

PET PARADE

Where would we be without our fine furry and feathered friends? We help you make the most of your pet – and with a spot of animal whispering and all the best in pet news



When it comes your smaller fur-babies like guinea pigs, gerbils and hamsters, it goes without saying that their best playtime is with you. However, it's important to make sure they have plenty activities to help them amused when you can't. Their teeth and claws need something to work at to keep them a good length and in great condition, and they need toys and cage "furniture" designed to satisfy activities that come naturally to them.

Guinea pigs love tunnels and burrowing so make sure they have materials to mess around with. They also get a kick out of playing with balls, and if they have cage mates you can sometime see them have a tug of war, so small rope toys are ideal. Make sure they have plenty room to play and you'll be rewarded with a happy popcorning piggie. And food! Guinea pigs so love their grub, so make sure there is a good of selection of tasty things for them to chew on.

If you have gerbils, you'll know they love to dig and dig and build their own tunnels, so a deep cage lined with plenty of soft, non-allergenic materials is ideal. A toilet roll tube is thing of deep joy for gerbils! They will have fun running through it and chewing it up for more material to build tunnels with. The loo roll itself (plain with no scent) is great for them to shred and nest build too. Gerbils love to chew so pop a gnaw log or two into their gerbilarium and watch them make light work of it!

Hamsters cages traditionally come with a wheel for a good runabout in, but please ensure you choose a safe wheel that won't damage little legs and tails. It's a good idea to change their toys to ward off boredom, so keep a good selection to swap in and out of the cage to keep them motivated. Mazes are fun for hamsters and hiding their treats can be another great success. Hamsters love a good chew so a wooden activity toy is a great cage addition.



How Clever Is Your Dog?

Broadcaster and author Anna Webb has studied at the College of Integrated Veterinary Therapies (CIVT). She lives in London with Prudence and Mr Binks.

Anyone who has owned a dog knows they're capable of "emotional intelligence". Yet this cognitive ability in "non-human" animals has been hotly debated among scientists for years.

Only a decade ago using clever devices like MRI scans made scientists consider that dogs might possess episodic memory that's a key attribute of emotional intelligence.

Surprisingly there have been few studies on dogs' memory, despite the vast amount on their cognition.

However, a new study from Aarhus University in Denmark reveals exciting data that strongly suggests dogs do have emotional intelligence. The study worked with 375 dogs and

their owners to discover whether their pooches showed evidence of remembering episodes from their personal past.

Based on contextual factors like people, objects, sound, weather and location, over 80% of owners said that their pet did remember past events.

Location was the most frequently remembered and most common retrieval cue, similar to memory in people, along with social information.

The study revealed that dogs do have long-term memories and these share many characteristics with human involuntary autobiographical memory.

If dogs do possess episodic memory, and if this

is not exclusive to human cognition, then could such studies question why pets are still seen as property in law? In the same way your car is your property, so is your dog. But how can a dog be judged similarly?

Stolen and Missing Pets Alliance (SAMPA) and Pet Theft Reform are lobbying government for increased sentencing for a crime that's on the rise. A petition proposing changes to the current Theft Act 1968, re-classifying pet theft as a specific crime and as a category 2 offence or perhaps even more!

Grassroots campaigning will hopefully bring legislation in line with what man's best friend truly deserves.



Doggie treats

A Clean Sweep!

If it's time for spring cleaning, or you just want to give your house a good clear out, remember to check that the products you are using are safe to be used around your pets.

Look for pet friendly products online as well as in your local pet store. Check the product labels for safety information and follow the usage instructions.

Natural cleaning products – for example, lemon juice, vinegar and baking soda – are always useful to keep around as well as being safe to use around family pets. For more information, advice and ideas, you can visit Anna Webb's webpage at www.annawebb.co.uk

Food For Thought

If you love pottering and creating in the kitchen you can keep your doggie best chum in the manner to which they've become accustomed! *The Happy Dog Cookbook: Burgers, Bites and More* by vet Sean McCormac, and featuring Annabel Karmel, has all the recipes you and your woofers could wish for – from dog friendly hot cross buns to meatloaf! Look for it in all good book stores or on Amazon, priced £9.72.

Of A Sensitive Nature

Has your feline friend got a bit of a sensitive stomach? Well, if your puss struggles with regular pet food, move them over to a food line that is designed for cats with food sensitivities. Ranges like Royal Canin and PurinaONE are perfect for cats with delicate tums containing both wet and dry options. Always have a word with your friendly local vet if you have concerns about your pet's digestion.



Rescue Dog

By Melanie Cruickshank, internationally renowned animal communicator.

This month, I was invited to meet Scruff at his new home in Cumbria. Scruff mentioned he was found limping aimlessly along the streets of Cyprus and he had nearly given up hope. He was covered in mites, hungry, his health was deteriorating, and he struggled to get around due to a seriously damaged leg. He was found by a lovely couple, who nursed him back to full health and got him the medical attention he needed. This meant he endured numerous operations to help heal his leg. For a few years, he had the perfect home but due to circumstances beyond their control, the couple moved to another area and he was unable to travel with them. So, it was a race against time to find him the perfect home. Their online plea was answered by two amazing ladies who had been looking for a rescue dog to give them a second chance. Scruff fitted the bill perfectly. They began the process of bringing him to the UK. As soon as Scruff arrived in his new home in Cumbria he immediately felt at home, as if he belonged with them for years. He still has regular check ups at the vets and he is looking forward to new adventures in the Cumbrian countryside. It was as though everything fell into place at the right time.

