Guinea Pigs display different types of behaviour with humans, especially during lap time (when you handle your pig).

**Fidgeting and Nipping**—usually means your Guinea Pig is scared or uncomfortable. Some pigs nip when they need the toilet. On average they need to go every 15 minutes.

**Licking**—this is either due to the salt on your skin or them ‘grooming’ you.

**Running away/not wanting to be picked up**—it is a natural instinct for your pig to run away. The ‘flight’ instinct is very strong in Guinea Pigs, more so than rabbits.

**Sprawling out on your lap**—this is sign of a content pig that is enjoying your company.

### A Few Final Points...

- **Guinea Pigs can get bored.** To stop this rearrange their cage/hutch once a week. It is very entertaining to watch them exploring their new home.

- Guinea Pigs are active creatures when healthy, content and living in spacious quarters. If your pig is not moving/very quiet this may be because they are scared (common when pigs are moved to a new home) or they could be sick. **It is important to know what is normal behaviour for your pet and take them straight to the vet when they act differently.** Also physically check over your pig every day:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check List</th>
<th>What to look for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coat</td>
<td>Should be sleek and shiny. Long haired breeds need grooming to keep fur clean and knot free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>No wounds, scrapes or swellings. Check for bald patches/flaky skin. This can be a sign of mites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ears and Eyes</td>
<td>Eyes should be bright and wide open. They do produce a cream coloured liquid from their eyes for grooming, this is normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeth</td>
<td>Check they are wearing evenly and not overgrown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Make sure claws are clipped to a correct length (ask a vet to show you how) and legs are working well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behaviour: The Basics

Origin of Guinea Pigs:

► Guinea Pigs or ‘cavies’ (from their scientific name *Cavia porcellus*) are not related to pigs or from Guinea. They are rodents that originate from the Andes. Guinea Pigs do not exist in the wild but other members of the ‘cavia’ family do.

► Their average life span is 4-5 years, but may live as long as eight years. The oldest guinea pig recorded lived for 14 years.

► They would naturally live in large herds with one male (boar) and several females (sows) and spend most of their time grazing. Guinea Pigs are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk.

► They do not burrow underground but will happily steal another creature’s home!

► Guinea Pigs use various forms of body language and sounds to express their feelings, this leaflet will help you to decipher what they mean.

What Pig Noises Mean

► **Wheeking** - A loud, high pitched noise which means your pig is excited. It often happens when they are being fed or hear you open the fridge! It can also be a way of a lone pig finding its herd.

► **Rumbling** - A strange sounds that sounds like a rumble. Pigs often look/feel like they are vibrating. It is a show of dominance or disapproval. Guinea Pigs do this when their hair is being brushed the wrong way as it is irritating for them.

► **Chattering** - Pigs chatter their teeth together as a warning to others. They tend to raise their heads when making this sound. A more relaxed type of gnashing often means the Guinea Pig wants a treat that is somewhere nearby but out of reach.

► **Squealing** - A high-pitched sound of discontent, usually due to being bitten or picked on by others.

► **Chirping** - This is a rare sound, like a bird chirp. It is not certain what this noise means but it could be related to when a baby guinea pig wants to be fed.

Recognising Pig Behaviour With Their Own Kind

► **Standing Still / freezing** - If a pig hears/sees something that it is not used to they often freeze. They think they can’t be seen.

► **‘Popcorning’** - Running and jumping around. This is sometimes mistaken for a pig having ‘a fit’ by people who have never seen this before. In fact it is a sign of joy.

Signs of Dominance:

► **Mounting**—this is common between females when they are in season.

► **Yawning** - Guinea Pigs yawn to show their teeth as a sign of dominance to others.

► **Pacing back legs from side to side**

► **Two pigs raising their heads** - which ever pig raises their head the highest wins the show of strength!

► These types of behaviour are natural and should not be something to worry about. However, when pigs start to stand on 2 legs and show their teeth this usually means a real fight may happen. When bonding Guinea Pigs it is important to be aware of this behaviour. When introducing a new pig do so on neutral territory i.e. In a bath and do not separate unless blood is drawn. They will squabble between themselves but they will settle with time.