



1.SEMINAR FOR CAVY JUDGES IN RETIE, BELGIUM – 14. AND 15. MARCH 2009

The cavy section of the European Association (EE) organised its first ever International Judges' Seminar in Retie, in the north eastern part of Belgium on the 14. and 15. March 2009.

It was an overwhelming success with 23 judges from 10 affiliated countries taking part. As we were not sure how many judges would attend, we decided to limit the amount to around two per country for this first time seminar, with the exception of the host nation, Belgium. I was therefore very honoured to see Belgium turn up with three judges, one of which was Dieter Plumanns, who, apart from being a rabbit- and cavy judge, is the President of the Belgium Small Livestock Society, as well as my colleague in the EE –Dieter is the President of the Rabbit section.

We had also agreed to welcome people, who are training to become cavy judges, to the seminar; as it enables us to train them in a certain way and get them ready to judge according to the European Cavy standard at shows in their own country as well as Europe-wide. Our first trainee-judge to attend was Rita Ribeiro from Portugal, who is already very knowledgeable and really got "stuck in" with the practical (judging) part of the seminar.

On the Saturday, the Longhairs; i.e. Peruvians, Shelties, Coronets, Alpacas, Texels and Merinos, were introduced by Lena Tysk and Jens Lindgren from Sweden. They had put together an impressive "Power Point" presentation and lecture, that in my opinion, really set the standard for future breed lectures at our seminars. I would like to thank, Lena and Jens for their immense engagement and superb lecture.

One of the most poignant points, that raised its ugly head again, is the continuing disagreement between the countries that follow the Dutch/German line of thought and those that are based on the English/Scandinavian standards; i.e. colour and markings in Coated and Longhaired breeds. Whereas the English, Scandinavians and most of the more recently affiliated countries judge these breeds primarily for their coat qualities (45 out of 100 points in the standard) and regard the colour as a more minor thing; the Dutch/German line of thinking very much emphasizes the colour and markings (only 10 points in the standard) of the coated breeds. At times, this argument between the differing factions became quite fierce. During the practical part of “the hands-on” judging of the Longhairs, it also resulted in totally different verdicts between the judging groups: where one group had awarded an Alpaca 97 points, because of its terrific coat qualities, another group had disqualified the same exhibit for having “the wrong colour or markings”.

Although, this argument between the different member states has been raging for a long time now; no progress has been made in resolving the matter. It is therefore good, that the Judges’ Seminar is now up and running to pinpoint these problems once more. By discussing the differing opinions more often, I am living in great hope that a solution will be found some time in the future. I am not expecting a fast result, but I am sure, that with a lot of goodwill on both sides, these factions will eventually come together. It is very important, that a solution is found sooner rather than later, because we need to make it possible for all members of all our affiliated states to show their coated breeds at the European Shows, that are held every 3 years as well as at the Breedspecific European shows. And in doing so, these members must be able to show their exhibits and gain good results with them.

We must not allow the argument to degrade itself into a situation where all exhibitors from certain member states are banned from taking part in shows on a European level, because their exhibits are more than likely to be disqualified. Take this one step further and the consequences will be that certain member states are going to pull out of the EE and that is the last thing we want to happen. It is the prime task of the EE cavy section to look after all the members of all its affiliated countries. To achieve that –we must be flexible and not adhere too tightly to our national principles –it is far more important to start thinking on “a European level” rather than only on “a National level”.

The second day of the seminar was devoted to discussing the relatively new breeds of Tans and Foxes; our lecturer was David Marshall from England, who is the first chairman of the newly formed National Fox and Tan Cavy Club in England.

Discussing the Tans and Foxes was far less controversial than the Longhairs, but we still managed to reveal some differing points of view and wording in the various national standards. It is good to come across these differences in opinion between the countries, because once they are known to all, they can be discussed thoroughly at the forthcoming ESKC (European Cavy Standards Committee) meetings in an effort to achieve a similar view in all affiliated countries.

David had also done his lecture with the help of a PowerPoint presentation that contained some very good photographs to show the good and bad points on Tans and Foxes.

The PowerPoint presentations and minutes of this year’s and all future seminars will be collected and kept in the cavy section as a training aid for up and coming new cavy judges.

A total of 30 longhaired as well as Tan and Fox cavies had been brought together from 3 countries for the seminar participants to practise with. All cavies were housed in spacious show pens for the duration of the seminar.

We can all look back to a very successful first cavy judges seminar; I am sure we all learned a lot from each other and I personally am already looking forward to next year's seminar which will be held in England on 20. + 21. March 2010 and when the breeds for discussion will be the Rex and Teddies.

Evelyne van Vliet



Hotel "de Linde" was the venue for the 1. Cavy Judges Seminar.



The cavies that were used for judging practice were housed in spacious show pens.



Lena Tysk in full swing in her longhaired breeds presentation.



Jens Lindgren leading the practical part of the longhaired breeds' presentation.



David Marshall doing his presentation on Tans and Foxes.