A Short History of Dutch Cavies

by Nancy Brookes

The following is an account of the history of Dutch cavies, pieced together with the help of several long-time cavy breeders. Thanks goes to: Tim Brock and Allan Trigg of the Dutch Cavy Club in the U.K., and Muriel Reid, Peter Herman, Caroline Lewis, and Ron Smelt in the U.S. for their contributions. While Dutch-marked cavies are recognized in the U.S. in all breeds except White Crested, this history documents the short-haired American breed because I was unable to find information about those who may have raised Dutch in other breeds.

According to Wikipedia, cavies have been domesticated and raised by South American indigenous people for around 7000 years. Accounts of how cavies were brought to Europe vary, however they probably were introduced to Europeans as pets by Spanish, Dutch, and English traders beginning in the 16th century. During the 17th century, popularity of cavies among royalty and the wealthy grew and spread. The binomial name, *Cavia porcellus*, came into use in 1777.

Tim Brock's research, published in the Dutch Cavy Club Handbook, produced an engraving of a cavy with Dutch-type markings from Buffon's *Natural History Book of 1807*. It is widely accepted that the first Dutch cavies came from tortoiseshell and whites and were tri-color Dutch. Around 1900 and before, Dutch cavies were being shown in tri-color in Europe. Later it was agreed that Dutch cavies should match Dutch rabbits and be bi-colors.

Englishwoman, Catherine Whiteway, in her booklet, *Colour Genetics of the Cavy: An Introduction*, published in 1975, states that the medium grade ss spotting gene normally produces the Dutch pattern. She further states that the Dutch pattern may be influenced by non-genetic factors, which cause non-Dutch in a litter, but that selective breeding can improve the regularity of Dutch markings in the offspring. It is generally accepted that once cavies were introduced in Europe, efforts were made to selectively breed them for new breeds, colors and markings. The ss gene, which produces white spotting was identified by geneticists by the 1800's or possibly earlier. It is likely that tortoiseshell and whites were one of the older color combinations, with the Dutch pattern of blaze, cheek circles, saddle, and stops occurring periodically in TSW litters.

Dutch cavies were documented in *Rabbit, Cats and Cavies* by C. H. Lane, published in 1903 in England. There is a chapter on English Dutch-marked cavies, as they were known at the time, with the comments that Dutch were not an easy variety to achieve in greater number than anywhere else in the world. It is uncertain exactly when and how cavies came to the U.S. from Europe; however, it is likely that they were brought over by English immigrants in the 1800's. Dutch cavies may have enjoyed a peak in popularity in the U.S. in the early 1900’s and into the 1920’s.

An early book, *Cavies for Pleasure and Profit* by Edwin F. Deike, published in 1918 in America, has a chapter on the Dutch. Deike mentions that while there was good demand for Dutch, they were not easy to produce.

During the early 1900’s, cavies were being raised by fanciers for exhibition in the U.S. In 1910, the National Pet Stock Association was established to oversee the breeding of small animals including rabbits and cavies. The name was changed to the National Breeders and Fanciers Association of America. The 1915 standard has standards for rabbits, cavies, mice, rats, and skunks. 1924 standard has standards only for rabbits and cavies but has articles on fox, muskrats, mice, and rats. Their advertisements in the yearbook say the club is devoted to the interest of all small fur-bearing animals. January 20, 1925, the name was changed to the American Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Association.

How and when the Dutch variety of cavies became recognized by ARBA is unknown, though there may be some documentation of it in the ARBA library archives. Muriel Reid said that back in those days, if a cavy looked like a breed of rabbits, it was accepted for showing. It may be that because Dutch cavies were marked like Dutch rabbits, they were automatically accepted. According to Muriel, cavies lost popularity in the 1930’s and 1940’s. One might draw the conclusion that the Great Depression and World War II could have had a negative impact on cavy breeding and showing. Muriel related, at one ARBA convention around 1950, the cavy fancy was in such disarray that she and her husband, Don, were asked to reorganize the cavy club. In 1952, they formed *The American
Cavy Breeders Association. Don chose to raise the reds and golden agouti and Muriel chose creams and Dutch marked. Dutch had become very rare by then. Muriel said that she and Don would drive long distances from Illinois to Michigan and New York to buy Dutch stock from Canada, but often the Dutch that they picked up were no better than what they had. According to Muriel, "The Dutch were a mess and anything went. In a year I had only two that were cleanly marked Dutch. What a thrill!"

Muriel further stated that because showing was down, she and Don offered to pay for sanctions and awards if clubs would put on official ACBA shows. Don and Muriel attended those shows and tried to show at least one of every color including Dutch to get more people interested.

Peter Herman found his copy of the 1971-1975 ARBA Standard of Perfection, the year he began judging. The three breeds of cavies that were recognized in the 1971 SOP were American, Abyssinian, and Peruvian. The Dutch were a recognized variety in all breeds with the points for markings being the same as they are today, though it was stated that the placement of markings and disqualifications were the same as for rabbits. By then, the Reid’s were not showing much, and Dutch were again very rare.

Ron Smelt, who is of Dutch descent, didn’t want Dutch cavies to be dropped by ARBA due to the 25 shown at an ARBA Convention in its 5 years rule, and he became one of the first of the current generation of Dutch breeders. Ron began raising American Dutch in 1980. He started his bloodline from two red Dutch sows from Berma Crowl which he bred to his own red Dutch. The sows came from English bloodlines, though only one turned out to be breedable. Ron added Dutch-marked cavies with good type that came from red/white broken colors and TSWs from Carol Miller and Jim Touchette in California.

Tracy Iverson, another long-time cavy breeder, made a trip to England in 1996 and imported Dutch for himself and others who wanted them. It was the 1997 ARBA Convention where Caroline Lewis and Terry Lee bought some of Tracy’s English Dutch stock and became Dutch breeders. Later, Ron added a red Dutch sow from Terry Lee and received all of Tracy Iverson’s English red Dutch in 2001 to establish the foundation for his current Dutch herd. Caroline and Terry became breeding partners, trading their Dutch with each other until Terry was forced to close her caviary this summer due to complications from a fall last winter. A few other breeders have gotten in and out of Dutch from time to time, but Ron, Tracy, Caroline, and Terry kept the variety alive through the last decade.

Currently, Dutch are experiencing another revival here in the U.S. after I went to England last year and imported English Dutch stock in seven colors. The advantage of using English stock, bred from hundreds of generations of Dutch, is that the markings are more fixed, and it is predictable that one or more showable Dutch can be found in nearly every litter. Increasing the percentage of showable pups has greatly improved the willingness of breeders to give the Dutch a try. My hope for the future is that Dutch cavies will continue to grow and thrive in the U.S. in the coming years.

The Dutch Cavy

by Ron Smelt, ARBA Judge 385

It was in the early 1980’s that I decided I wanted to work on this variety for fear of losing it in the ARBA Standard of Perfection. This would be a shame for the variety has a very pleasant and classic look and has been listed in the early history of the Fancy.

At the time, the ARBA had given itself the ability to delete breeds and varieties if in a 5-year period none or a limited number were shown at ARBA Conventions. So the pressure was on to be able to show at least 25 Dutch at convention. This has been achieved with the help of a few dedicated Dutch breeders throughout the country. The variety primarily is being saved thru the American Breed. Dutch have been shown in other breeds, but those occur through a surprise breeding result (The new 2011-2015 ARBA Standard of Perfection removed the clause dropping cavy varieties, but this can always be reversed in future standards, thus why it is important for our members to breed good numbers of this variety. – Editor).

If you are interested in helping with the survival of the Dutch Variety in the United States, it is not as simple as putting a boar and sow in the breeding pen and hoping the offspring will be a showable Dutch. I wish I could say it is that simple. Breeding a showable Dutch to a showable Dutch does not produce showable young in most cases. Mismarked Dutch with showable markings behind them in their pedigree have just as good chance to produce a showable marked one.

To be a successful Dutch cavy breeder, you need to develop a herd mentality. A herd mentality, you ask, what is that? It means you must have many Dutch breeding sows and several Dutch breeding boars to work with. This requires lots of cage space to house them all. Having said that, you may want to start small. The minimum, in my opinion, are 5 sows and 2 boars. The boars need to be closely marked to the standard; with sows you can be more lenient. It will be harder to find good typed boars. Easier to find are good typed sows. Most Dutch boars will have a straight nose,
The Finer Points of Dutch

by Allan Trigg, Dutch Cavy Club President, Lifetime Judge

I’m sure most fanciers have a good, general idea of what to expect in a Dutch cavy; cheeks and blaze at the front and the rear end coloured with white feet (stops). That’s it in its simplest form but, of course, there is much more in the fine detail.

Taking the blaze first, it should be like an inverted “V”, widest at the bottom near the nostrils and narrowing to a fine point between the ears or, at least, a narrow, thin line that divides the two cheeks. There has been some conjecture as to which is the desired ideal and opinions have varied over the ages and even nations. My thoughts that both are equally acceptable, and I am more concerned with the shape of the blaze as width at the base can help create a more pleasing frontal whilst narrowness only serves to

lacking Roman nose desirability, but look at where the points are in the standard. The points are mostly on the markings. You might lose three to five points from the overall 15 type points because the boar lacks a Roman nose.

When evaluating your breeding stock, look for good even CHEEKS that are round. Round cheeks are preferred, but do not eliminate those that are angular. Most important is that they are balanced from side to side.

Next look for a clean straight SADDLE marking. You want this to be behind the front shoulder area, ideally about 1/3 the distance of the body.

Next, look at the UNDERCUT on the belly. It should be a straight line matching up with the saddle marking.

I call the rear foot STOPS the icing on a cake. You want them 1/3 up the rear feet, even all around, and balanced with the other foot. You will get many Dutch that look showable in all areas of markings but are missing one or both foot stops. They are keepers for breeding but not for showing, because it is a DQ. If the rear toenails are white on all rear toes, they can be shown and the color between the toes is a fault called Split Stops (a DQ in the Dutch Rabbit standard).

The BLAZE is the white wedge shaped portion of the head covering the nose and whisker bed, tapering up between the ears where it joins the HAIRLINE, a narrow row of white hair that joins the blaze and neck, dividing the cheek circles. The white from the blaze continues down to the mouth and throat where it divides the cheeks and follows the jaw line towards the leg areas. The NECK is behind the ears. It is a wide, white wedge, running behind the ears to meet the hairline. The HAIRLINE is described in the standard, though no points are given to it. If the hairline is missing, the animal should not be disqualified.

The Dutch cavy is all about balanced markings, with one side of the cavy matching the other side. That is how the Dutch cavy is judged. The Dutch markings on a well-typed animal is a beautiful sight to behold.

Surprisingly the Dutch can be shown in many colors. Any Dutch in self color, Agouti, Dilute Agouti, Solid (excluding Roan), Dilute Solid.

The Dutch cavy is all about balanced markings, with one side of the cavy matching the other side. That is how the Dutch cavy is judged. The Dutch markings on a well-typed animal is a beautiful sight to behold. Presently I have built up my Dutch sows to about forty animals with three herd boars. The showable boars are kept separated with a sow as a companion. Show sows are also kept separately, and are bred from time to time.

If you are interested in working with this classic variety and are willing to dedicate the time and space to preserving it, you will not be disappointed, especially when a showable pup is born.

Just remember, you can be successful with a small herd if good stock from showable genetic background is obtained.

If you have any questions or comments you can reach me at RRRRWEST@aol.com
Judging Dutch Cavies

Judging Comments by Allan Trigg, UK, et al

Standards are intended to describe the most important characteristics of the ideal exhibit and indicate, via an allotment of points adding up to 100, the relative weighting to be given to each of the characteristics. In the United States ARBA Standard of Perfection for American Dutch, half of the points are given to breed characteristics and half are given to the Dutch markings. The importance of balance in an exhibit must always be considered. An exhibit that is a “near miss” on all characteristics may be regarded as more desirable than one that is perfect in several, but very poor in a particular one. **The points allocations are therefore not intended to be the basis of any form of scoring system.** When judging Dutch, you have to view the exhibit in the round, so to speak, and consider the overall balance of the markings. All words in italics are quoted from the ARBA Standard of Perfection, for the 2011-2015 edition.

**Dutch** - Color is to consist of any Self, Agouti, or Solid (excluding roan) marking color in combination with white. Markings are to be clear, distinct, regular, and free from colored drags in white sections or white runs into colored sections. Collar, chest, forelegs, blaze, and foot stops are to be white in all varieties. **Disqualification from Competition** - Colored spot isolated within a white area. White spot isolated within a colored area. More than 50% white color on the surface of the ear. Body color running below the elbow of the foreleg(s). Stop(s) running above the hock joint. Dark toenail(s). Eye color not corresponding to the body color.

**Cheeks** - (12 points) The cheeks are to be even, well rounded (not angular or ragged) and carried to, but not into the whisker bed. The cheeks are to be full, following the jawbone and meeting the line of the neck. The cheeks are to be free from drags into the throat or mouth. (The standard asks for two feet stops of equal length that are ideally cut midway between the hock and the toe ends (This references the English standard requirement. The ARBA Standard calls for markings to be 1/3 the length of the foot, measured from toes to hock. - Editor). Each stop should have three white toenails and the white pigmentation on the pad underneath should not run to the hock. Stops can vary so much though being long, short or odd or faulty in other ways e.g. white hairs running inside the leg. Judgment needs to be given as one sees things on the day and on the balance/severity any shortcoming but there are some disqualifications to be noted.

As stated, one stop or no stops disqualify a Dutch from being a show exhibit. Also any coloured toenail warrants a swift dispatch from the show table as does a long stop that runs over the hock. Please note it is **over the hock** and not to the hock as the latter is just a faulty stop. Also, it should be noted that the standard now states that Very Short Stops “consisting only of a few hairs above the nails are to be penalized.” Consequently, one could consider being more tolerant of slightly odd stops of good length in preference to very short stops that may be more balanced but are “falling off” the feet. Of course, the overall balance of an exhibit needs to be considered (along with good colour, etc.) but I trust the above will give some insight into the possibilities that can be encountered when officiating behind the judging table and searching for the winner. For others, I hope it will be something of a guide and a help when assessing one’s own stock at home.

**Faults** - High cheeks, looking more like eye circles. Heavy cheeks that drag into the whisker beds. Cheeks that run below the jaw line. The cheeks are heavily weighted because they are the first thing a judge sees when examining a Dutch cavy. The cheeks carry nearly the same weight as type on an American Self.

Note - the exhibits in the photos have balance cheeks, with both cheeks marked nearly the same. An exhibit with unbalanced cheeks should be penalized more harshly than one with balance.
Blaze - (5 points) The blaze is the white portion of the head. It should be medium wide and wedge shaped, covering the nose, whisker bed, and tapering up to the ears where it joins the hairline. The cheeks should be well rounded and follow the jaw line after passing the whisker bed. Faults - Narrow, poorly shaped blaze; blunt blaze; blaze that does not finish to the hairline and is rather rounded at the finish of the blaze.

Neck - (5 points) The neck is the portion of the collar behind the ears. It should be wide, wedge shaped, clean, and even. It is to be free of drags of body color from the ears into the collar running onto the base of the ear.
Hairline - (0 points) The hairline is a narrow line running between the ears, entirely dividing each cheek and ear, and connecting the white portions known as the blaze and collar. If the hairline is missing, the animal should not be disqualified. If the hairline is partly there but doesn’t not join either the blaze or the neck, it should not be considered a spot, nor should the animal be disqualified. A hairline between the ears is desirable, although no points are allotted to it.

The hairline is desirable and noted in the text. It is a line of white hairs from the blaze to the neck, dividing the cheek circles. It should consist of only a few white hairs in width.

Ears - The ears are to match the marking color. Faults - White portion on the outer surface of an ear covering less than 50% of the ear. Disqualification from Competition - White portion(s) on the outer surface of the ear covering more than 50% of the ear.

Note: White spotting on the underside of the ear is not a fault and should not detract from the overall evaluation of the markings. The top side of the ears on a Dutch should be free from white spotting, called flesh spots. Because there are no points for ear markings on a Dutch, flesh spots would be counted against the cheeks markings. Ear shape and placement would be judged as part of type. The following photos show varying degrees of flesh spots:

1: slight flesh spot on the lower tip of the ear. It is a minor fault.
2: less than 50% of the ear has a flesh spot. It is a major fault.
3: more than 50% of the ear has a flesh spot. It is a disqualification from competition.

Saddle & Undercut - (10 points & 8 points respectively) The saddle is the point where the white color ceases and the colored hair begins, on the upper part of the body. The division should be just behind the shoulders and form a perfect circle around the body with the undercut. The undercut naturally refers to the under part of the body. This is a continuation of the saddle marking, and it should run in an unbroken line close behind the forelegs, but not touching them.

Saddle

1st: A good level cut to the saddle with nice placement.
2nd: A little wavy and untidy in top line with saddle appearing to cut away at one side (skewed saddle).
3rd: Reasonable top line to the saddle but poor placement as cut far back (slipping saddle).

Undercut

1st: An excellent undercut.
2nd: Fair line but dips.
3rd: Poor line with pronounced V.
No Award: Heavily marked to spoil undercut. Not a show pig.
Stops - (10 points) Hind feet are to have white markings one third the length of the foot, measured from the toes to the hock. They should be equal in length, clean-cut on both feet, and form perfect circles around the feet where the white of the foot meets the body color of the leg. 

Faults - Split stops Disqualification from Competition - Stop(s) running above the hock joint. Dark toenail(s).

1st: Nice balance to stops if just a trifle long.

2nd: Quite good toe stops. Lose on length.

3rd: Odd stops. Lose on balance. Left stop is an example of a split stop.

4th: Very odd stops with right split stop. Nails on this stop likely to darken with age if the pad pigment underneath is coloured.

To Disqualify or Not

The dark nostril is a minor fault, not a DQ. Actually if you look at the skin under the white bridge between cheek and nostril, the skin color is dark all the way in every case I have examined, so it is not a stand alone spot. It is an extension of cheeks extending into the whisker bed and mouth area.

Color from the saddle or undercut that extends down a front leg past the elbow is a DQ.

Stop extending above the hock joint is a DQ.

A Dutch Breeding Strategy

by Nancy Brookes

I got my first Dutch in May 2005. She was very mismarked, but she came from a Dutch line, and the good news was that she was pregnant by a Dutch boar. A month later, she littered two sows and a boar, that were also mismarked, but I kept them for lack of better Dutch stock. In July of 2005, I was able to buy what was left of a small Dutch caviary when the breeder sold out. That gave me a fairly well-marked boar and sow and two more mismarked sows. My second Dutch litter produced six live pups with one showable sow and a boar that was off by one stop. From this point, I frequently bred back to my good Dutch boar and his son, and also outcrossed to a few of my Dutch marked red/white brokens. I continued trying to produce showable Dutch out of mismarked Dutch and Dutch-marked red/whites, and this produced a showable in one out of every four to five litters. My showables had faults but at least they could be shown and there was little to no competition in the Dutch variety. I continued this strategy for the next 3 years with little overall improvement in the Dutch markings or the frequency of getting showable pups in my litters.

In 2008, Ron Smelt and I began talking about importing Dutch from England, as Tracy Iverson had done in 1996. We didn’t know anyone who raised Dutch cavies in England, so I began searching the web for contacts. I found the Dutch Cavy Club website and began sending emails to several members. I organized a small group of U.S Dutch breeders and we joined the DCC. Over the next six months I was able to secure the purchase of over thirty young Dutch. I travelled to England in early October 2009 to pick them up, plus other young pigs for a few friends. I kept twenty-four of the English Dutch and as soon as they were big enough to breed, I paired them up, only breeding the English Dutch sows to English Dutch boars. It was very pleasing when my 2010 litters produced more showable Dutch than I got out of the previous five years of litters. I have been able to pass along many showables to breeders who would like to start raising and showing Dutch.

The results from breeding my English Dutch has changed my breeding strategy quite a bit. If I apply Catherine Whiteway's color genetics
findings to my experience, it is logical that when I bred my red/white broken colors and poorly marked Dutch, the medium grade spotting gene would regularly produce litters with Dutch markings and once in a while a Dutch pup would be showable. In contrast, the Dutch stock from England can represent hundreds of generations of Dutch to Dutch breedings. While there is no specific Dutch gene, aside from the medium grade spotting gene, selecting for Dutch markings for hundreds of generations increases the probability of getting a litter that has all Dutch pups with one or more showables.

I have retired most of my American Dutch and all of the mismarked stock that I used to breed, in favor of using my English Dutch. I will continue to breed the English boars into my American sows to improve type and hybrid vigor, but in the future, most of my line will be predominantly English Dutch.

This strategy also makes sense financially. I estimate that a pig costs me an average of twenty-five cents a day to keep. If the pig lives 5 years, I will have spent $450.00. Importing the Dutch from England was expensive. I estimated that the cost, including purchase, health exam, and shipping, was around $120.00 per pig. If I added in the cost of building the shipping boxes and my travel expenses to go to England, cost goes up to around $150.00 each. To me, it makes sense to spend whatever it takes to get "real" Dutch stock that will improve my herd and allow me to produce plenty of showable pups that will reproduce more Dutch and promote the variety here in the U.S. Financially, it cost a lot up front, but over time, it will cost me far less to produce showables from the English stock.

If I compare keeping my best American-bred Dutch sow, that produced two showable pups and cost $450.00 during her lifetime, to the cost of keeping my best English-bred Dutch sow that has already produced three showable pups in one year and so far cost $240.00 including importing her, there is really no contest as to which sow is the most cost-effective. Hopefully I will be able to make another pig run to England next fall and bring back a few more English Dutch to fill in my herd colors.

As much as I love all of my American Dutch pigs, I have learned that the adage, "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear" really does apply to pigs.

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My Life as a Dutch Breeder

by Caroline Lewis

I have always loved Dutch cavies. There is something about them that is classic and charming. My adventure started when I got my first cavies in 1973 when my husband brought two unwanted sows home from the high school science department where he was teaching. Shortly thereafter, I decided to start breeding cavies as we’d just bought a house and had the room. I started with Aybs, then concentrated on the Americans, always trying to get some with Dutch markings. Since I was breeding strictly from broken stock, and not yet knowing how to find out about shows, I was not very successful. It was not until about 1997, when I attended an ARBA Convention in Madison, WI, that I got my first actual Dutch: two chocolate sows, two black sows, and a black boar from stock Tracy Iverson had sent out from Oregon. These were from Dutch cavies he had recently imported from England. From these animals, I established the line which I still continue to this day. I gradually was able to develop other colors, and at one time, I had 10 different colors of American Dutch, including three colors of Satins. I was able to get a red boar from Ron Smelt, and also traded animals frequently with Terry Lee of Michigan, who had also gotten some of Tracy’s and Ron’s pigs, so our lines complemented each other and we became close friends from this association.

In 2001, I was able to enter my first national specialty show in Hastings, Minnesota with my first showable homebred Dutch, and got BOSV with a Golden Agouti boar, Trinidad. I was really proud of him. He did well at several shows and sired a lot of nice babies! I tried thereafter to enter at least one specialty or ARBA convention every year, and got BOV several times, to my great delight. In 2007 Ron Smelt, Terry, and I decided to honor our good friend and longtime Dutch breeder Teri Leach, who had been a passionate supporter of the Dutch variety, by establishing an annual award in her memory to be given to the breeder of the BOV Dutch American at ARBA. I was proud to be the first recipient of this award at the ARBA show in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where I had been able to enter 10 of my Dutch cavies. We were trying to reach the minimum 25 entries to keep Dutch a separate variety to be judged, as there had been so few entered in previous years. There were 14 entries, which we were very proud of, and at the time of their judging there was an appreciative and interested crowd around the table.

On several occasions I have exhibited my Dutch in Canada at the Ontario Cavy Club’s shows. This was especially fun for me because I was able to enter several of my red Crested Dutch which I had at the time. I no longer have any of this attractive variety left, but they were very cute!

In October of 2009, I was fortunate to be able to attend the Dutch Cavy Club’s Specialty Show held at Norton Lindsey, Warwickshire, England. This was a real thrill for me. There were 84 entries, a mind boggling entry by US standards. They actually had two judges going over the Dutch at the same time there were so many! There I met up with Nancy Laity from Arizona, who had come to import a large number of Dutch into the United States. It was great to finally put a face to a name on an email. It was wonderful walking around looking at all the entries and getting to
know some of the United Kingdom breeders. They had a couple of different colors of agouti, in name at least, otherwise the quality of the animals and style of judging was comparable to the United States, other than the sheer numbers entered. My husband and I picked up well known Dutch breeder Allan Trigg at the train station with his handmade wooden cavy carrier and took him to the show. It was delightful getting to know him. I tried to imagine getting onto a train here in the United States with a carrier full of cavies. That would cause a sensation for sure!

Exactly one week later, I attended the Scottish National Championship show in Dunblane. This time there were only two Dutch entries, both black, but I did get to see several examples of the fuzzy Swiss, and also a new variety they are working on called Belted, which resemble Dutch without the blaze, cheek markings, or stops. I was told they were striving to breed them to resemble the Dutch belted cattle. They were really quite appealing. It was very interesting to see the different types of carriers and show boards used, many beautifully handmade of wood.

Over the years I have learned a lot about what does and doesn’t work, and will for some time be striving for that near perfect marked Dutch cavy. They are a real education in genetics. Tracy was a big help to me in the beginning, stressing not to breed any animals with tri color markings, for instance. Occasionally a the first time is exquisite.

Importing Dutch Cavies from England

by Nancy Brookes

Though this is a personal experience article, the information provided within is of excellent value for anybody considering importing stock from Great Britain. It gives sound advice on what to expect and how to avoid mistakes and pitfalls the author experienced herself. - Editor

In the fall of 2008, Ron Smelt and I began talking about importing Dutch cavies from England. Both of us are Dutch breeders and we thought that improving our Dutch stock might reverse the dwindling number of Dutch breeders in the U.S. I found the Dutch Cavy Club website online. It was obvious from the number of breeders listed in the club and the all-Dutch shows that Dutch cavies were quite popular in the U.K. We considered going to England in the winter to coincide with the Bradford Small Stock Show, however, that date conflicted with other commitments. I began contacting members of the Dutch Cavy Club to ask if they would sell good quality Dutch pups for importing to the U.S. Initially they were hesitant, fearing that the cavies would not survive shipment and that, once, here, they wouldn't adjust. D.C.C. president, Allan Trigg, keeps a very small stud of red Dutch, which he is famous for, and while he only had one sow to sell, he said he would help me communicate with other Dutch breeders. My next contact was with the D.C.C. secretary, Christine Peache. Chris who also had champion red Dutch, helped me make connections with more breeders. Because of Allan and Chris's helpfulness, I decided to join the D.C.C. During the spring, I connected with Kevin Burke in Iowa online after he inquired through ACBA about getting Dutch. Tamela Wyble had recently gotten started as a Dutch breeder and, in all, 5 of us joined the Dutch Cavy Club. It is rather fun to have my name listed as a breeder on their U.K. website, as well as having a D.C.C. logo patch on my club shirt to wear when I show Dutch cavies.

Through the spring and summer of 2009, I made many contacts with Dutch breeders in England. My most successful contact was with Sarah Stribley in Cornwall. She has a large Dutch herd in many colors and she was willing to fill the order for many of the colors that I hoped to buy. Sarah also was willing to part with one of her Dutch champions, Treleaver Ruby. Sarah taught me to use Skype, which reduced my very big phone bill to zero. Using video Skype, Sarah could show me prospective cavies and we could talk for free. Sarah provide most of the reds I wanted, along with a trio of blacks, a trio of red agouti sows and a chocolate sow. Sarah introduced me on Skype to Wil Goldsworthy, who is one of the best breeders of black Dutch in the U.K. Wil agreed to provide a trio of good quality black Dutch. I met Sally Nye through Skype and she offered me a pair of cream Dutch, a golden agouti boar, and a silver agouti sow. Sally also helped me arrange to buy a cream sow from Graham Godfrey. Chris Peache gave me 3 lovely red Dutch including Blitzen, the son of her quadruple champion sow and triple champion boar. I decided that rather than driving all over England to pick up the cavies I was purchasing, it would be easier to meet the sellers at a D.C.C. show. That was agreeable to all parties, and I chose the Margaret Elward Memorial Show on October 3rd at Norton Lindsey, Warwickshire County in central
England. As a thank you to the D.C.C. members for their willingness to sell their Dutch cavies to me, I brought the award ribbons for the show in Arizona state colors. It was a bit of a novelty, since our ribbons are somewhat different than those made in England. I also asked Karyn Fegles to make Dutch clay pig necklaces for each seller to match the cavies they were selling to me. Those turned out to be very popular.

The next step was finding out how to import cavies from the U.K. to the U.S. Tracy Iverson had imported cavies early in the decade and he was very helpful, giving me information that I would need. He also introduced me online to Evelyne vanVliet, a Dutch breeder and international cavy judge who lived near Bristol. Evelyne had judged a show in Oregon in the summer of 2009, and thoroughly enjoyed the show and Tracy’s hospitality. She graciously offered to host me while I was in England. Looking back, I don’t know how I would have managed without her hospitality. It wouldn’t have been too difficult to drive myself around England, though driving on the left would have taken some adjustment, but finding a hotel that would have allowed 36+ cavies in the room, would have been impossible. As it was, Evelyne offered to pick me up at Heathrow Airport in London, put me up at her home, drive me to the show where I would buy most of the cavies, put my cavies up in her caviary, arrange a local vet to do the health exams, and take me back to Heathrow for the flight home. She also provided 8 of the cavies that I brought home. I will always be in her debt for her kindness and generosity.

During the summer of 2009, British Airways instituted a new policy that all animal shipments must be done by an approved shipping agent. They published a list of agents on their website, and after calling a few of them, I settled on Pinehawk Livestock Shippers. The owner, Andy Wylie, was the most reasonably priced. Shipping agents get a discount, and Andy adjusted his fee so that it would cost me no more to use his services than if I had been able to ship the cavies myself. That was great. Andy met us at Heathrow on the morning of my departure with all the necessary paperwork and stickers for the boxes designating animal cargo. His working relationship with the animal cargo agents made getting my transport boxes through check-in and inspection a breeze. Prior to leaving for England, I had contacted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a permit to import cavies into the U.S. There is a brief but necessary form stating that the cavies I was importing were bred and raised in captivity. Because cavies exist in the wild in South America, they require a clearance document to insure that I was not importing wild animals. No inspection was required.

My initial plan was to borrow two large dog shipping crates and fit them with enough wire hole carriers to house the cavies I was importing. Several exhibitors use these carriers to fly their cavies to shows in the U.S. I selected British Airways because they are the only airline that transports cavies with non-stop service between Los Angeles and London. I didn’t want any layovers or plane changes. I read their instructions on shipping animals as cargo, and I learned that my carriers had to meet IATA standards. I had no idea what that meant, but a search for the International Air Transport Agency put me in contact with their head office in Montreal. IATA standards are recommendations for all aspects of air transportation that most airlines follow. I requested their guidelines for transporting cavies and the office agent faxed me a 32 page document with all of their recommendations related to shipping cavies. I learned that using wire hole carriers in dog crates is not an approved method for shipping cavies. One type of shipping box for cavies must be made of wood with wire screen lining and ventilation. Each compartment must have a separate door that can be securely latched, with metal food and water cups and a minimum number of square inches for each animal of various weights. There were drawings of various carriers that met their requirements and none of them looked like anything I could buy in the U.S. I am fairly handy with tools, and I set about building six boxes with 5 compartments each and removable dividers so that the boxes could be re-configured to have communal or individual compartments, depending on the need. I gave myself a month to make the boxes, but I had no idea what I was in for. I have never cut so many pieces of molding, ground edges off so many pieces of wire, and set so many screws in my life. There were 30 little doors with wire tops that had to be secured with screws, attached with 60 hinges and 30 latches. 48 pairs of guides for the dividers had to be screwed on, and the wire mesh lining also had to be secured with screws. In the end, my good friend Brian, spent many nights after work helping me finish the boxes. My worst nightmare came a few days before I left, when I called British Airways...
Cargo to book the boxes onto my flight. I was informed that if I shipped my boxes as cargo, they would not arrive while I was in England. For national security reasons, all cargo from the United States must go to a remote airstrip in Canada and remain there for days to insure that there are no explosives inside. I checked with FedEx and they said they could ship the boxes, but it would cost over $1000.00. Luckily I learned that I could ship my 6 boxes as excess and oversized baggage on my flight for $120.00. I shrink wrapped each box and stacked them in 2 sets of 3. I cut cardboard to fit the stacks and used a lot of duck tape to create outer shells. The 2 cardboard boxes were half inch over the size limit, but thankfully the baggage agents at LAX let them go through. On October 1st, I was finally aboard a British Airways flight to London, arriving the following morning. My arrival was not without problems, though. At the customs desk, I was asked why I was requesting entry into England. I answered honestly, that I was there to buy cavies to export to the U.S. That was a huge mistake, because the agent had never heard of such a thing. She decided that it must be illegal, and she began to question me about who was meeting me and where I was going. When I told her that I had never met my English cavy friends face to face, that created more concerns due to the possibility of an internet scam. An hour after I had landed, I was the last person sitting in the customs area, but finally a supervisor cleared me for entry. I have vowed that next time I go abroad to meet cavy fanciers, I will simply say I am on holiday for a few days. I felt badly for Evelyn, waiting so long in the arrival area with my suitcase and 2 cardboard boxes being the sole pieces of unclaimed baggage on the carousel. At last I was in England, and Evelyn drove me 2 hours to her home in a quaint little town up country. England was so beautiful in October. I spent the rest of the afternoon setting up my boxes to pick up the cavies at the show the next day. Ironically, while I was at the show, I noticed the cavy carriers that everyone used were made of wood and wire, and would have met IATA standards. I could have saved myself a lot of time and expense if I had ordered custom boxes made to the required specification and picked them up in England. The following morning, we got an early start for the trip to the show. I was anxious to meet the Dutch breeders whom I had spoken to and met on Skype, and to see the Dutch pigs that I was going to bring home. I was also going to meet Caroline Lewis and her husband at the show. Caroline raises Dutch cavies in Illinois. Although she decided not to import any Dutch, she thought it would be fun to take a vacation to England and go to Norton Lindsey and one other cavy show in the north while they were travelling around the U.K.. English shows are a bit different than U.S. shows because the exhibitor must pay for each level that the cavy advances to. Each color within the Dutch breed has separate classes. Age divisions are about the same as our weight divisions, and eventually the cavies advance through challenges to the Grand Challenge which is the Best in Show.

Here is a nice photo of judging at at 2008 DCC show. I like it because it shows the judging compartments. The men watching are DCC members. This isn't the show I attended but it is representative of DCC shows.

Here is a photo of judging in progress from the Norton Lindsey show that Caroline and I attended in England October 3, 2009.

After so many last minute problems, I was grateful to sleep for most of the flight. My arrival was not problem free, though. The flight was so long that I felt badly for Evelyne, waiting so long in the arrival area with my suitcase and 2 cardboard boxes being the sole pieces of unclaimed baggage on the carousel. At last I was in England, and Evelyne drove me 2 hours to her home in a quaint little town up country. England was so beautiful in October. I spent the rest of the afternoon setting up my boxes to pick up the cavies at the show the next day. Ironically, while I was at the show, I noticed the cavy carriers that everyone used were made of wood and wire, and would have met IATA standards. I could have saved myself a lot of time and expense if I had ordered custom boxes made to the required specification and picked them up in England. The following morning, we got an early start for the trip to the show. I was anxious to meet the Dutch breeders whom I had spoken to and met on Skype, and to see the Dutch pigs that I was going to bring home. I was also going to meet Caroline Lewis and her husband at the show. Caroline raises Dutch cavies in Illinois. Although she decided not to import any Dutch, she thought it would be fun to take a vacation to England and go to Norton Lindsey and one other cavy show in the north while they were travelling around the U.K.. English shows are a bit different than U.S. shows because the exhibitor must pay for each level that the cavy advances to. Each color within the Dutch breed has separate classes. Age divisions are about the same as our weight divisions, and eventually the cavies advance through challenges to the Grand Challenge which is the Best in Show.

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