CAVY MANUAL

SATIN

AETHIOPIAN

AMERICAN

TEDDY

CRESTED

PERUVIAN

SILKY
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HISTORY OF THE CAVY

The cavy is a member of the rodent family and unrelated to rabbits in any way. The term "guinea pig" has an unknown origin, since it did not come from Guinea in Africa but from Peru, South America. The Spanish conquerers of Peru brought these rodents to Europe around the turn of the 16th century and they were brought to England in the 18th century. In Peru today, the cavy is kept in very much the same way we keep chickens. They are fed grain, hay and table scraps and are commonly known as "Cuiss" (KWEES). The Peruvian government has very large operations where cavies are raised under strict supervision for food purposes.

When cavies were first shown under the American Rabbit Breeders Association, there were only three recognized breeds. Today there are seven with three more waiting to be shown and recognized in the 1985 National Convention of A.R.B.A. Hold on however, there are more breeders working on even more breeds such as the Coronet, the Ridgeback and the Satin Teddy.

There is a lot of history behind these interesting little creatures, but a whole lot more to be made as this booklet is introduced to 4 H ers who have had no contact with these little, loveable animals.

FACTS ABOUT CAVIES

Cavies, like humans, cannot store vitamin C and have to take this vitamin everyday to prevent scurvy.
Cavies need toenails clipped and need an occasional bath to keep them in top condition.
If a cavy breaks a tooth, it will replace itself within one week; however, to prevent them from going down in condition, soft foods such as bread and their pellets soaked in milk will help them along.
Cavies come in season every 13 to 15 days normally.

A cavies gestation period is 68 to 70 days

Cavies, if well cared for, will live approximately 7 years.

A cavies eyesight is very poor, this is why they startle so easily but its hearing and sense of smell are excellent.
Cavies cannot transmit any disease to man.
Cavies are nocturnal animals, but easily adapt to human hours for care and feeding. They should never be kept directly on wire because of the structure of their feet. Toenails tend to get caught and the cavy, in its panic to get unstuck, will very often twist and break their leg.
ABYSSINIAN

The Abyssinian was developed in England through crosses of the smooth coated cavy and the Peruvian cavy. The coat is short, harsh and wiry with an erect mane running down the back. On both sides of the body are rosettes with clearly defined centers and are distributed regularly all over the body.

AMERICAN

The American, or smooth coated variety, is the original domesticated variety, and was originally known as "English" in this country. Surprisingly enough, in England they are known as "smooths". Their country of origin was South America, and it is said sailors brought them to Europe. The American has a short, silky coat of hair lying smoothly and evenly over the entire body.
CRESTED

The biggest characteristic is the white rosette or star, the gene that causes this has been labeled the "star gene" or "star ring". The placement of this gene is strictly luck in where it shows up. It has taken years of careful breeding to get the star to appear where it should, which is on the forehead, between the ears. It has been proven that the very best results for breeding a show quality crested is to breed a mis-marked animal to a solid.

PERUVIAN

The origin of the Peruvian is rather cloudy, but record has it that between 1866 and 1880 it was introduced into England and the secretary of the London Zoo named it Peruvian simply because it sounded good. The coat should be very dense, silky and as long as possible. It is divided into three parts for the purpose of description; rear sweep, side sweep and head furnishings which fall over the shoulders into a thick mane.
SATIN

The distinctive feature of this breed is its hair. The "Satin" hair is different from the regular hair of the other cavy breeds in that its hair shaft is hollow allowing light to flow through it and this gives off the "satin" sheen appearance.

SILKIE

The Silkie has been around for a long time and used to show on the table as "Angoras". They became an accepted breed of cavy in 1979. The coat should be dense and silky, very long and even. The coat on this cavy is also divided into three parts, the mane, the rear sweep and the side sweep. The mane should grow straight back between the ears flowing naturally with no part and flow into the rear sweep.
TEDDY

The Teddy appeared in the middle 1960's in a large herd of pet stock. The original boar and sow were mongrels, that is caviés that are not purebred. A part Abyssinian boar and a mostly Silky or Peruvian sow. They were all mostly tortoiseshell and white in color. Soon after that they were bred intensely for their odd Teddy coat. They were accepted as a breed in 1977. The coat is to be thick, close and short, as uniform in length as possible. Hair shafts are to be "kinky". No gap or flatness should be in a good Teddy coat.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW BREEDS

Efforts are being made all the time to improve the accepted breeds and to introduce new breeds to the standards. Presently there are breeders working on several new breeds to be introduced at the 1985 American Rabbit Breeders Convention to be held in Houston, Texas in October. At the printing of this book, these are some of the breeds being worked on; the Satin Abyssinian, the Satin Silkie, The Satin Teddy, the Coronet, Satin Peruvian and the Ridgeback.

To be accepted as a new breed, the animal (in sufficient numbers) has to be shown at three consecutive National Conventions of the American Rabbit Breeders Association, these are held yearly in a different state each time. The state of Florida was the host for the 1984 Convention.
CARING FOR THE CAVY

HOUSING

It is very simple to provide a place for your cavy to live. You can have something as elaborate as a cage with a solid bottom with feeders and water bottle or something as simple as a box or aquarium with water bowl and feed bowl. A cavy should never be kept on wire bottom cages as their feet are likely to get caught and their leg broken in the effort to get out.

All different kinds of bedding can be used for your cavy. A common bedding is wood shavings. Another alternative is ground corncobs, which are available at your feed store. Cavies have no smell at all, their urine, however, is another story. Cavy cages need to be cleaned at least once a week. If you use thick bedding, you may find that you can clean every other week, your nose will tell you when you have waited too long. Set a schedule for yourself and you will find that a routine is easy to stick to. Once a month you should do a complete cleaning on your cavy home and equipment. Remove your cavy and discard all bedding. Wash your cage and equipment in a mild soap, rinse well. It is a good idea to rinse your things in water with a touch of bleach in it (bleach is an excellent disinfectant) and then rinse with clear water and allow to dry, then rebed the cage, replace your equipment and your cavy. Be sure to keep your surplus bedding in a dry place; damp bedding gets moldy.

The very best thing you can do for your cavies and yourself (once they are cleaned and fed) is to get a chair (or sit on the floor, depending on the height of your cavies home) sit back and watch them. You learn a lot about their individual personalities this way and, when you know your cavies, it is easy to spot any abnormal behavior. You will know, for example, when a certain animal goes off his feed; you see when a sow has had enough of her brood and is tired; or when a certain little boar starts to "feel his oats" and needs to be removed from the females. The key word to raising cavies, is involvement. The more you learn about these little animals, the more interesting they become. Above all, learn to relax and enjoy the best fancy in the world, Cavies.

AQUARIUM

WIRE CAGE (with pull out, solid bottomed pan)
This a very nice professional set up. Notice how the cages are all neatly stacked with plenty of head room in the building for air circulation. A cavy needs little room and must be free from drafts. Here at Valley Acre, the fan for the building is mounted in the door for good ventilation & at the same time not giving animals a direct draft. Water bottles are mounted to the left of each door for ease of filling and preventing the bottle from being in the way when you are removing animals or cleaning the cages.

This is how your cage should be set up for a group of cavies.
HANDLING YOUR CAVY

Slide your hand under the cavy & gently take your finger and "roll back" the fur (that is, pulling the fur back the wrong way in order to see the skin surface) to check for fur mites.

Support the animal with one hand and gently flip him on his back into your other hand.

To check the sex of the cavy, while on his back (shown) take your thumb and gently press right above the lower portion of the animal (as shown).
This Cavy has gone too long between nail clippings. This condition is easily remedied with a pair of nail clippers.

Hold the cavy firmly against yourself and gently place the nail clipper around the nail. Firmly nip the end of the nail off, being careful not to cut too close to the blood vessel in the nail.
FEEDING

The cavy is strictly a herbivorous animal. In the wild cavies eat large quantities of various vegetation. Their front teeth are used for biting and pulling food and their back molar teeth are used to grind the food up in their mouth. All of the teeth of a cavy grow continually so it is important to feed some foods that are hard so that the teeth will be kept worn down and not grow too long.

Cavies may be fed Guinea pig pellets, rabbit pellets or other small animal pellets. Sweet feed used for horses may be added to the pellets to form a mixture of not more than one part sweet feed to one part pellets. Cavies may be free-fed all that they want to eat of the pellets. They also need fresh fruit or fresh vegetables every day. Cavies especially like lettuce, carrots, potatoes, cucumbers, apples and other scraps of vegetables. Make sure the vegetables are fresh and wash them if pesticides have been sprayed on them. Remove the unbeaten portions each day as they will spoil. Cabbage may be fed, but only in very small amounts as it will give the cavy diarrhea. Alfalfa hay cubes and hay which is free from mold can be fed to cavies also to aid in keeping their teeth worn down. Sticks from fruit trees will also give the cavy something to play with and wear its teeth down.

A cavy cannot store vitamin C in its body so they must be fed vitamin C each day. Vitamin C granules may be sprinkled on a leaf of lettuce or mixed in the water at the rate of one teaspoon per gallon of water. Some cavies will also eat a vitamin C tablet if broken into pieces. Do not put a vitamin C tablet in the water to dissolve as it will form vinegar in the water and the cavy will not drink it.

Nursing mothers with more than two babies may also benefit from additional milk to help replenish their milk supply. Milk may be fed cold from the refrigerator and put in a bottle hung in the cage. The babies will also drink from the bottle.

Cavies require fresh, cold water in clean bottles. It should be available at all times. If the water contains a high percentage of chlorine it may be left to sit out for a while or boiled and cooled before giving to the cavy.
PROPER IDENTIFICATION OF CAVIES

There are two ways to do proper identification of your cavy; one method is tattooing, the same way as for rabbits. This is fine for cavies with light or white ears, but the most popular method is the use of identification tags. The following photographs will help you in understanding this procedure.
BREEDING

The male cavy is called a boar, a female is called a sow. A cavies gestation period (the time she carries her young) is approximately 68 to 70 days and they come in season (that is, they are ready to breed) every 13 to 15 days.

The boar can live comfortably with 2 or 3 sows in one cage. The boar does not have to be removed when the sow are ready to give birth, as they do not harm the young in any way and may even help rear them.

If you have been used to rabbit, gerbil or mouse babies, you are in for a surprise with baby caviies; they are born fully furred and eat solid food within a few days of birth. It is like having a miniature adult. Cavies are weaned at about 2 l/2 weeks of age as they are capable of breeding at a little over three weeks of age.

It is a good idea not to use your young sow until she is at least 3 months of age and wait until your boar is 5 to 6 months. It is very important to keep good records of your breeding sows and boars, never rely on remembered info, write it down. You will find that even though the cavy makes an excellent pet, they are also a joy to put on the show table and are very beneficial to man as laboratory animals. Don't raise a cavy just as a pet, you will find that there are many breeders who can show you that the cavy can be managed as a project that will not only teach you many things, but will also give you a lot of experience in the management field and how to make your project profitable.

SHOWING YOUR CAVY

Now that you have a cavy, you might want to think about competing with other cavy raisers to see just how fine an animal you have raised. Your cavy needs very little grooming and if kept on clean bedding, his hair coat will require very minimal brushing. The long haired varieties will, of course, need much more care and will need scheduled grooming. There are certain standards that are set by the American Rabbit and American Cavy Breeders Assoc. that need to be met before you put your animal on the show table. Showroom and registration weights are as follows; Junior boars and sows are cavies up to 4 months of age with a minimum weight of 12 ounces and maximum weight of 22 ounces. Intermediate sows and boars are up to 6 months of age, weigh over 22 ounces and up to and including 30 ounces. Senior Boars and sows are over 6 mo. of age and over 30 ounces. Some general faults (things which can usually be corrected) are urine stains, shedding, too thin, over fat. Animals with the afore mentioned faults are marked down for them, but not disqualified. The following are disqualifications; A disqualification is a permanent defect, deformity or blemish which render an animal unfit to win an award in competition; patches of foreign color, white toenail in a solid color animal, crooked legs, more or less than 4 toes on the front feet and three on the hind feet or a toenail missing, deformed teeth.

You will find that you will learn a lot from other people who raise and show caviies and have a lot of fun too boot.
The pictures at your left show the posing of your animal, both right & wrong. Top left, posed too short and cobby. Middle, too stretched out. Bottom, the right way to pose your cavy; elongated just slightly to show off his form.

The picture at the right shows just a little of the rewards you can reap from caring for your cavy properly. Although winning is a wonderful thing, you win every time you work with your animals in that you gain more knowledge all the time.
DISEASES

The cavy is usually a very healthy animal if given proper care and diet. If the cavy is handled daily any abnormal condition will be discovered and can be treated. The following is a list of the more common diseases and conditions found in cayves and their treatment. Any condition that does not respond to treatment should be looked at by a veterinarian immediately.

Stress—Stress can be caused by pregnancy or from travel. During stress the vitamin C level in cayves is lowered. This can be corrected by giving additional vitamin C and giving Vitapol in the amount of one teaspoon per gallon in the water. Travel stress may be eliminated by administering an eye dropper of children's C-Vi-Sol or Poly-Vi-Sol directly into the mouth three or four days before travel starts and each day until the cavy has returned home. Diarrhea is a common sign of travel stress and will need to be treated. Use Sulfa-Six in the amount of one-quarter dropper for small cayves and one-half for larger cayves directly into the mouth. Administer tea or three times to stop the diarrhea.

Heat Prostration—While traveling in warm weather heat prostration can be a problem. Chilled cans of soft drinks can be put in the cavy's carrier to keep it cool. At home cayves may be cooled with packs of blue ice or frozen plastic soda bottles slipped into a sock and placed in the cages. Refreeze each night. A cavy suffering from heat prostration must be cooled immediately. Immerse the cavy in cool (not ice) water, remove and give fluids with an eye dropper. Cold water with sugar added or cold Gatorade may be given. A cold piece of lettuce may also induce the cavy to respond.

Abscesses—An abscess must be drained if it occurs. Use a sterile razor blade to make a quick slit and drain out the pus. Cleanse the area with hydrogen peroxide and apply Neosporin, Mycifradin ointment or Panalog to the wound. Warm compresses should be applied two or three times a day and the wound re-cleaned with hydrogen peroxide and ointment reapplied until it is healed.

Cuts and Bites—Treat the same way as and abscess but do not make incisions or apply warm compresses.

Eye Problems—Cloudy eyes in a baby may be treated with Vitamin A. Snip the end off a Vitamin A capsule and squirt it into the mouth and squirt the rest into the eye. Repeat twice a day until the eye is clear, usually three or four days. Eye injuries may be treated by using Terramycin Ophthalmic Ointment squeezed onto the bottom eyelid twice a day and administering additional Vitamin A.

Pea Eye is a hereditary disease and cannot be cured. Do not use a cavy with Pea Eye in a breeding program.
Mites and Lice—Mites may be cured with a drop of Black Flag behind the ears and above the tail once a month. Cavies may also be dusted with Seven Dust being careful to keep it out of their face. Another method to cure lice or mites is to wet the animal all over and squeeze some Kycodex with Lindane on top of the head and rump. Suds up the entire animal but keep it out of their eyes and mouth. Wrap the animal up in a towel with the nose and eyes left out and keep wrapped for five minutes. Rinse the animal and blow dry on a warm temperature, not too hot.

Skin Problems—A skin problem is indicated if the cavy has loss of hair, dry, scaly skin, or is constantly biting or scratching itself. Use four tablespoons of Orthorix in ten cups of warm water and mix well. Put a drop of mineral oil in each eye of the cavy incase some of the solution gets in the eyes. Dip the cavy into the solution feet first up to the eyes and remove. Dry the cavy. Repeat the process if the hair has not started to grow back in one week.

Salmonella—Use D-Con in boxes set about the caviary to keep pests away. Keep feed in covered containers. Salmonella infestations will need to be treated by a veterinarian.

Strep-Staph—Cleanliness in the caviary will almost always prevent Strep and Staph infections. Cleaning all cages, bottles and feed containers and floors with household bleach will eliminate Strep and Staph. Should they develop a veterinarian will need to treat them.

Colds—Do not allow anyone with a cold to handle the cavy. Cavies kept in a draft or in too cold temperatures in winter may develop a runny nose or sneeze. Consult a veterinarian for treatment.

Broken Teeth—If a cavy breaks a tooth it will grow back. In the meantime watch the other teeth to be sure they do not grow too long. Trim remaining teeth if this occurs. Frequently broken teeth may indicate a vitamin deficiency.

Overgrown Teeth—Cavies fed hard foods in sufficient amounts will usually keep them teeth worn down. If the cavy’s teeth do become too long they will need to be clipped. Use a sharp toenail clipper designed for dogs to clip the teeth to the proper length. Consult a veterinarian if you need help.

Overgrown Nails—Toenails left to grow too long will result in discomfort and deformities in the cavy. Nails may be clipped with a toenail clipper designed for dogs being careful not to clip them too short. If the nail is cut too short and starts to bleed, soak a cotton ball in peroxide and hold it on the nail a few minutes.

For any other condition not covered, consult a veterinarian.
GLOSSARY

Agouti—A ground, or undercolor, determining the base color with dark ticking over the entire animal except the belly which should not have ticking.

Angel wings—Rosettes located over the hips or shoulders of an American or Crested cavy, giving a "winged" effect; a disqualification.

Back ridge—The erect ridge of hair running down the back of an Abyssinian from the shoulders to rump including the mane.

Banded—The color pattern of a cavy where one color may circle the entire body forming a band of color.

Bare spots—A section of the cavy entirely denuded of hair.

Blaze—Head marking on a Dutch cavy in which the white portion is a wedge shape tapering to the ears between the check markings. The white portion of the head should cover the nose and whisker beds and run along the jaw line.

Bleeding—A light band of color extending under the chin on Agouti or Dutch marked caviaries.

Boar—A male cavy.

Bonnet Strings—When the belly color on an Agouti runs under the chin and on to the face forming "strings."

Brassy—Term applied to Creams when the color is too dark and too harsh rather than the pale delicate shade.

Broken coat—Guard hair broken or missing in spots exposing the undercoat; areas where the coat is moulting exposing the undercoat.

Chest—Front portion of the body between the front legs and neck.

Collar (Ruff)—Lateral ridge of hair running across the shoulders of the Abyssinian cavy.

Crest—A rosette found on the forehead of Crested caviaries.

Crown—A rounded, fleshy protuberance above the shoulders and neck in caviaries.

Depth of color—How far a color is carried down the hair shaft to the base of the skin.

Double rosette—Two centers where one should be.

Drag—When color runs from a designated spot into another color in a Dutch, Crested or Agouti cavy.
Ear folds—Effect created from the incorrect positioning of the cavy's ear where the ear falls backward or forward upon itself creating a fold.

Eye circles—A circle of color around the eye, lacking ticking, in an Agouti cavy.

Faking—Any change in the external appearance of a cavy on exhibition, with the intent to deceive.

Faults—Qualities on a cavy which are not serious enough to be a disqualification or elimination but do detract from the perfection of the cavy.

Flesh spots—Small areas of skin found on ears, nose and feet pads where the skin remains flesh-colored and does not match the surrounding skin color; a fault in Dutch and Dalmation; a disqualification in Agouti.

Frontal—The hair which falls over the face of a Peruvian cavy.

Gutter—An undesirable line or part extending from rosette centers in the coat of an Abyssinian or the crest in a Crested cavy.

Impaction—A condition arising from an accumulation of wood shavings, hair or hard condensed fecal material found in the perineal pouch, usually found in senior boars.

Intermediate—A cavy four months of age or older and under six months of age.

Junior—A cavy under four months of age.

Leg—A certificate awarded to a cavy by a licensed cavy judge at officially sanctioned ARBA shows where there is sufficient competition. Three leg certificates are required for application of a Grand Champion award.

Malocclusion—Improper meeting of the teeth; wolf or buck teeth.

Mane—The part of the back ridge of an Abyssinian cavy extending from the back of the eyes to just past the shoulders. In Silkie the long hair sweeping back from the crown to join the rear sweeps.

Marked—Having the basic color broken up by an orderly placement of color on a white (usually) background. Also the black and red patch marking for Tortoise Shells.

Mustache—The ridges of hair found on the sides of the face of the Abyssinian cavy.

Open-centered—Rosettes having enlarged centers rather than pinpoint centers.

Pica eye—A visible abnormal swelling or growth on inside eyelid.
Pedigree-A document provided by the seller attesting to the purebred lines of the cavy for at least three previous generations.

Polydactyl-A cavy having an extra toe; a disqualification.

Ridge-A line of raised hair shafts which separate the rosettes in the coat of the Abyssinian cavy.

Roman nose-A wide, blunt nose which in profile shows an arch from nose to crown without stops; good width and depth allowing for eyes to be spaced widely apart. Extreme golfball effect is not desirable and a prominent straightlike with no arch is also undesirable.

Rosette-The radiated pattern of hair growth from a center point found in the coat of an Abyssinian or the crest of a Crested cavy.

Rotated eyeball-An eye that is set in the socket so that the line of vision is not normal, but cast upward.

Resiliency-The capability of coat to recover to its original state; jump back or recoil.

Rump ridge(Rear ruff)-A lateral ridge of hair running across the rump of an Abyssinian cavy.

Saddle-The rear colored marking on a Dutch cavy.

Self or Self-colored-Animals having the same colored hair over their entire head, legs, and body without ticking.

Senior-A cavy six months of age and older.

Side whisker-Rosette or partial rosette located just behind and below the ear in the coat of an American or Crested cavy; a disqualification.

Smudg(Emudge)-A dark, sooty appearing a rea in the surface color. The nose marking on a Himalayan cavy.

Solid-A cavy having the same color and uniformity over the entire animal.

Sow-A female cavy.

Splashes-A slight show of color is present but not enough to constitute a distinct patch of color.

Split stops-Found on the hind feet of a Dutch cavy where the marking color runs down between the toes; a fault.

Sweep-A side sweep is the hair falling from the back down the side of a Silkie or Peruvian. Rear sweep is the hair falling over the rump of a Silkie or Peruvian cavy.
Ticking—A wavy distribution of longer guard hair throughout the coat of a cavy which is a different color from the undercoat.

Undercolor—The color of the base of the hair shaft next to the skin, not the belly hair color of the cavy.

Vent disease—Venereal diseases in cayes of both sexes.

Wall eyes (Moon eyes)—Eyes having a milky film over the cornea or having the appearance of a moonstone. Colored eyes having an extremely light iris giving a glazed appearance.
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