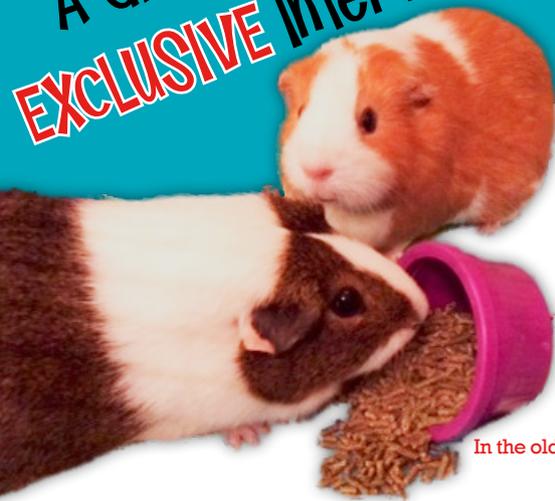


STAYbowl; the new non-tip bowl from Michigan USA, makes its debut



In the olden days!

When we were asked to advertise this brand new product, we just had to find out more about it. We were fascinated by the sheer genius and simplicity of it, so we arranged the interview pronto...

We talked to Janice Karlovich, Co-Founder and Vice President of Marketing and Communications at Green Oak Technology Group, Brighton, Michigan, USA...

Hi Janice and thank you for taking the time to speak to us. So, what is your exact line of business?

We have developed the STAYbowl™ tip-proof food bowl for guinea pigs and other small pets. It is a brand new product that launched last fall (2015), and it is totally unique in the marketplace. The STAYbowl™ is basically a small, one-piece bowl designed with a slightly raised platform that small animals stand on, making it impossible to flip the bowl over. This saves owners time and money not having to sweep up and throw out wasted kibble. STAYbowl™ is ergonomically designed with a raised bowl so that guinea pigs can comfortably reach their food without straining. It is a very simple design, but it is innovative enough that my husband and daughter have filed a patent application on it.

How long have you been running the business and who runs it with you?

We started this business in fall of 2014, when my husband, Ken Foster, left the corporate world where he was an innovation expert and research and development director. We started our own consulting business called Green Oak Technology Group, which is focused on helping small- to mid-sized companies grow through new product development. The STAYbowl™ grew out of that work in kind of an interesting – totally unexpected – way. New product development is all about looking at problems in new ways and trying to find a solution that has never been done before. That's exactly what happened with STAYbowl™. Our daughter, Megan, now 12, was kind of the driving force behind this product after she got tired of sweeping up spilled kibble from the bottom of the cage of her two rescued guinea pigs, Ginger and Cocoa. Our son, Sean, 14, also helps us with social media. He is a pro, and this is an area where we need lots of help. So it is a real family affair! Ginger and Cocoa also serve as our vice presidents of research and development!

How/why were you inspired to start it?

It all started back in 2013, when our daughter, Megan, who was 10 at the time, spent the night with a friend who had guinea pigs. She came home totally hooked! We tried to dissuade her, as neither one of us knew much about guinea pigs, but Megan was determined. She did online research and wrote up a report detailing all the costs, care requirements, etc. It was very cute and very thorough for a 10-year old. As part of her research, she learned that guinea pigs are social animals, and that they do better in pairs. So then very quickly we were looking at getting not just one—but two—guinea pigs! We had an older Border Collie named Rascal at the time, and we had adopted her when she was about a year old, along with an-

other Border Collie who had passed on a few years before. We were big believers in animal rescue, so we encouraged Megan to start looking into rescued guinea pigs. We were surprised at how many were out there! Sad, but for many people, guinea pigs and other small pets are more of an impulse buy, with very little thought given to the long-term commitment these animals require.

After doing her research, Megan saved her money and we eventually adopted two female guinea pigs named Ginger and Cocoa from West Michigan Critter Haven, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA (www.wmicritterhaven.org). The group's members and website were a fantastic source of information for newbie guinea pig owners like us.

Eventually, the day-in/day-out cage clean-up wore a bit thin, and Megan was frustrated at the amount of mess the guinea pigs were making with their food. Cocoa especially loved to flip the food bowl over within minutes of putting it in the cage. Then, the piggies would poop and pee on it, and grind it into the fleece bedding as they scampered around their cage. We estimated that they were actually eating only about half of what we put into the bowl, and wasting the rest.

We read online recommendations that said to get a heavy crock and fill it up with food, and that would prevent the pigs from tipping it over. But further researched showed that that was a recipe for over-feeding, which can lead to a whole host of health problems, just like it does in humans.



So one day, Ken and Megan sat down at the kitchen table and started sketching out a plan to foil the guinea pigs and make sure they got just the right amount of food they needed. That whole process eventually led to the commercially produced STAYbowl™ that we sell today. The bowl eliminates wasted kibble, and so it easily pays for itself within a few months.

How did you go about bringing your idea to life?

Ken started the project as kind of a simple way to demonstrate new product development to our kids at the kitchen table. But the more he looked into it, the more he realized that there was a real market need for this product. Eventually, Ken worked with his industry contacts to have the bowl professionally designed, 3D printed into prototypes, tested in the U.S. and UK, and eventually manufactured. He also worked with an attorney to file a U.S. patent application with Megan as co-inventor.

We received our first batch of STAYbowls™ in November, and have been selling them online at www.mySTAYbowl.com ever since. The market response so far has been very positive! We are now considering expanding our product line to include a larger size for rabbits, as we hear they too, are big bowl-flippers.

Do your guinea pigs love to flip their food bowls?

NEW!

STAYTM bowl

Will pay for itself within a few months



- Keeps food clean
- Saves time and money
- Promotes health and wellness
- Dishwasher safe
- ¼-cup (42 g) size (2.7 fluid ounces) just right for one or two guinea pigs

www.mySTAYbowl.com



And we may also develop a larger size for guinea pig veggies and salads at some point. Of course, some day we would like to offer different colors, too. We would love to hear feedback from small pet owners about what they would like to see in the marketplace.

To demonstrate our commitment to small animal rescue, we donate a portion of our profits each year to small animal rescue groups. There is such a need out there. We also use our website and social media channels to educate the public about animal rescue, and help people understand the cost, care requirements and other aspects of small pet ownership. A pet should never be an impulse buy! We feel very strongly about this.

What would you say is your main USP (unique selling point)?

STAYbowlTM is the first bowl of its kind designed to meet the specific requirements of guinea pigs (and other small pets) and their owners. It incorporates ergonomic, health and wellness, time-saving, and economic benefits into a simple, cost-effective solution. With STAYbowlTM there is no more wasted kibble to throw away, so it very quickly pays for itself.

STAYbowlTM allows small animal owners to monitor their pets' food intake and ensure that they are getting proper nutrition. Health and wellness has been a big area for

cats and dogs for a number of years, and it is becoming a bigger concern for guinea pig and other small animal owners now too. A guinea pig only requires one eighth of a cup (21g) of kibble per day. The ¼-cup (42g) capacity of STAYbowlTM can accommodate up to two guinea pigs, so it solves the problem of over- or under-feeding, both of which can lead to serious health problems.

Where can your product be purchased from, and where can we go to find out more about your product?

You can find out more about STAYbowlTM and purchase them online at www.mySTAYbowl.com, or through our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/mySTAYbowl/>
We also have a YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBxTZk-2JWdnhTJNn3z6rR9A>

Do you ship worldwide, or just within the US?

We are based in the U.S., but we ship our products worldwide. We are looking at setting up a distribution center in the UK that would reduce shipping costs to our UK and European customers.

Last but not least...tell us about your guinea pigs!

Ginger and Cocoa are such a fun addition to our family! They are both female guinea pigs, and they are about three years old. We have had them since 2013. We adopted

them from West Michigan Critter Haven (a couple of hours north of Chicago). Their personalities are so different from each other, but they are like yin and yang, and so get along really well and are the best of friends. Of course, there is the occasional sibling spat, but nothing serious. They both love Romaine lettuce, parsley and carrots, and "wheel-out" whenever they hear a plastic bag rustle. From the standpoint of their eating habits, they are really good role models for the rest of us!

Ginger is light orange and white in color, and she is our adventurer! She loves anything new, and is always at the front of the cage when new people come over – or when she hears the refrigerator open. When we let her out of her cage, she is the first to disappear into another room. She is active and playful, and loves to chase Cocoa around the kitchen. She also likes to sit on your lap.

Cocoa is dark brown and white, and is a little bit bigger than Ginger. She is our shy one. She is a homebody, who really prefers to stay in the safety of her cage or on someone's lap. It takes her awhile to warm up. But she usually follows Ginger's lead. Once she gets started, she likes exploring, too, and is getting braver all the time. Our two little pigs provide a lot of comic relief around here, and they both have become an important part of our family.