

# Silverbeet, Saturday and Sunday

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# Silverbeet, Saturday and Sunday



## Chapter 1

Saturday and Sunday were brothers. They lived together at Bailey's house. Bailey had named them Saturday and Sunday because she loved the weekend.

They had an exercise pen on the back lawn and a guinea-pig hutch nearby that was clean and new. They had warm dry bedding to sleep on and clean water to drink. They had lots of fresh hay, vegetables and pellets to eat. They had toys and plenty of attention from Bailey and her mum. Their nails were trimmed and their long coats were brushed every day.



Things began to change, however, when Bailey's mum started a job. Bailey found some different friends and some new interests. They didn't have as much time to share with Saturday and Sunday. The hutch was left longer between cleans. The hay became damp and stale. Their coats were knotted and matted. Their nails grew very long.

So Saturday and Sunday weren't as happy and healthy, though they were still safe and fed.



## Chapter 2

The fact that the guinea pigs weren't getting much attention worried Bailey's mum. She had read about how in South America guinea pigs lived wild and free. So she decided that Saturday and Sunday would be better off in the wild. She didn't realise that Saturday and Sunday were bred as companion animals. They wouldn't be able to survive on their own.

Bailey felt sad when they released Saturday and Sunday into a bushy area in a nearby park. Like her mum, Bailey thought she was doing the right thing. Neither of them knew that this was not just cruel, it was also against the law.



Saturday and Sunday scuttled into the leafy darkness. They huddled together. There was no hay, no shelter, no food. Suddenly, they heard a crunchy noise. It was getting closer and coming straight towards them.

Saturday and Sunday were frozen with fear. The noise was really close. The guinea pigs were sprayed with mud and gravel. They ran in different directions as fast and as far as they could.

As the trail bike disappeared, Saturday and Sunday lay muddy, frightened and now alone.



### Chapter 3

“Hey Wiremu! Do you like jellybeans? I’ve got some for you!” shouted Koro.

Wiremu loved jellybeans but he was sure his grandfather was playing tricks.

“Are you sure, Koro?” Wiremu asked as he looked at the small black objects in Koro’s hand. They were the size and shape of jellybeans but without the shiny surface. They didn’t smell like jellybeans either.

“No thanks! I like the red ones,” said Wiremu with a laugh.

Koro laughed too and dropped the black objects into the garden. “They don’t belong to me,” he said. “I think we had a visitor.”

He pointed at some shredded leaf stems poking out of the soil.

“They belong to whoever has been eating my silverbeet!” he said.

Wiremu got it. “You mean those black things are animal droppings?”

“That’s right boy,” said Koro. “It looks like guinea pig poop. I don’t think there’d be one of those living around here! Which means we have a job to do. We have to build a trap!”



“Nobody steals my vegetables,” Koro said. “If we put the trap in the garden with some silverbeet in it, I think we’ll have the thief.”

Koro and Wiremu both wanted the plan to work, but for different reasons. Koro wanted to protect his vegetables. Wiremu wanted a guinea pig to keep as his own.

When they checked the trap in the morning, they found a sad guinea pig. Saturday was thin, with muddy matted fur. His teeth were overgrown and his claws so long, he was having trouble walking. Wiremu got some water and silverbeet.

“Can I keep him?” asked Wiremu. “I won’t let him get into the garden.”

“He doesn’t look well,” said Koro. “He probably belongs to someone else. I think we’d better get him to SPCA.”



## Chapter 4

At the local SPCA centre, Saturday was seen by a vet. He was treated for mites, lice and fleas. His overgrown teeth were fixed. His long claws trimmed. His matted coat shaved and replaced with a knitted jersey to keep him warm until his fur grew back.

After a few days, he was looking a lot better. He was eating and drinking. He had put on weight. His eyes were bright and he had more energy.

Justine, the SPCA animal attendant, decided that Saturday was healthy enough to move in with the other guinea pigs.

As he was carried into SPCA guinea-pig village, Saturday smelt a familiar smell. His ears perked up and his eyes widened. He started moving about in the carrier. He made the soft “wheeking” sound that guinea pigs make when they are with other guinea pigs.



Justine placed Saturday in the enclosure next to a bigger guinea pig. This guinea pig had been brought into SPCA by a member of the public. Saturday knew the guinea pig. It was Sunday!

Justine could tell by their behaviour that the two guinea pigs knew each other. She checked the details of where and when they had been found. She was almost sure they had once lived together.

She placed them both in a larger play run with lots of toys, tunnels and food. Justine watched how they behaved together. They even groomed each other. Now she was certain they belonged together. She decided that they would need to be adopted together.



## Chapter 5

It was two weeks since Saturday had been dropped off at the local SPCA centre and Wiremu hadn't stopped thinking about him. He looked up everything about caring for guinea pigs. He even found out things about guinea-pig poop to tell his grandfather.

He showed Koro an online video. A gardener made liquid fertiliser from guinea-pig poop and hay from their shelter at cleaning time.

"I could mix it up, Koro," he said excitedly. "We could call it Jellybean Juice. You will have the best vegetable garden in the street! The only thing we need is a guinea pig."

Koro laughed.

"Alright, mokopuna," he said. "We'll ring SPCA and find out what happened to that silverbeet stealer you like so much."



As promised, Koro called SPCA for an update on how Saturday was doing. He spoke to Justine. She told him about Sunday, and how both guinea pigs would have to be adopted together. Koro looked concerned.

Wiremu, who was listening on speaker phone, held his breath.

“Two guinea pigs! That’s twice as much food,” said Koro.

Wiremu smiled the cheeky smile he knew Koro loved. “That’s twice as much Jellybean Juice too,” he said. Koro laughed and Wiremu knew he had won.

The next day, Wiremu and Koro visited SPCA to arrange the adoption.

“What are you going to call them?” asked Justine.

“Salt and Pepper,” said Wiremu, “because Koro likes salt and pepper on his silverbeet.”

Justine said that Salt and Pepper had to stay at SPCA for another week. She had to be sure they were fit and healthy before they were ready for adoption.

“That’ll give me time to build their enclosure,” Koro said. “But I’m not sure if I can build one big enough for two guinea pigs. It might make my garden smaller.”

“Of course you can!” Wiremu said. “Let’s build a multilevel house – up, over, through the garden.”

Koro smiled. “OK,” he said. “I will.”



And he did.



# Caring for Guinea Pigs

## Facts and Tips

- Guinea pigs are also known as cavies. Female guinea pigs are called sows, males are called boars and babies are called pups.
- Guinea pigs are very social animals. They should live with at least one other guinea pig to prevent loneliness and boredom.
- Companion guinea pigs can't survive in the wild. They depend on us for food, water, shelter, grooming, enrichment, safety and health care.
- Guinea pigs need a balanced diet of hay, leafy green vegetables (such as kale, parsley, and spinach), guinea pig pellets and constant access to fresh drinking water.
- Vitamin C is essential for a guinea pigs' health. Like humans, guinea pigs are unable to make their own vitamin C so you need to make sure that they are getting enough vitamin C through their diet.
- Guinea pigs need access to quality, fresh, dry hay all the time. Hay keeps guinea pigs' digestive systems healthy and is important for their teeth. Because a guinea pig's teeth grow throughout their life, they need to be worn down and kept at the correct length and shape by eating hay, grass, and leafy green plants.
- Guinea pigs need a large safe exercise area for running, exploring, playing and hiding, and a secure shelter where they can rest, feel safe and are protected from predators and weather.
- Guinea pigs need exercise, mental stimulation, environmental enrichment and the ability to express normal behaviours including social interaction with other guinea pigs, tunnelling, exploring, stretching horizontally, hiding, foraging, gnawing and jumping.
- Always contact a vet immediately if your guinea pigs are sick, injured, or not acting like themselves.

**Visit [spca.nz/kids](http://spca.nz/kids) to learn more about caring for guinea pigs**

Ruby

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