

Making Cavy Shows More Youth Friendly

By Aryana Police

This year at ACBA Specialty in Taylor, Texas, I had the amazing opportunity to speak at the judges conference to many involved fanciers. I shared tips on how to make cavy shows more youth friendly, in hopes that we can all do something to make shows even more beneficial to younger fanciers. Here is a recap of what I shared.

As a youth exhibitor myself, I have seen a few ways that fellow fanciers can improve shows to allow shows to offer even more benefits to the youth that attend them. This hobby has done amazing things for youth, myself included, and I would like to share my opinions on how you can make cavy shows more youth friendly, and improve our hobby even more.

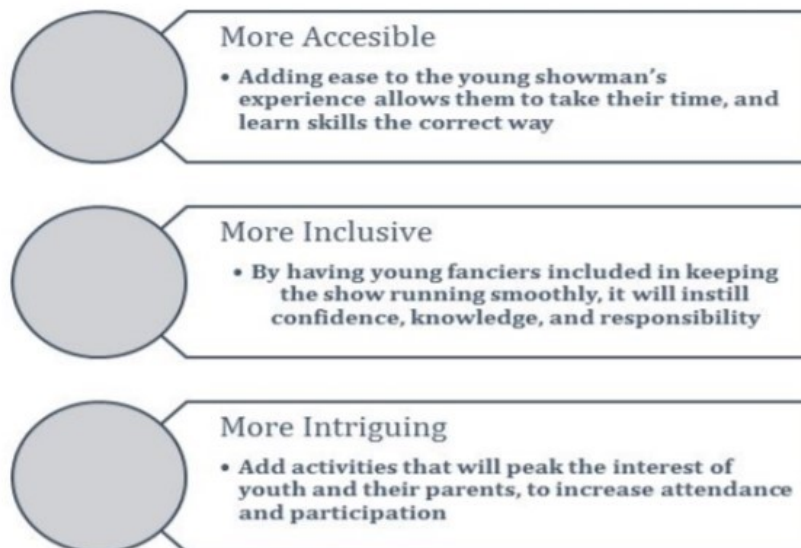
First off, what does “youth friendly” even mean, and why is important to make open shows youth friendly? An activity that is “youth friendly” means youth are easily able to participate and benefit from the experience. Since ‘youth’ can mean a kindergartener all the way to a teenager, this can vary depending on the age group. And also, just because there is not an actual youth show, does not mean you can’t make the show youth friendly! Youth should be encouraged to show in open shows also. There are simple ways to improve, without costing your club an immense amount of stress, time, or resources, as well as in-depth contests. Here I’ll explain three steps to making shows more suitable to the younger crowd.

Make the Show More Accessible

Adding ease to the young showman’s experience allows them to take their time, and learn skills the correct way. This is the simplest way to make a show more youth friendly, and likely the easiest. Something to take in consideration when working with very young exhibitors is height. Since show tables are generally raised up to be a comfortable height for a standing adult, a small child may have a hard time reaching the show table. To solve this problem, try supplying a small step stool to make it more convenient for children to

safely load their animals in the show coops.

Another factor that makes shows more accessible for everyone is time. Adding just two extra minutes to get a breed on the table, especially breeds that require grooming, can alleviate the rushed feeling that adds stress to a show. If a youth is tablewriting or ramrodding, I suggest that you allow an extra minute between classes to make sure they can keep up with comment cards and control sheets. Speaking from experience, comment cards can be difficult when first learning to write for a judge!



Making the Show More Inclusive

Making sure youth feel welcomed to shows typically dominated by very experienced breeders can be extremely inspiring to those just starting out. For some ways to make sure youth are included in all the fun and learning opportunities, try allowing younger members take on more leadership roles within your club or show committee. This may include having kids assist the secretary during check-in time, setting up the show table, learning to ramrod, or even just table writing. If you are

hosting youth activities, such as a judging contest or games, let a younger member help keep everything running smoothly.

And having youth in positions during and before a show doesn’t have to mean more work for the adults. If there is a youth member who is experienced in the hobby, this would be a perfect opportunity for them to teach newer fancier how things work. Let a new youth shadow a ramrod, or a teenager give a quick demonstration before the show starts about what all the abbreviations on a comment card mean. If youth are given more responsibilities at shows, they will grow into the adult exhibitor with the skills and knowledge to continue bettering our fancy.

Making the Show More Intriguing

Now here’s where all the fun and exciting things happen. Enhance your show with activities that will make youth (and their parents) want to attend. This could be what makes an exhibitor choose your

show over another event that weekend, and continue coming back to your shows time and time again.

Even if there isn't actually a youth show, there can still be fun activities for younger members to enjoy. Often times, it takes a fun contest, or something of the like, to convince a novice to try an open show for the first time. Activities that are intriguing to a kid can range from simple games to complex contests. And always, fun awards and prizes for shows and activities always make exhibitors even more excited, and can be the reason someone adds a couple extra entries. An added bonus with most youth activities, is the club can charge an entry fee for them, which may increase profits.

Activities that you can add to your show that don't take many supplies, helpers or planning are a costume contest or games. Either of these can happen during the lunch break, and wouldn't even disrupt the show. For games, I recommend an educational game, that aids in learning more about cavy, such as Quiz Down or cavy Jeopardy. Costume contests generally cater towards younger children, but teens can enjoy them too. And who doesn't love seeing cavies dressed up?

Something I've seen at a couple of shows is a youth-only silent auction. This means that only youth are allowed to write bids on the items (typically animals), not adults. I thought this is quite an interesting concept, and could be a great way for youth to learn entrepreneurial skills, such as money management, and have a chance to make decisions regarding their project. If you are able to acquire donated animals or items, this could be a way for the club to fundraise. Though, it might only be successful at an event that has a large amount of youth in attendance, so keep that in mind.

Other events to consider offering at the next show are Breed ID contests, or educational exhibits. These could easily be set up on a table out of the way, and be ran by a helpful volunteer. Breeders may be able to bring along an extra cavy or two to be used for Breed ID, and the club would just need to supply some extra show coops or carriers to hold the animals in, and someone to score the answer sheets. Educational exhibits can include posters, art projects, crafts or equipment, and is a perfect way to bring more focus to the hobby. This would just take a table to display the entries, and someone to judge them.

Of course, the epitome of a youth contest, would be a Royalty contest. This would require a hefty amount of time and volunteers, but can really draw a crowd to the show. Management and Achievement contests go right alongside this, and would need a few people to judge applications.

Lastly, is showmanship. This is a classic, and what most people think of when you mention "youth activities", and for a good reason. Just like a Royalty contest, it combines many aspects of the cavy hobby into one coveted contest. A cavy showman will need to know how to present themselves and their animal well, be able to correctly handle their cavy, and have knowledge about their project.

In conclusion, I hope that these suggestions have inspired you to improve our fancy by making your next show more youth friendly. A small improvement can really go a long way to making an event



that much better for a young person. And know that youth appreciate the opportunities in this amazing hobby. And youth- make sure to thank your mentors and everyone that has helped you with your project, because they are what keep us going!