



4-H Cavy Fitting & Showmanship Member's Guide



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WELCOME TO 4-H CAVY FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP

Cavy fitting and showmanship contests offer you an opportunity as a 4-H member to compete with other 4-H'ers from your county and throughout the state. In regular cavy shows, the animals are judged rather than the 4-H member. However, in a fitting and showmanship contest, the judge evaluates 4-H members on their demonstration of the various skills related to working with cavies as well as their general knowledge of cavies. The judges also consider each participant's preparation, attitude, behavior and animal.



Objectives

A 4-H member's participation in a cavy fitting and showmanship contest will develop:

- ▶ **Practical cavy handling skills.**
- ▶ **Leadership.**
- ▶ **Competition and sportsmanship.**
- ▶ **An interest in raising cavies**



Fitting is the process of selecting a particular cavy from a breed, feeding and caring for the cavy, and preparing the cavy prior to the contest, such as cleaning the coat in certain breeds, removing stains and trimming the toenails. Your animal should not have any diseases or external parasites, such as mites or lice. You must use an appropriate carrying case to take the animal to the show. Your general appearance, attitude and behavior is also included in fitting.



Guidelines for the Cavy

Deciding if you should purchase a mixed or purebred cavy can be tricky. Make sure to ask your 4-H cavy leader or a knowledgeable cavy breeder for their opinion. There are 13 breeds of cavies that are listed in the *Standard of Perfection*, published by the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA). As of 2018, these breeds are Abyssinian, Abyssinian Satin, American, American Satin, Coronet, Peruvian, Peruvian Satin, Silkie, Silkie Satin, Teddy, Teddy Satin, Texel and White Crested. These breeds are great for showing but can sometimes be hard to find. If you cannot find a cavy breeder, then choosing a mixed-breed cavy is another choice. Just remember that the cavy will probably be judged by the ARBA standards. Choose an animal close to the breed it represents.

Selecting the Animal

Choose an alert, active animal with clear, bright, bold eyes and a smooth, shiny coat. These are indications of good health. Try not to choose a cavy that has any defects or one that is pregnant. Consider the following factors when choosing your cavy:

- ▶ Sex – boar (male) or sow (female)
- ▶ Age –
 - Junior – a cavy under 4 months of age with a minimum weight of 12 ounces and a maximum weight of 22 ounces
 - Intermediate – a cavy 4 months to 6 months of age with a minimum weight of 22 ounces and a maximum weight of 32 ounces
 - Senior – A cavy over 6 months of age and over 32 ounces in weight
- ▶ Condition – the overall appearance of the cavy (It should be healthy, clean, groomed by breed standard, firm of flesh, not too fat with soft flesh, nor too thin.)
- ▶ Faults and disqualification as stated in the ARBA *Standard of Perfection*

Feeding and Care of the Cavy

Once you decide which cavy to enter in the contest, you must pay special attention to the animal's feeding and care. Take into consideration these conditioning steps:

- ▶ Provide a good fresh cavy (guinea pig) pellet as the main source of food and clean water daily. Cavies need vitamin C daily. This is usually in the feed. If your cavy feed does not have adequate amounts of vitamin C, supplement with ascorbic acid in the water, or offer plenty of vitamin C-enriched vegetables and fruits daily.

- ▶ Keep the animal in a cage with clean litter. Change litter as often as necessary. Litter would include pine or aspen shavings, recycled newspaper, pine pellets for animal use only and felt. Do not use cedar shavings.
- ▶ Control the temperature to keep the cavy comfortable. They do not do well in very cold or very hot temperatures. Also remember to keep your cavy out of drafts.

When finding a home for your cavy, keep in mind that wire-bottom cages are not recommended for cavies. Any container that has a flat, smooth bottom with sides at least 1 foot tall is a good choice. You can also purchase a cage from pet stores or cage dealers. The home you select must be large enough for your cavy to move around in comfortably.

Preparation

Cavies should be groomed according to their breed standard as outlined in the ARBA *Standard of Perfection*, which also includes information on cavies. Not all cavies should be given a bath. Check your breed of cavy to determine the proper grooming method. If you choose to bathe your cavy, do so several days before the show – preferably, a week before. Use a soft baby shampoo, and try to keep soap out of the eyes. Rinse your animal and dry with a blow-dryer set on a warm, low air-flow setting. Caution: Keep the blow-dryer away from any contact with water. Then trim its toenails by cutting off only a small portion at a time to avoid cutting the quick.

Working With Your Cavy

To do well in the competition, you must learn how to carry your cavy correctly, and how to pose and examine it properly. Try holding your cavy in different positions used in judging. The more you work with the cavy, the more confident you'll be to expertly perform the activities in the competition.



Guidelines for the Participant

The fitting and showmanship contest for cavies is generally an annual event and may have several spectators. Remember that a cavy fitting and showmanship contest is as important as any other fitting and showmanship contest. Therefore, your appearance is important. Wear neat and clean attire such as dark pants and a white, long-sleeved shirt or blouse. You can also wear a plain white show coat (with no patches) over light-colored shirts. Do not wear jewelry or nail polish. Wear closed-toe shoes and comb your hair back. If you have long hair, pull it back properly. Looking professional will make you stand out as a competitor.

SHOWMANSHIP

Showmanship is a nonverbal event, except when asked a question.



Posing the Cavy: Step 1

The showmanship competition begins when participants are called to the assigned table. As a participant, you will need to stand behind the table with your cavy. Put the cavy in front of you facing sideways. Then pick up the cavy and turn it so it faces the judge. When the judge gives the command, “Handle your cavies,” follow the steps listed below. (These directions are for right-handed contestants. Left-handed contestants should use the opposite hand from that noted in the steps.)

Posing the Cavy on the Table

Any time you work with your cavy or during showmanship, pose your animal on a rug or a carpet piece on the table. A smooth table surface will not give your animal the necessary grip; therefore, it may not pose properly. Every time you put your cavy on the table, you should pose it.

Step 1.

To properly hold your cavy, its head should be facing your elbow, resting on your forearm.

Step 2.

Slowly place the animal sideways on the carpet piece on the table. Then pick the cavy up and turn it, without dragging its toenails, so the cavy will be facing the judge. Now both you and the cavy face the judge.



Posing the Cavy: Step 2



Posing the Cavy: Step 3

Step 3.

Set the front legs directly under the shoulders, and the hind legs under the hips, with the feet tucked under. Do this using one hand to set each foot separately. Make sure the cavy is not too stretched out or tucked in.



Posing the Cavy: Step 4

Step 4.

Gently touch the end of the animal's nose. This will help induce the animal to lower its nose, thus raising the crown and shoulders, and will help pose the cavy in a natural way.

Handling the Cavy



Handling the Cavy: Step 1

To properly hold your cavy, its head should be facing your elbow, resting on your forearm. Wait for the judge to ask you to handle your cavy.

Step 1.

Your cavy should be facing the judge. Pick up your cavy and turn it, without dragging its toenails, so it is facing the side of the table.

Step 2.

Place your right hand over the cavy's shoulders and grasp.

Step 3.

Lift the cavy's front legs and slide your other hand under the rear end for support. Do not let your cavy dangle, but perform the motion smoothly.

Step 4.

Lift the animal in the above position and hold it against your body with its head facing into the bend of your elbow resting on your forearm.

Step 5.

Drop your free arm to your side or behind your back.



Handling the Cavy: Step 2



Handling the Cavy: Step 4



Handling the Cavy: Step 5



Handling the Cavy: Step 9

Step 6.

Take a step back.

Step 7.

Wait until the judge tells you or motions for you to put the cavy back on the table.

Step 8.

Take a step forward.

Step 9.

Pose your cavy on the table using the steps for “Posing the Cavy on the Table.”

Examining the Cavy

When the judge asks to “Examine your cavy,” perform the following steps.

Step 1.

Pick up your cavy and turn it, without dragging its toenails, so it faces the side.

Step 2.

Examine the hairs in the crown of the head for any foreign hair colors. Foreign hair color refers to any color differing from that prescribed for the variety in the *ARBA Standard of Perfection*.

Step 3.

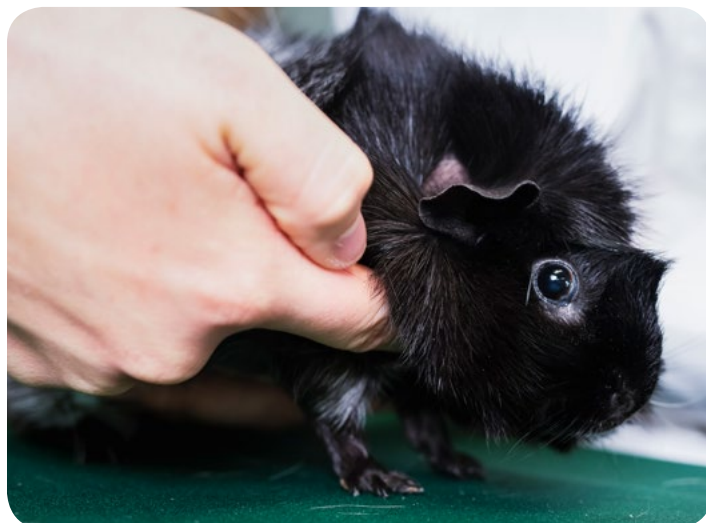
Examine an area behind the ears for skin tags. Examine the ear carriage. Look inside the ears for any mites. Notice any torn ears.



Examining the Cavy: Step 3



Examining the Cavy: Step 4



Examining the Cavy: Step 5

Step 4.

Examine the cavy's eyes thoroughly. Point your index finger at your cavy's eyes so that the judge will know that you are examining them. The eyes should be bright and clear. Look for cloudiness, or specks or a chip around the iris. Check the size of the eyeballs. Each eyeball should be the same size and bold. The eye should be in a natural position. Eye color should be examined to determine whether it is true to the variety.

Step 5.

With the cavy on the table, check under the throat for lumps or abscesses. Keep the cavy on the table or grasp it by the shoulders and slightly lift the front. Then, gently press the cavy's abdomen with the fingers of one hand to look for signs of abscesses or lumps. Check the cavy for potbelly. In sows, late pregnancy will be indicated by a heavy belly.

Step 6.

Turn the cavy easily and smoothly onto its back. To do this, grasp the cavy's shoulders firmly with one hand. Your other hand should support the hindquarters while turning. Hold the animal firmly in position against your body, in the crook of your arm. Support the cavy in the crack between your arm and body, or on the table. You can hold and examine a very small cavy in the palm of your hand.

Step 7.

Examine the nose area by pointing your index finger and lightly touch the nose. Look for signs of discharge. The nose should be dry, clean and free of discharge.



Examining the Cavy: Step 6



Examining the Cavy: Step 7



Examining the Cavy: Step 8

Step 8.

Use your encircled thumb and index finger to gently pull back the cavy's lips. Check the condition of its teeth. The teeth should be straight, not broken or overgrown.



Examining the Cavy: Step 9

Step 9.

Check under the neck for foreign hair colors.



Examining the Cavy: Step 10.

Step 10.

Gently pull front legs and check their straightness. Check for any residue from nasal discharge.

Step 11.

Check front feet for any extra toes and for missing or broken toenails. Check toenail colors.

Step 12.

Check for foreign hair coloring between front legs.

Step 13.

Check your cavy's belly area for foreign hairs by looking at it while you run your fingers up and down over the cavy's belly hair.



Examining the Cavy: Step 13.

Step 14.

Examine hind legs for deformities.

Step 15.

Gently pull the hind feet. Look for broken or missing toenails, extra toes or wrong-colored toenails.

Step 16.

Examine the cavy's sex. Is it a sow or a boar? Check for any signs of disease on the sex organs. In the case of a boar, check for impaction.

Step 17.

Return the cavy to the upright position on the table. Check coat length according to breed standard.



Examining the Cavy: Step 15.



Examining the Cavy: Step 18.

Step 18.

Examine the hair color and length of hair on the back and the sides. Flip the rear of the coat to see the length. Examine the hair shafts on the cavy's rear for any signs of lice or mites.

Step 19.

Pose the animal.

Step 20.

Put your hands on both sides of the cavy to check its width. Do not pound the table.

Step 21.

Put your arms to your side or behind your back and step back.

At this point, the examination is complete. Carry out the sequence of the examination systematically, confidently and smoothly. Take your time and make sure the judge sees you work through these steps.



Examining the Cavy: Step 20.



Examining the Cavy: Step 21.

Condition of the Cavy

The judge will now examine each cavy for its condition. The cavy's condition includes its health, proper preparation of the animal for show (fitting), and any faults or disqualification points.

The judge will examine each cavy on the table in a general way. Depending on how many contestants there are, the judge may conduct a detailed examination or a quick version. However, the judge will thoroughly examine the fitting of the animal.

Tips for Cavy Showmanship

The points outlined in the examination steps represent what you will do at a cavy show when owners are asked to show their own animals, or when the table is full of contestants competing in a cavy showmanship contest. In both cases, the judge will ask you to show what he or she wants to see.

If there are only a few contestants, or if the judge is having difficulty in selecting a winner, you may be asked to participate in a more in-depth showmanship experience. If this happens, you might be asked to carry your cavy to a table and perform each step in the showmanship procedure again. You may be asked to explain each step as you complete it and tell how your observations compare with the standard for your breed. While showing the cavy to advantage, respond to any question that you may be asked. Then carry your cavy back to its carrying case or to the exhibitor's cage. Return to the judging area and listen to the rest of your

class. You can always learn by watching and listening to other exhibitors compete. Please be aware that it is at the judge's discretion to perform showmanship steps or ask additional questions.

Quiz

Quizzes are given to test the general knowledge each 4-H member has about cavies during showmanship. Quizzes will be oral and will consist of each participant answering questions from the judge on a one-on-one basis. The reference guide should be the ARBA *Standard of Perfection*.

Attitude and Behavior of the Participant

Every eye will be on the participants; therefore, you must act properly. Remember that this is also supposed to be fun for you. You have the opportunity to show the audience and the judge that you are competent and proud to be a part of the contest. Be alert and look at the judge from time to time to make sure you have his or her attention. Your attitude should demonstrate good sportsmanship as you congratulate your peers on their achievements. If a judge asks you questions, answer correctly and politely. Be enthusiastic about what you are doing and smile to indicate that you are enjoying the event.

Remember, cavy fitting and showmanship can be as much fun and provide as great a learning experience as any other livestock fitting and showmanship competition – so don't miss your opportunity. Good luck!





4-H CAVY FITTING AND SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD

Handling of cavy	10
Posing cavy on table	10
Examination of cavy	40
Condition of cavy (Fitting included)	10
Cavy quiz	20
Appearance and attitude of participant	10
TOTAL POINTS	100