

Minutes of the 1. Seminar for Cavy Judges
organised by the EE Section Cavies

In attendance were 23 cavy judges from 10 European countries, see attached attendance list.

1. The opening on the first day of the seminar, Saturday, 14. 3. 2009, was 9:46am.
2. All were welcomed by the President of the EE Cavy section, Evelyne van Vliet.
3. Dieter Plumanns, President of the EE Rabbit section and President of the Belgian Small Livestock Association spoke a few words of welcome.
4. All participants briefly introduced themselves.
5. Lecture on Longhaired breeds by Lena Tysk and Jens Lindgren from Sweden, theoretical (with accompanying teaching aids) and practical exercises.

➤ The Ideal Picture

Jens set out that in order to judge every breed properly, a judge needs to have an ideal picture in his head of that breed. Each exhibit that is judged will then be compared to that ideal picture.

➤ Workshop for pinpointing The Ideal Picture

All participants were divided into 6 groups and were given the task of jointly finding the 4 most important points of the ideal picture. Each group had one photograph, representing a longhaired breed, to work with.

It became apparent from the ensuing discussion that the two most important points of the ideal picture were similar in most groups, but that there were some differences with the third and fourth placed points between the groups.

➤ Clipped or Un-clipped?

Jens pointed out that in order to present a longhaired exhibit in full coat length represented a huge amount of work from the exhibit's age of 5 months onwards.

By clipping a longhaired exhibiton, many faults can be eliminated and hidden, such as unevenness, missing coat etc.

During the following discussion, it became apparent that there are three ways of presenting longhaired exhibits in Europe:

- in full coat;
- clipped to floor length;
- clipped, but longer than floor length (min. 5cm.).

Longhaired exhibits are judged quite differently in the various member countries. Jens stressed that each country should continue to judge their longhairs in the way they are used to and that no country should criticise another on their methods.

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However, it is imperative that judges throughout Europe reach a compromise with regard to judging longhairs at European shows. This fuelled an immense discussion and after a lengthy debate, it became clear that there are enormous differences between the countries.

➤ Longhairs and Colour

Jens started by pointing out that the European standard states that the colour in longhairs may be slightly paler. This point caused another debate between the countries.

According to Jens, the colour in longhairs should not be overly important, but neither should the colour be bad, as there are many exhibits that possess very good colour. He went on to say that colour in longhairs is not important in Sweden, but that he would like to be an ambassador for all affiliated countries to achieve an increasing alignment in views and opinions throughout Europe. We have to accept that all countries currently have their preferred ways, but no country should think that their methods are best. By aligning all standards, it should be possible to forge links and create more uniformity. The countries are not as far apart as most people think.

It was planned for the afternoon session to try and come to a uniform decision on how to judge coated breeds at European shows (we were shown two longhairs with completely different colour intensities, by way of clarification).

Evelyne pointed out that the European standard was completed in a rush and now that judges are beginning to judge to this standard, mistakes are revealed. Part of the Judges' Seminar is therefore meant to find and discuss these mistakes and amend them.

Jens hoped that a happy medium could be struck whilst correcting the mistakes in the standard, so that no countries would be left out in the cold (e.g. England and Scandinavia).

It will be a slow process, but a compromise has to be struck with a view to improving colour and markings in coated breeds.

6. Lunch break.

7. Continuation of the discussion of longhairs by Lena Tysk and Jens Lindgren from Sweden.

➤ Development of the Coat

Very young curly longhairs do not show their potential as much as non-curly longhairs at the same early age. The development of the curly coat cannot be anticipated. The belly will give a clue as to the density of the coat. Between the ages of 8 to 16 weeks, the youngsters will go through various stages of coat development – from good to bad and back to good again. The chops in the curly

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varieties are often under-developed at a young age and in most cases their development cannot be predicted.

Jens went on to say, that the best Alpacas generally show an oblong shape (shape of the coat when brushed out), despite the fact that a rounded shape is expected in Peruvians and Alpacas. All other longhaired breeds are expected to show a half-circle shaped body. The body shape on all longhaired breeds is extremely important to show off the brushed out coat best, but it is not the most important aspect. He touched on the Canadian imports that were crossed into European lines to improve coat and colour, but had inferior type and head qualities. Experienced breeders could take these risks and improve the aspects that needed improving, but less experienced breeders would probably face deterioration of their stock and lines.

The quality of the coat will never be assessed if all the cavies in the stud are constantly clipped for showing. This would also probably negatively influence the choice of breeding stock. Longhaired fanciers normally aim to breed stock that have a steady coat development.

- Workshop, practical session, judging some longhairs followed by comparison and discussion.
All participants were divided into groups again and jointly judged the longhairs presented to the group. It became very evident at the evaluation, that there were huge discrepancies between the groups in their assessment of colour and markings, especially so in the case of two tricoloured Alpacas.
Part of the groups disqualified one of them, because there was not enough of one of the three colours (the European standard calls for a minimum of 20% of each colour); whilst the other was disqualified, because it did not show one of the three colours on one side of the body (the European standard calls for all three colours to be present on each side of the cavy's body). The latter really fired up the discussion; the judges that had not disqualified the Alpacas were of the opinion that the standard of the country where the exhibit was from has to be considered (coat quality carries the most points); whilst the judges that had disqualified them on colour aspects stated the view (backed up by their national standards) that paler colours in longhairs are already accepted, so judges had to be stringent where colour distribution and markings were concerned.
After a lengthy and heated debate, Evelyne suggested that all judges would discuss these items with their fellow judges at home, in an effort to reach a compromise between all countries on how to deal with longhairs at European shows.

A further point of discussion was: when an exhibit is disqualified in one position, the judge at a European show will still judge and award points to all other positions. Helmut asked whether this procedure would also hold good in the case the exhibit had running lice etc. It was unanimously decided that such an exhibit would still be judged and awarded points in all other positions.

It is important whilst judging longhairs, to always check the belly and armpits for disqualifications (e.g. bald patches, matting etc.).

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Evelyne warned all never to penalise an exhibit twice for the same fault under different positions (e.g. deduction under „Type and Shape“ and then again under „Condition“, because the exhibit needs to be fitter). She had further noticed that some wording in the comment cards had got lost in translation between the German and English versions.

➤ Discussion of Points Systems in the European Standard

The question was posed whether it was possible to do away with the points system altogether and just give a written comment on each exhibit. Evelyne replied that, unfortunately, the EE dictated the points system, so that we have no choice in the matter.

Jens mentioned that it was quite feasible that the EE cavy section would lose members if the European standard is not amended to suit all affiliated countries in the case of colour distribution and markings in coated breeds. This sparked off another heated debate. Various participants stated that the European standard was a reflection of the work done by members of various affiliated countries, who had taken into consideration most national standards and that the majority of the national standards were identical with the European standard. It was therefore considered wrong to fundamentally change the European standard now to accommodate a minority of affiliated countries. At the end of the debate, there was unfortunately no uniformity of opinion.

The ESKC (European Standards Committee for Cavies) will have to tackle this problem at their next meeting and come to a solution in time for the European Show in Nitra next November.

Evelyne urged all participants to try and judge abroad as often as possible and also invite foreign judges to their national shows with a view to gain as much experience and get acquainted with other national standards and judging methods.

Evelyne finally thanked Lena and Jens for their well prepared and eloquent lecture on longhaired breeds.

8. The first day of the seminar closed at 6pm.

9. The seminar continued on Sunday, 15. 3. 2009, at 8.30am.

10. Lecture on Tans and Foxes by David Marshall from England, theoretical (with accompanying teaching aids) and practical exercises.

- During the discussion, it became clear that some terms in the various national standards are interpreted or called differently. These points will also have to be thoroughly discussed at the next ESKC meeting:

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- ❖ There are differences in the standards with regard to the „lacing“ on the body. Some countries have them on the hindquarters as well as on the flanks, other do not (yet).
- ❖ In some countries, the body colour is described as the undercolour (conform Agouti standards), and the markings are described as the topcolour; whilst other countries describe them the other way round.
- ❖ In some countries, the tipped hairs along the flanks, between the head markings and between the belly and cheeks are called „lacing“ c.q. „peppering“, whilst other countries call it „tipping“.

11. Lunch Break.

12. Workshop, practical session, judging Tans and Foxes, followed by comparison and discussion.

All participants were divided into groups again and jointly judged the Tans and Foxes that were presented to the groups. During the evaluation, it became clear that the discrepancies between the groups were not as great as in the workshop for longhairs.

A lively discussion followed about at what point an exhibit should or should not be disqualified. In certain countries, judging is much stricter and therefore disqualifications are more often handed out than in other countries.

Evelyne stressed that judges should first and foremost judge cavies positively by looking for their good points and their quality rather than eliminating them by finding as many faults in the exhibit as possible. This point should be thoroughly discussed in all the affiliated countries. The Standards Committee will welcome any comments, suggestions and recommendations.

Evelyne thanked David for his very successful presentation.

13. Evelyne further proposed that the 2010 Seminar for EE Cavy Judges, which will be an annual event from now on, will be held in England on 20. – 21. March. Breeds to be discussed include Rex and Teddies. All were in favour.

Evelyne will have more information and details in time for the EE-Convention to be held in Belgium in May 2009.

14. Evelyne thanked all judges and lecturers for taking part in the seminar and wished all a safe journey home. She hoped to be able to welcome everybody again in one year's time in England .

15. The second day of the seminar was closed at 2pm.

Minutes' Secretary:
Sigrid Tooson