a home like Margaret, Julie Owen, Alison and co. They are all happy and healthy...



Cliff Elvis Gary Mickie Patch Snowy Swiftie

Patch Meets Merry and Pippin

Elaine called me when she was worried about her elderly rabbit 'Patch'.

His little guinea pig friend had passed away and he had become depressed and was eating less and less. Of course I had a guinea pig who needed a home, trouble was, they came as a pair! Patch came to the Rabbit Ritz, was introduced to them and was soon happy and eating and back to his old self. The following pictures tell the story.



2006 Awards

Ten Best Behaved Bunnies

1. Vanilla Alaniz
2. Harvey Smith
3. Smudge Denny
4. Big Ears Hanby
5. Charlie Quine
6. Ruppert Patane
7. Poppy Cheval
8. Roger
9. Henry Pullar
10. Flopsy Crawford



Ten Naughtiest Bunnies

1. Ella Venables
2. Lily
3. Wiggle
4. Choci Morely
5. Toby Atkins
6. Smudge Gostick
7. Rosie Little
8. Snowflake
9. Domino Bayliss
10. Max Wicks



Biala, stroppiast three legged rabbit



Pappy



Smudge Gostick

Randiest Bunny

Choci Morely

Least Improved

Carter Boys

Best Wig

Pappy

Most Embarrassed Looking Patient

Smudge Gostick

Rabbit Ritz This Year

Another busy year at "The Ritz" beginning even before Christmas. The day before Xmas eve I was telephoned by a distraught relative of a man who had been found dead. It was now a crime scene. In his house was a forlorn looking hamster and with all the trauma she didn't know what to do with it.

Later that evening I gazed at the little chap... He looked like a bedraggled piece of carpet cut off. His cage floor was two inches of congealed poo and there was no food to speak of. I had to use a wallpaper scraper to clean the cage. I was doubtful he'd last the night. Next day was Xmas eve and in between pets arriving for their hols, Andy and Jill arrived with a bag of veggies for the unwanted and a Xmas bottle of wine for me (I like white for future reference). How thoughtful...well, they only have a guinea pig... what's a little hamster... no trouble at all really... opened the wine and two hours later I was strapping Rudolf and his cage into their car. He is fit and healthy still, has eaten their carpets and, yes, I've heard all the jokes about "the hamster did it"!

More than a hundred animals re-homed so far, some stories I have printed there's no room to print them all. I cannot do it without your help. Thank you to many people who send donations in Xmas cards. Greyboys' mum and dad even sent a donation in his memory. Some people do sponsored events or even pop in with a sack of rabbit food for the unwanted. It all helps no matter how small... A big thank you to the kids who make tremendous efforts to raise funds. This year, Katie did a sponsored silence and Katherine and Rachel did sponsored carol singing. They helped pay for countless MIXI jabs and gave bunnies the chance of life.



Katie and Berti

We were inundated with guinea pigs (see frontpage) and a customer commented how different my current career was from my previous modelling career(I was picking poo out of my hair at the time).

I thought about it, Canapes with Brucie, dancing with Des, snooker with Davis and Hendry, fooling around with McCoist, thrown in the air by Bruno, supping with John Hurt, flirting with Jeff Goldblum, chasing lions at Kilimanjaro, the catwalks, the countries, the parties, the premieres, the planes, the yachts, the mansions... All been replaced by being peed on, pooped on, squirted by slimy yellow pus from abscesses, picking out maggots, picking open scabs to squirt out more pus, being bitten and scratched and generally despised by my patients. I wouldn't swap it for the world!

And it's YOU that can help... so if you want to prolong my discomfort send me a donation... I can't do this without YOU !!!

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!

Oakley and Myrtle

Alison calls me from London. She'd fallen for a little grey and silver dutch called Oakley at a rescue centre and tried to introduce him to her bonded pair. That proved to be impossible and Oakley went on the attack and due to his lack of teeth he came off worse!

Oakley is the image of Fizz the manager but with the extra leg of course.

Myrtle came here for holidays and was always a bit depressed when she went home because she missed her bunny friends so I began to introduce them slowly. Oakley

immediately tried to attack her but Myrtle reared up and became the were-rabbit. She slapped a hefty paw across his jaw and growled and off he scampered in surprise. He sat in his corner looking utterly bemused. Who was this 'big



Oakley and Myrtle

momma' who had the measure of him? And, indeed she had, she wasn't going to let any young toy boy ride roughshod over her.

We then had to endure two days of chasing and growling until finally the day dawned when two little noses were touching as they ate from the same bowl. That night they spent their first night together and she decided that toy boys weren't so bad after all.

Recently, Myrtle had a serious illness and it was the love of Oakley that pulled her through, he groomed her, lay beside her and just loved her..

Sweet Pea and Sheila

Shortly Before my annual holiday I received a phone call from Sheila. She sounded confident as she began her story until she reached the part where she told me her rabbit had been put to sleep that morning, then she dissolved into tears. She sounded so sad and desolate but the grieving process is something we all have to face at some time. My heart went out to her. I promised that I would keep her in mind for a new rabbit.

Later that afternoon... I receive another phone call, this time a lady called Sophie had discovered two rabbits in cardboard boxes, cello taped down and abandoned in a field close to an allotment. I cannot describe the feeling you get just before you open such a box- you hope its not too horrific. One box contained a cute little black, lop eared boy. He was malnourished and covered in mites, parts of his skin almost bald. The second box contained a white lionhead who was also starved. It was only when I turned her over that I recoiled. Stuck to her bottom was a piece of poo the size of a cricket ball! Luckily I'd had my dinner, so I got my trusty basin of lukewarm water and began the messy task of breaking it apart and easing it off. Inside I discovered maggots but none of the little blighters had penetrated her yet. It brought it home to me that had she not have been found she would certainly have been eaten alive by the morning.

The little bulb in my head lit up and I thought of Sheila, it was surely meant to be... Over the next two weeks Mr Paul, the vet, worked his usual magic and with careful

nursing from me, both rabbits recovered well. When Sheila came to collect the little white lionhead it was love at first sight and I captured those moments to show you here. The bunny is now called SWEET PEA and lives a lovely life with Sheila and the other rabbits.



Our Lost Little Friends

As usual we have to say a final goodbye to some treasured friends. Gone but not forgotten, just waiting for us at the rainbow bridge...

Rosie Tuvey, Leo Dolder, Jo Michael, Flo Venables, Berti Bayes, Scampi Owen, Bert and Vicki smith, Andy, Tiggi, Fudge, Radar, Gary, Misty, Fluffy Thorne, Snowy, Malcolm, Billy Pearson, Patch, Biscuit and any others I may have missed...

Gut Stasis

Many people have asked me about gut stasis and the following comments are my own thoughts on the subject, if in any doubt seek your vets advice immediately.

One of the most important tasks for me is observation. First thing in the morning I am looking at each and every animal to see if they are behaving normally and eating normally. In fact, I am sure that when I walk down the path they are all TRYING to look healthy so there's no danger of going to the vet. We cannot be really sure what causes gut stasis; pain, stress, dehydration, a blockage?

A rabbits' tummy is never empty, so when it stops eating you must act swiftly. Symptoms include not eating, gurgling tummy, depression and/or yellow mucous discharge. SEE YOUR VET.

The patient must be kept hydrated. I then administer pain killer and begin syringe feeding with Oxbow Critical Care. Some vets use Metaclopramide or Propulsid which work on different areas of the gut to improve mobility. It can mean intensive nursing but I'm sure you'll agree these little munchkins are worth it. Other tips from bunny guru Laura Watson, (who's bunny Dobbie has frequent episodes) include the feeding of papaya and pineapple that have enzymes which may assist in the breakdown of mucous or gut obstructions. Then start tempting them with their favourite foods, curly kale or dandelions work for me.

This year, one of my customers, Toffee Collinson, was off colour, or, as I said to the vet, he was looking at me strangely. My sixth sense of rabbit health kicked in and off we went to Mr Paul the vet.

He was diagnosed with Stasis and I began the above intensive nursing care. As you can see, he made a full recovery. Act swiftly and never give up hope...



Toffee

A Big Rabbit Ritz Thank you.

Running out of space this year so a big thanks to all the Vets, Pet shops, Notcutts and Wyevale garden centres, Mark and the team on the Wendover Thursday market. As the above businesses realize what I am trying to achieve they are helping more and more...

A special mention to my friends at Hampden Veterinary group. During my working week I feel reassured because I know they are a tremendous team and should I need their services they will react swiftly and professionally and my clients will have the best care. Sorry guys, I know I drive you to distraction but I can't do this without you. Thank you so much.

New Opening Times and Price Rise

Mon- Sat 10 – 1145 a.m.

Its been two years since the last price rise and unfortunately I have to compete with the rising prices of hay, food, veg etc. I also have on the premises, remedies, critical care food, antibiotics and pain relief. This all costs money but is vital should I spot an illness. I know you will still lend me your support because you can see the unwanteds that arrive here each and every day and that's where your money goes. New prices are published in my new leaflet.

E.G. One rabbit £4, Two rabbits £7, One guinea pig £3, Rabbit & guinea pig £6

Peanut

Many of you have met my new recruit Peanut pig who lives in the bushes and jumps out at unsuspecting cats. None of this wishy washy RAF here he's an SAS trained pig and is now Entertainments Officer for Peanut SAS pig the visiting guinea pigs. Welcome Peanut.



Stop Press!

Who needs homes... Currently;

Brandy, a beautiful chocolate brown boy, castrated.
Vanilla, a honey and white lop boy, castrated.
Three adorable silver grey babies, all male.
Dougal, a shy lion head cross.
White, a large albino who's neutered and great company
Several guinea pigs including; Brandy and Bossy, two females.



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