

ACBA: Husbandry

## PRACTICAL POINTS OF BATHING THE SHOW CAVY

by David Hardesty

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I can still remember vividly going with my father to help set up the booth at the Montgomery County Fair, in Dayton, Ohio. My father was a recruiting officer for the local branch of the Navy Reserves and I loved getting into the fair before the rest of the public could.

I would always sneak away and find my way down to the 4-H barns and watch with great jealousy as they would scrub down and generally spruce up their steers for the show ring. I always wanted to be able to show steers. Big Black Angus. But I was practical and settled on much smaller, Black American cavies. Besides carrying cases for steers are very, very expensive.

I moved to Denver, Colorado in 1978, home of the National Western Stock Show. The now defunct Rocky Mountain Cavy Club would have a cavy show during the run of the Stock Show. I even judged there one year. And once again I found myself checking out the livestock. Once again seeing these magnificent animals being groomed within an inch of their lives prior to hitting that show ring. There were many other flavors of livestock, and they all were receiving the same careful preparation for the show ring.

Why is it that cavy breeders fail to give the same preparations to their cavies prior to a show?

I judged a show a few weeks back and not a few of the entries had belly stains and several senior coated animals were so dirty that their coats were matted and stuck together when you would feel for texture. When I mentioned that these animals were loosing on color and finish of coat and could have greatly benefited from a bath, one breeder actually confessed that they didn't know you should bath a pig, *at all!* I got some chuckles when I said I could see someone had been working hard on that new broken color variety, *belly stain & white*.

Clean cages beget clean pigs. If you raise pigs with white, you must keep your cages clean and dry. Next you need to bath the animal on a regular schedule. It will vary from breed to breed but *all* breeds of cavy benefit from a bath. It will vary from breed to breed the minimum number of days prior to a show that you will bath.

Use a quality shampoo, with conditioner, for dry hair. You don't want to strip all the beneficial oils. Allow enough time for the coat to re-hydrate. This period of time varies with the natural relative humidity in your climate. Learn how quickly your animals get back to that perfect shine and texture. Pretend that you have a show the following weekend. Bath your animal. See if you timed it right.

I have Black Americans that I *know* will be perfect the next day if I bath the night before. I have Abys and yes you do bath Abys! But never the night before a show! Maybe a week to ten days before and that still may vary from individual to individual. This is why we need to do wet runs, if you'll pardon the pun, to learn how long it takes for the coat to be prime again.

At this same show someone had entered some white junior Americans. They were so clean and white that you needed sunglasses to look at them. But the coat had all semblance of life washed out of it. The coat could *not* be made to lie down. It had been bathed in too harsh a shampoo, which had stripped all the oils out of the coat. Give those babies three days and their coats would have been prime.

So please don't underestimate show preparation. Learn how your show animals respond to bathing. And be conscientious about your show preparation. It does make a difference and pay dividends.

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