

Allan Trigg on Judging Pet Cavies

Photographs by Lyndon Nowell



During last year, plans were afoot to give better guidance on the judging of Pet Cavy classes. Some guidelines were advisable as there had been instances of juvenile pets being penalised for the lack of tight grooming that is more appropriate to purebred classes and the actions of adults.

In order to ensure a uniform approach, the Chairman of the British Cavy Council did contact the National and Southern Cavy Clubs with a view to some tripartite discussions on the matter.

The hope was nothing more than to ensure consistency but, unfortunately, both clubs have decided to go their own way and the reverse has resulted.

Therefore, what was intended to make things better has actually caused a worsening of matters.

The National Cavy Club guidelines are more concise and cover four elements i.e. Physical Condition, Cleanliness, Temperament and Attractiveness.

These rudiments offer a good basis to work from and the only problem here is that the first essential of Physical Condition could be more explanatory as a footnote makes reference to NCC guidelines on "Disease Control and Prevention" and "Exhibition of Cavies with Genetic or Acquired Abnormalities".

The former is on the Club website but I have seen no reference anywhere to the latter. However, I assume that I can interpret from these stipulations that any disabled pets whether they are one eyed or three legged are precluded from Pet classes.

If my understanding in this regard is correct, it is in direct conflict with the Southern Cavy Club's instructions to judges that in very detailed Guidance Notes, lists under a NOT FAULTS caption several failings including Missing Eye, Fatty Eye and Cataracts.

The one eyed exhibit would therefore qualify or be disqualified according to the area's/judge's allegiance to the NCC or SCC.

Fatty Eye could fail under genetic/appeal concerns NCC-wise but SCC-wise it would be left to the judge's freedom of choice.

Cataracts would seem to be subject to a similar fate depending on the interpretation of either NCC or SCC needs.

Whilst there is some merit in the SCC detailing several DISQUALIFICATIONS (all entirely sensible) and

failings (FAULTS), I do feel that the NOT FAULTS list is questionable and those that, I feel, are rightfully placed in this category would be best entitled OF LESSER CONSIDERATION as they would, doubtless, sway a decision through personal preference if nothing else.

For example, if I had to choose between two exhibits that were inseparable on fitness, cleanliness and temperament, I would put the exhibit with two complete ears in front of the other with badly torn ears.

Equally, I would favour a fit two eyed pig in front of a fit one eyed pig as, forgive the pun, it would have more eye appeal and be more complete.

Of course, I do recognise the sympathetic approach that the Southern have taken to children's pets and their wishes not to be too oppressive.

In this respect, I can understand that an owner of a fit one eyed pig deserves recognition more than the thoughtless owner of an unfit, dirty two eyed exhibit but things have to be kept in perspective.

In general, I do favour the concept of pet cavies being sound, complete examples of their species although it would be rather harsh to exclude an exhibit because of a minor thing like a missing toenail. These can be lost if caught in the wire netting on an exercise run or some similar unfortunate accident.

From the National aspect, I'm not sure that there needs to be a specific reference to genetic abnormalities as aren't all aspects of physical makeup genetic?

I'm certainly no expert in this field but I suspect that there is some gene that governs hemmed ears and side whiskers but I'd be no more likely to penalise a Pet for these characteristics than an Abyssinian!

If there is a demand and the desire to cater for the one eyed exhibit (to quote one example), could I suggest that they be segregated from other pets in the similar way that clipped long hairs are kept separate from their fully coated relations at stock shows?

Also, I would hope that, even at this stage the two clubs (SCC & NCC) can get together and broker a more consistent approach to this problem that should not be beyond easy reconciliation.

If there is a will, there will be a way.



The World of Cavies by Allan Trigg (Coney Publications).

Softback, 148 pages. Includes an A-Z of cavy diseases compiled by Virginia Richardson MRCVS. Full descriptions of all breeds recognised by the British Cavy Council, illustrated in colour by Lyndon Nowell. 21 chapters cover cavy keeping for both the specialist and the novice, from choosing a breed to housing, feeding, showing and show preparation. Available from the F&F Bookshop for £10.50 + p&p

