

Minutes of the Meeting of 17th October 2009, held at Norton Lindsay Village Hall, Warwickshire.

Present: Bryan Mayoh (Chair), Jan Alston (Secretary, elected during the meeting), Allan Trigg (DCC), Ted Brearley (NHCC), Ann Rolph (DRCC), Tony O'Neill (ESCC), David Oulton (ESCC), Don Payne (CCC), Caroline Smith (RVCC), Nikki Matthews (CSCC), Joan Phillips (PVCC), Penny Bell (NACC), Ken Yates (NTWCC), Rex Matthews (RCC), Simon Neesam (ACC).
In attendance: Oliver Joyce (DRCC Internet Expert)

1. Meeting Administration

a) **Apologies for Absence:** None were required.

b) Minutes of the Meeting of 18th October 2008

All present agreed that the Minutes of the Meeting were a true record.

c) Matters Arising from the Meeting on 18th October 2008 (not on the Agenda)

All Matters Arising were dealt with on the Agenda.

d) Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chairman reported that he had suggested that Mr Joyce be in attendance at the meeting, since he had travelled down with Ms Alston, in order to support Mrs Rolph in representing the DRCC in what was likely to be an extensive discussion of the BCC website. Of course, only Mrs Rolph would be eligible to vote on any matters under discussion.

The Chairman then outlined two of the main items that were to be discussed. These had not previously been the subjects of detailed discussion by the Council; but he believed that both were of great importance to the cavy fancy. The first was the redevelopment of the **BCC website**, which he hoped would not only be a valuable resource for existing fanciers but might also prove a significant means of attracting new people into the fancy. The second was the implications of **the Animal Welfare Act 2006**, which, if inappropriately interpreted or developed, could pose a threat to the very existence of the cavy fancy. He hoped that there would be a constructive discussion of both points.

2. Administration of BCC

a) **Election of New Secretary** (Ms Alston and Mr Joyce were not present for this item.)

The Chairman reported that he had notified Councillors of Mrs Hadley's resignation as Secretary due to other commitments, but that, although there had been offers of help, there had been no suggestions as to who might take over the position. He had therefore approached Ms Alston, who he believed had the right knowledge and attributes for the job; and she had agreed to become Secretary if elected. All agreed that Ms Alston should be appointed, and that Mrs Hadley should be thanked for all of her past efforts.

b) **Biennial Election of Chairman** (discussed at end of meeting)

The Chairman reported that he would be willing to continue in the position for a further two years if required, and offered to leave the room so that Councillors could discuss the matter. All agreed that this was not necessary, and the Chairman was re-elected unanimously.

c) **Financial Report**

The Chairman reported that Mrs Hadley would produce a full-year Financial Report at the end of December, before handing over the books to Ms Alston. However, as income from Prefix Registrations had exceeded expenditure (largely on hire of the hall and web-site) there would be

a surplus on the year's activities. At some stage Councillors might discuss how to utilise any surplus funds in the interests of the cavy fancy.

d) Standards Booklets

There had been relatively few sales during the year, and the Chairman, Mr O'Neill and Mr Matthews were still holding significant numbers of copies. Mr Matthews confessed his shame that, having sold a considerable number of booklets in 2008, he had failed to sell any during the current year. However, he was comforted to learn that the ESCC had issued 5 copies but not been paid for them, which cast a more favourable light on his achievement of not having actually lost any.

e) Publication of New / Revised Standards

These would continue to be published in CAVIES, with pdf versions available for download from the website.

f) Prefix Scheme

Mrs Smith reported that 63 registrations had been received this year, as against 85 at the same time last year and 112 for the full year. There had been difficulties in updating the web-site, due to the involvement of a third party; but it was agreed that Mr Neesam will update the new website with details of new prefixes each month.

g) Website

Mr Neesam demonstrated a prototype of the new BCC website, which will go live as soon as all Standards have been loaded by mid-November. The website includes a number of distinct features:

- Introductory articles on feeding, housing, breeding and showing cavies / guinea pigs;
- Articles on the role of the Council, its Rules and Constitution, and the purpose and structure of Breed Standards;
- Breed standards in web format (separate page for each, with photographs) and in pdf form for downloading / incorporation into Standards Booklets;
- Details of all Breed Clubs within the Council (separate page for each, showing contact details and breeds catered for);
- Archive of Minutes of the Council;
- Archive of Articles on cavy genetics, different breeds of cavy etc.
- Advertisements
- Links to Breed and other Club websites.

The Chairman suggested that, because the site now featured introductory articles on the basics of cavy keeping, it might serve to act as a 'portal' in attracting new people into the cavy fancy. Key to this would be to ensure that the website reaches a prominent position in Search Engine listings when common search terms relating to cavies / guinea pigs are entered.

Mr Neesam stated that he had endeavoured to incorporate several of the factors that were likely to increase the prominence of sites in searches. This would be further helped by encouraging fanciers and clubs to refer to the BCC site on their own web sites.

There was a discussion of these topics and it was agreed that:

- Mr Joyce and Mrs Smith will check the links on the website to ensure their validity before the site goes live.
- Councillors (at least the ones having web access) should check the introductory articles and if possible provide additional information to strengthen them.
- Mr Neesam will set up a 'banner' for the BCC website, to encourage fanciers and clubs to use this as a link from their websites to the BCC site.
- Councillors should try to ensure that their Breed Clubs send one article on each of their breeds to Mr Neesam, so that these can be incorporated into the website.
- Councillors should check the Breed Club details on the website. Any Breed Clubs without websites should advise Mr Neesam of any additional details that might help their BCC pages become 'de facto' club websites.
- Mr Payne will provide help on 'Search Optimisation' via his girl-friend, who is expert in these matters.
- Mrs Smith will modify the Wikipedia entry for the BCC, to promote the Council's website and correct any factual inaccuracies. She will also look at setting up a Facebook page for the Council. The purpose of both activities is to supplement Search Engines as a means of introducing the BCC and the cavy fancy to potential new fanciers.
- Mr Neesam will ensure that the articles on feeding, housing, breeding and showing reflect the Code of Practice defined by the Animal Welfare Sub-Committee (see below).

The Chairman stated that, though praise did not slip lightly from his lips, he felt that Mr Neesam had done a truly outstanding job in producing the website. All Councillors agreed with this and Mr Neesam was thanked for his efforts. Mr Wright, who had raised in CAVIES the issue of using the internet to promote the cavy fancy, confirmed that the actions being taken were in line with his ideas.

3 Breed Standards

a) Longhairs: Specifications for show-boards

The Chairman commented that confusion had arisen about the requirements for show-boards, following a decision by the CSCC that round boards might be used at one of its Stock Shows. The Peruvian and Alpaca Standards carry one form of words but the other longhaired varieties use slightly different forms; whilst NCC and SCC Show Regulations also include stipulations on the use of boards.

Following a discussion on the matter, it was agreed that:

- The ideal situation is that the relevant Breed Clubs should define the requirements for show-boards for longhaired cavies and these should be the same for all long-haired breeds.
- To this end the PVCC, the CSCC and the RVCC should discuss what the stipulations might be. These would be confirmed and any differences resolved by the Council.
- The NCC and SCC should be asked to modify their rules slightly, so as to continue to state that only long-haired cavies may be shown on boards and stewarded by their exhibitors, but that boards should be as defined in the Standards of the breeds concerned.

b) New / Emerging Varieties: Proposed Guidance Notes for Breeders, Exhibitors and Judges

Mrs Smith presented updated Guidance Notes for Breeders, Exhibitors and Judges on the most popular New and Emerging Varieties, as agreed by the RVCC. It was confirmed that other breeds could still be shown in New / Emerging Variety classes, but in these cases exhibitors will have to provide similar notes to help the judge assess the relevant breed. These will not be required in the case of the breeds defined by the RVCC. The agreement of such Guidance Notes by the Council is the first step towards possible Guide Standard status, once it has been established that sufficient numbers meeting the Guidance Notes are being exhibited.

Chinchilla

Although it has long been established that Standards refer to the phenotype (appearance) of a cavy rather than its genotype (genetic make-up), an understanding of the genetics of a breed can sometimes be helpful. It was agreed that in the case of the so-called Chinchilla, the guidance notes are most likely to be fulfilled by a homozygous agouti based on black/ chocolate and buff/ white. However, the features required include factors such as eye circles and white markings on nostrils, jowls and chest that are anathema to the standardised Agouti.

Mrs Bell stated her view that the NACC would not wish to include such cavies within its remit. Mr Wright added that some 'Chinchillas' had been shown that were of 'Agouti Fox' genotype, and that these did not have the qualities that were sought in the Fox and so would not be catered for by the NFTCC.

It was agreed that:

- The Guidance Notes for the 'Chinchilla' were as suggested by the RVCC, although there are reservations about the validity of the name.
- The specific colours of the breed should not follow the nomenclature for the Agouti, i.e. Silver, Cinnamon, Lemon, Cream. Instead the colour combinations making up the ticking should be specified, as for the Argente.

Lunkarya

It was confirmed that the Guidance Notes related to the Peruvian version of the Lunkarya, although Sheltie and Coronet versions are also possible. The Guidance Notes were modified slightly to emphasise key differences from the Peruvian in coat texture and the absence of a parting. It was also agreed that the Lunkarya should be shown free of knots or tangles, but should not be brushed out in the manner of the other longhaired breeds

Sable

The Guidance Notes were modified to describe the adult cavy and emphasising that the breed can be encountered in two versions, the Dark Sable, based on black, and the Chocolate Sable. Several Councillors had doubts about whether the shading required by the Guidance Notes was actually perceptible in most exhibits, although others had seen cavies with these characteristics. All agreed that since the body colour in the young cavy is a single shade of dark sepia, as the shading has not yet developed, these are not suitable for showing.

Sable Fox

It was agreed that this breed should be shown under this name, which describes what it actually is, rather than as a 'Marten Sable'. It was agreed that if / when the Sable reaches Guide Standard status this breed might be transferred to the NFTCC. The Guidance Notes are as for a Sable with Fox markings.

Self Caramel

It was agreed that the Guidance Notes should be modified to require ‘light ruby eyes’ and ‘a warm toffee colour distinctly darker than the Beige.’

Swiss

Councillors suggested that two different models of the Swiss were being exhibited in Europe. Somewhat ironically, the wording suggested by the RVCC follows the ‘Scandinavian model’, requiring an even, erect coat, rather than the original ‘Swiss model’ in which the coat lies forward at the front. It was agreed that the wording would be slightly modified to require coat 6-9 cm in length in the adult cavy, and that a crest should be a disqualification, not a fault. However, it was pointed out that an exhibitor could circumvent this by showing ‘a Crested Swiss’, providing their own Guidance Notes, although judges might well look upon this unfavourably. Swiss are to be shown on boards.

Guidance Notes will be published with the Minutes in Cavies, and on the Council website.

c) Status of Cresteds and Ridgeback as Roughts or Smooths

Mr Trigg introduced possibly the most intellectually stimulating topic of the day, whether Cresteds and Ridgebacks should be classified as Roughts or Smooths in Pet Classes and certain duplicate events. The Chairman pointed out that both the NCC and the SCC had not wished the Council to be involved in defining ‘Pet Standards’; and so as to avoid a ‘three-way split’ on the issue the Council had decided not to become involved in this area. It could not, therefore, be expected to adjudicate on this important matter.

As regards duplicate classes, the Council had classified breeds in a number of ways that could be used to define such classes on a logical basis (Self, Ticked, Marked / Marked Patterned, Crested, Satin, Rough Short-Coated, Longhaired), so that the continued use of such a primitive classification as Rough / Smooth should not be encouraged. However, if this were to be used Mr Payne stated that the Crested should be treated as a Smooth, whilst Mrs Smith stated that on the same basis the Ridgeback is a Rough.

d) Extra teats as a fault or disqualification

Mr Trigg advised the Council that in the USA extra teats were regarded as a disqualification, and asked whether we should do likewise. Mr Oulton pointed out the danger that this might encourage fanciers to try to remove these teats, which was not desirable; and the Chairman suggested that there might be any number of minor physical differences that could occur, but attempting to adjudicate on things that most Councillors had never seen was not a particularly sensible thing to do. It was therefore agreed not to include extra teats as a disqualification, the appropriate action being left to the judge’s discretion.

e) Giantism

Mr Brearley advised the meeting that he had seen ‘Giant’ cavies that did not display extra toes, which was thought last year to be a distinguishing feature. Furthermore, these cavies were placid in temperament. Mrs Smith confirmed that the RVCC did not wish to provide development opportunities for such cavies; and the consensus of the meeting was that they should not be catered for in any Council-regulated classes at cavy shows. The stipulation that “Breed classes at shows are only intended for cavies of the species ‘*Cavia porcellus*’, and not for other species such as ‘*Cavia aperea*’ (the so-called Giant cavy)”, will be added to the Guidance Notes for Judges within the Standards.

However, it was not presently thought possible to stipulate specific characteristics that could unambiguously identify Giant cavies, so that judges will have to use their general experience and knowledge of the characteristics of '*C. porcellus*' in order to identify them.

Since it has now been recognised that Giant cavies do not always possess extra toes, Mr Oulton raised the issue of whether the **disqualification for extra toes** should remain, particularly since many 'normal' cavies have vestigial extra toes that have no adverse effect on them. He pointed out that the disqualification encourages the removal of these toes, which can cause suffering to the cavy. Mr Trigg argued that these toes are a deformity and that the disqualification should remain. A vote was taken and it was agreed by a majority of 12 for and 1 against that the disqualification should be removed. This will take effect from January 1st 2010.

Discussion after the meeting indicated the majority view that the wording previously used for 'Extra Toes', namely that 'Single extra toes on each foot are of minor significance,' should be reinserted into the 'Faults Applying to All Breeds' section of the Standards.

4 Breed Club Responsibilities

- a) The Chairman introduced this topic by suggesting that the approach followed by the ESCC and the RVCC, whereby both clubs put on classes for Guide Standard and New / Emerging Selfs, so as to allow a better development process for such varieties prior to possible standardisation, might be followed for other breeds. It was agreed that:
- The same principle would apply to Fox and Tan derivatives, with both the RVCC and NFTCC putting on classes for such cavies, as requested by Mr Wright.
 - The PVCC would be the logical home for the Lunkarya (Peruvian –type) should it become standardised, with the CSCC being the club catering for any standardised Sheltie or Coronet versions of the Lunkarya. The PVCC will therefore consider whether to put on classes for Lunkaryas at its Stock Shows, so as to give judges and exhibitors a better opportunity to assess the breed; and at some stage the CSCC will discuss a similar approach for Sheltie and Coronet versions of the Lunkarya. However, the RVCC will continue to provide the main focus for the development of these breeds.
 - The Rex CC is to discuss whether it might wish to follow a similar programme for the development of the Teddy. However, in this case Teddy breeders must also be consulted about whether they see the Rex CC or some other body as the appropriate Breed Club for a fully-standardised Teddy breed.

5. Cavy Fancy Issues

a) Animal Welfare Act: Implications for Cavy Fancy

The Chairman introduced this item by stating that the discussion of such matters was not normally the concern of the Council, but Mr Trigg and Ms Alston had alerted him to the threat that might be posed to the viability of the cavy fancy by inappropriate development or interpretation of this Act. He asked Ms Alston to explain her concerns.

Ms Alston stated that there were three aspects to be considered:

- The Act actually states that the animal has the need for a suitable environment, a suitable diet, to exhibit normal behaviour patterns, to be housed with, or apart from other animals, and to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease. It is expected that genuine fanciers will already be meeting these requirements.
- However, some of the people who are typically active in 'Animal Rights' areas are interpreting the Act to suit their own objectives and stating their interpretations as if they

were law. These include 'requirements' for 4x2 foot cages to house a pair of covies, with separate bedroom facilities. This is a serious concern as it seeks to place genuine fanciers in a bad light as providing their animals with 'illegal' levels of care.

- The AWA is a framework for 'Secondary Legislation'. This has already been undertaken for equines, cats and dogs; and it is presumed that the same action will be taken for smaller animals. If such legislation were to incorporate some of the housing requirements being suggested, with similar strictures for shows, it could provide insurmountable obstacles for the fancy.

Mr Payne added that, in addition, courts might be asked to adjudicate on alleged offences under the Act on the basis of what is 'reasonable', and there was a danger that the RSPCA could propose requirements for keeping covies that a court might consider reasonable but a fancier would not.

Mrs Bell stated that the DEFRA were suffering from money shortages (which news surprisingly failed to prompt Councillors to organise a 'whip-round'); and because of this DEFRA might use secondary legislation being developed by the Welsh Assembly, which is apparently better funded, to apply to England. Accordingly, the SCC is in contact with a body named FOCAS (Federation of Companion Animal Societies) that is seeking to influence Welsh legislation.

Mr Payne raised a further concern, that European legislation might go even further, including such matters as a ban on breeding from animals with 'lethal' genes, which could affect Dalmations, Roans and possibly Satins. The German cavy fancy was believed to be pushing such proposals, to which Mrs Mathews added her understanding that the German fancy was also proposing a ban on wrapping longhairs. The Chairman commented that it was becoming evident that the result of World War II had subsequently been overturned on appeal.

All Councillors agreed that these developments posed potentially serious threats to the viability of the cavy fancy. Accordingly it was agreed that:

- Mrs Alston, representing the BCC, Mr Oulton, representing the NCC, and Mrs Bell, representing the SCC, will meet as an 'AWA Sub-Committee' to agree a 'Code of Practice' that will contain the recommendations of the cavy fancy covering Housing, Feeding, Breeding, Showing, Transporting and Selling covies. This should form the basis for all recommendations by organisations within the cavy fancy in regard to development or interpretation of the Animal Welfare Act.
- The BCC, the NCC, the SCC and as many other clubs as possible should publish this Code of Practice on their websites. This would give any fanciers following the code a defence of 'reasonableness' if they face action under the Act. More importantly, it should form the basis of lobbying efforts to any bodies formulating secondary legislation.
- The AWA Sub-Committee will discuss the Code of Practice with Evelyn Van Vliet, who has sought to represent the UK Fancy on European issues, to seek her help in promoting the UK Cavy Fancy's views within Europe.
- Mr Payne will consider how we might lobby the RSPCA to incorporate these views into its thinking on the Act.
- Draft proposals on the 'Code of Practice' should be available at Harrogate. The Chairman will organise a brief meeting with Messrs Oulton and Payne and Mesdames Van Vliet, Alston and Bell to discuss this and to talk about further actions that might be needed. He emphasised that this was a time when the whole cavy fancy had to speak with one voice.

6. **Correspondence:** None to report.
7. **Motions of Urgency (accepted at the Chairman's discretion):** None received.
8. **Any other business:** None raised.
9. **Date and location of next meeting:** To be arranged by the Secretary at a similar time / location in 2010.