

SOUTHERN CAVY CLUB

A BRIEF GUIDE TO SHOWING CAVIES (GUINEA PIGS)

At a Cavy show, you will find that Cavy Fanciers - people who breed and show guinea pigs – sometimes call them “cavies”, and sometimes “pigs”, the terms being used interchangeably. The male cavies are called ‘boars’ and the females ‘sows’ – even though cavies are no relation at all to the farmyard pig!

The cavies you see at cavy shows are divided into two main groups for showing. One is the “Purebred” section, for pigs which are of a recognised breed, like Abyssinians for example, with their harsh coat arranged into rosettes.



ABYSSINIAN CAVY

Another purebred is the Dalmation, a smooth short-coated white pig with coloured spots all over its body, usually in black or chocolate colour.



DALMATION CAVY

You will also see the longhaired varieties with their long coats brushed out onto the boards on which they are shown.



ONE OF THE LONGHAired BREEDS: THIS IS A TEXEL IN SHOW COAT.

Then there are the "Self" purebreeds, where the pig is smooth coated, and the same colour all over. There are ten recognised colours for the pigs in this group.



A LINE-UP OF SELF CAVIES

The second section is for Pets. Some of these are pigs of no particular breed, just ordinary crossbred pet pigs. The judge is not looking for a particular colour or coat type – these don't matter in pets – so they can be any variety or mixture. You can also show pigs of a known breed in Pet classes. These are usually the ones which are not close enough to the show standard to be shown as purebreds. So a pet pig can be any colour or combination of colours, and can be long, short or rough coated. Showing pets is a good way to start in the fancy, and to learn how to present pigs in show condition.

For a pet pig to be successful in the Pet Classes, there are three things to remember:

- (1) The pig must be really clean, and this includes its coat, grease spot, ears, feet and nails. Nails must be trimmed if necessary. The pig should be bathed (see below) and when dry, carefully brushed/combed to remove loose hair and ensure that there are no knots or tangles. Longhairs are usually shown with their coats clipped to a length that just clears the floor.

- (2) The pig must be in good health and sound physical condition, and be free from any disease or parasites (mites, lice etc.) They should be fit but not fat, with a well fleshed, muscled body, healthy shining coat and bright eyes.
- (3) The pig must also be used to being handled, so should be tame, friendly and calm on the judging table. Allowances are made for younger pigs to be more skittish, as they are not expected to be as steady as adult pigs that have had more show experience.

Purebred cavies must be prepared in a similar way, but each breed has a written Standard to which they are judged. These standards can be seen on the British Cavy Council website, <http://www.britishcavycouncil.org.uk/Download/breedStandard.pdf>

Junior exhibitors can obviously enter purebred pigs in the Junior purebred section, but they can also enter in the 'Open' classes, where they are competing against adult fanciers.



A HANDSOME ROUGH COATED PET CAVY

ENTERING THE SHOW

The schedule can look very alarming to start with, so if you are not sure which classes to enter your pigs in or how to fill in the entry form, it is best to phone the secretary and ask, as it is easy to get it wrong at first.

If you look at the schedule you will see that all pigs are shown in age groups: Adult (8 months and over), 5-8 months old, and under 5 months old. Pigs shouldn't be shown before they are 3 months (13 weeks) old.

Pet pigs are further divided into classes for boars and sows, and then by coat type - that is: smooth, rough or long. For pets the coat can be in any colour or mixture of colours.

A smooth pet has a short smooth coat and all the hair must lie from nose to tail.

A rough pet can have a curly coat, or it may have ridges, quiffs or rosettes.

A cavy which has a smooth coat but has a crest (a round rosette) on its head is classed as rough, unless there are separate classes for crested pets.

A longhaired pet cavy can be smooth or rough, but the coat in both cases is long.

The Pet Classes are divided into those shown by adult exhibitors, and those shown by junior exhibitors – usually from age 5 to 17.



A CRESTED PET CAVY



A LONGHAISED PET CAVY WITH A CLIPPED COAT

TRANSPORTING CAVIES TO THE SHOW.

You can bring your pigs to the show in any secure, well-ventilated container. Cavy Fanciers usually have purpose made carrying boxes, but a sturdy cardboard box with a few extra holes in it, a cat basket or a plastic small animal carrier will be fine. Put newspaper, shavings and hay in the bottom to keep the pig clean while travelling. Obviously if the show is in the summer and the day is going to be hot, then it is very important that your container has really good ventilation, as pigs can overheat extremely easily in a closed box, and become ill or even die from heat stroke.

PREPARATION BEFORE THE SHOW.

Bathing your pet pigs should be carried out a few days before the show. You need to pay particular attention to the grease spot, which is situated where the tail would be if the pig had one. Boars are greasier in this respect than sows. A good way of cleaning this spot is to rub neat Swarfega* into the spot and the coat surrounding it. This will loosen the grease. Leave for a few minutes then rinse thoroughly, before shampooing your pig. For this, you can use any shampoo used for people. Boar's coats are often greasier than sow's coats, and may need more than one shampoo to get really clean.

**Swarfega is used by mechanics to get oil off their hands and is sold by Halfords and similar stores. The green coloured Swarfega in the red tub or pump bottle is best.*

You can wash your pig in the kitchen sink. Stand the pig in a washing up bowl in a few inches of warm water and gently pour water all over it with a small jug, going carefully over the head and face, until the pig is wet all over. Then lift the pig out onto the draining board and shampoo it thoroughly, being careful not to get shampoo in its eyes. Next, rinse the coat well, either by pouring clean water over it, or back in the washing up bowl in several changes of water, or by using a hand held shower attachment. Towel dry. Next put the pig on two or three old towels in a plastic basket, with another thick towel over it. Put the box in a warm well-ventilated place to finish drying off, changing the towels for dry ones as often as necessary.

A cavy's coat can take several hours to dry completely, and so it is important to make sure they are quite dry before putting them back in their clean hutch, especially if the weather is cold. Some people use a hairdryer to speed up the drying. You may decide to keep the pig in overnight if it is very cold outside.

Trim the nails if necessary with clippers or small sharp scissors, and check that the ears are clean. Don't, however, poke inside with anything like a Q-tip. The ear flap is all you need to check.

If you are showing a longhaired pet cavy, the coat must be neatly trimmed to clear the ground, and have no knots or tangles. The coat at the rear of the pig, or inside the back legs is particularly prone to getting knots.

AT THE SHOW:

On the show day, the pigs will spend the day in a wire pen which is supplied by the club. You will need to bring shavings, towels, Vetbed or puppy pads to put under the pigs and hay, dry food and vegetables for them to eat.

Water is not usually provided, although you can put a bottle on the pen if you wish. Instead, fanciers provide a selection of juicy vegetables, particularly cucumber, celery, apple, etc. to ensure that the pigs are not thirsty, and treats like parsley, chicory, fennel etc or whatever they particularly enjoy, to encourage them to eat in strange surroundings.

All the pigs should be in their pens half an hour before the time judging starts - this time is stated on the schedule. Once judging has begun, the pigs must stay in their pens except when being judged and must not be taken out except by the stewards.

Each pig is allocated a number for the day, and wears a small adhesive label on one ear with this number on it. The pen where they will spend the day has the same number. The ear labels will be attached to your entry form when you get it back from the secretary at the start of the show.

The numbering system also ensures that the judge has no idea which pig belongs to which exhibitor, and of course no exhibitor must tell the Judge which is his or her pig until judging is over, when they will be happy to answer any questions.

Short-coated pigs will only need a quick brush on the day to remove any loose hairs and get any dust out of the coat. Longer coated cavies must be carefully brushed and combed to make sure that there are no knots or tangles in the coats.

You must not take your pigs home until judging has completely finished, even if all the classes they have been entered in have been judged. The finish time depends on the number of entries and the speed of the judges, but is usually late afternoon.

Remember to take the bedding out of your pens and take it home with you, otherwise the club will have masses of rubbish to get rid of. At some shows, the exhibitors are also asked to help clear the pens away before any prize money is paid out. This doesn't take long if everyone lends a hand, and club committee members who have been working hard all day are always very grateful for help offered at the end of the show.



We hope you have found this brief guide helpful. If you have any queries, please contact

the Southern Cavy Club General Secretary:
Penny Bell, 01243 823294, or email southerncavyclubsecretary@gmail.com

or the Southern Cavy Club Chairman:
Margaret Hooper, 01793 497916, or email marg.gp@virginmedia.com



www.southerncavyclub.co.uk