

# Properly Presenting Coated Cavies on Boards: A Breeder's Perspective

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*Reprinted from Volume 14, Issue 3, Summer 2010*

## Day After Day... At Home

The first thing to do is pick young cavies that will last the duration of showing (9 months to a year for me). This is no easy task. There are pigs that are pigs, sitting under their water bottles, getting wet and dirty every day. It seems they need caring for every couple of hours to look good. Those don't last long in my show string.

Starting with very goo density gives the cavy a competitive chance to end up with good density. I am talking about my grooming. Others may be able to keep every hair in place, but not me. I groom daily, but sometimes it is not enough on some cavies. I learned that nay dirt should be washed out as soon as discovered and that wraps should be clean ones every time the cavy is groomed. The comb should also be clean each time. The board I groom on is recovered with a clean towel each time I groom.

The cage is cleaned out of any wet/dirty bedding and clean bedding placed in it before the regroomed cavy goes back in. Loose hay is deadly for getting wrapped up in the coat. I prefer hay cubes.

As the coat grows, shavings are no longer the bedding of choice for many of my cavies. Depending on the cavy's lifestyle, I may use wood pellets or towels. Some wrap themselves in the towels, so I have to figure out what else to use. Some of my longhairs have lost belly hair and developed rashes on their bellies when kept on wood pellets, especially Texels. There are other types of bedding that may work well, but I have to use what is convenient and most cost effective... and available.

Just when I think I have a winner, it may chew, get matted too bad to continue (when I go out of town to judge or for other reasons that the coat does not get groomed), or have a multitude of other problems. If the weather is really cold or I don't have enough time, it may not even get a complete bath before the show. Although its coat may look and feel acceptable to me, I have yet to see a judge have the same opinion. Bathing before a show on intermediates and seniors does make a difference in the feel of the coat. Then too, I have thought of the loss of density with each bath the cavy is subjected to; however, letting the coat get dirty causes loss of density with each grooming. Picking out mats and





shavings by hand helps keep more hair than ripping a comb through the mats.

Getting through the hazards of coating out a longhair (if I start with a dozen hopefuls, I may end up with 3 or 4 that make it through), the task then is to present them properly to the judge. Ideally, I have acclimated my show cavy to the grooming board. The last show I entered, several of my cavies were on boards for the first time and did really well staying there. However, one active cavy ended up under its board.

Prior preparation makes for more likely success. I don't always take the time nor have the time to do everything I should when I should. Life is like that. So I admire and respect those who have taken the time to prepare properly.

### Show Day Has Arrived

Before placing my coated cavy in its carrier, I groom with fresh wrappers. The carrier has bedding like or a towel. There are no water bottles dripping, no hay, maybe some carrots or lettuce if I am traveling a long distance. I like to wait until after the cavy has been shown to feed carrots since they leave "lipstick,"

Well in advance of having my entry called up, I like to go over the cavy again to be sure all of the tangles and loose bedding are out of the coat, and it is not wet. Then getting the cavy to the table isn't such a mad rush with the chance of yanking out those last mats. This is the ideal and doesn't always happen, especially if I am doing secretary, clerking, or other work too. Cleanliness is important if you want to be competitive. You can have a great animal, but if it has mats, dirt, curled and soiled nails, etc., things will detract when in competition with a well clean, well presented animal.

Oh, how hard it is to resist running through that comb one more time through the cavy's coat when the judge isn't looking@ I have been so guilty of this at times, but this too is a "no-no." If a judge wants a cavy re-groomed, he or she will give you the chance to do so.

I like to ask someone else to take up my cavy on its board and stay by if it is possible. This way, the judge has no idea that it is my cavy. But this isn't always possible also, and I have to give the judge credit for being impartial and fair whether or not the connection is made.

Yes, cavies pee on their boards. This is something that can't be helped. Sometimes when the cavy backs up to the edge of the board, that is an indication that it may be relieving itself soon. Keeping some paper towels handy is always a good idea. It would be nice to figure out how to make slipcovers for the boards and be able to change them when needed. Maybe this isn't such a farfetched idea in the future. Being gracious whether one wins or loses is a mark of good sportsmanship. All that hard work may pay off at last. If not, at least it was a good learning experience and practice for the next time.

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