

Recordkeeping in the Caviary – Part 1

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I personally fall somewhere in the middle between no record keeping and the other extreme- rabid, obsessive record keeping. I must say it is great to talk with folks who can give you weight gain or loss week by week, financial records for caviary transactions and can show you graphs that plot feed and bedding use and costs as well as detailed information on each animal.

Pedigrees

I think when all of us think of record keeping, we think of pedigrees. Some folks keep them, some don't and I have no issue with either position. I keep them for two reasons. First, I do look back to see who is in the background and who has produced successful show pigs in the past. Those animals get the nod when it comes to breeding since I am limited on how many animals I can keep, as most of us are. I will confess to paying more attention to the sire's production than the sows, and when I go to sell offspring, parentage counts in determining what I feel the potential value of a pig is. The second reason I keep pedigrees is this: anyone who entertains the idea of becoming a Master Breeder will need to produce pedigrees to register and potentially grand champion their animals. So keeping track is important. I keep my pedigrees on a well known cavy program which can import and export pedigrees to folks sharing the same program. I think there may be room for genetics on that program also. Keeping track of the genetic makeup of an animal is of great importance and interest to some breeders.

Breeding Records

It is important to know which animals in your herd are producing and which are not. It is also important to note who raises their offspring successfully and who doesn't, who had difficulties and what birth defects or disqualifications came from a given breeding. Some people will use a calendar to put down when a pair was first placed in together and I generally do the reverse. I mark down when I pull a boar that doesn't seem to be working, wait two- three weeks before putting in a different boar so I can identify who the sire of the litter is. I keep a book with entries that show the date of delivery, sow's name and ear number, sire's name and ear number, a fraction like $\frac{3}{4}$ where the numerator represents live births, denominator total births and then a second fraction if needed which shows the number raised out of total. So, if I have $\frac{3}{4}$. $\frac{1}{4}$ I know that I had one dead at birth, but sow only raised one,, two were born alive but died. I will try to list reason for their death and include anything unusual about the litter. Was it induced? Again, what faults are there in the offspring, did they require supplementation and remarks if needed about the mothering behavior of dam. All that sort of thing is written as well as the sex ratio of boars to sows. Generally we all feel we get more boars than sows, but with one boar, I can prove it! That rascal had 10 offspring in my caviary- 9 of which were boars!

Death Records

You need to know who dies so you can purge them from your system, but you also need to try to assign a reason for why they died. For example, these are the main things that I can point to as cause of death in my caviary: issues with teeth and urinary stones, pregnancy toxemia, post partum issues, a RARE hypocalcemia and then pigs whose demise I categorize as age related decline. There are always a few oddballs in there too, like animals with respiratory issues (and by no means are all or even most of them from infectious agents IMO), torsions of some part of the GI tract and cholecystitis (gall bladder problems- which may be primary or secondary to other issues). Death due to injury should also be noted. So, in a separate part of the book where my birth records are, there is a death record and the date of death is also put down in the pedigree program and the animal moved to the archives.

Financial records – you are on your own. Some folks like to know expenditures and income from their caviary. I found it too dismal to contemplate and consider this purely a hobby with appropriate expenditures to keep the pigs fed and clean as my husbandry goals dictate for me. I admire folks who are disciplined enough to keep financial records. I am not. Let me just say that if your caviary is a business, or if you sell lots of animals, it may be more important to keep financial records. Someone whose caviary is in this category could better address what records should or must be kept to satisfy various regulatory agencies (and the IRS) and frankly it would be great for an article to be written about that.

Next time we will discuss medical record keeping and show reports.

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