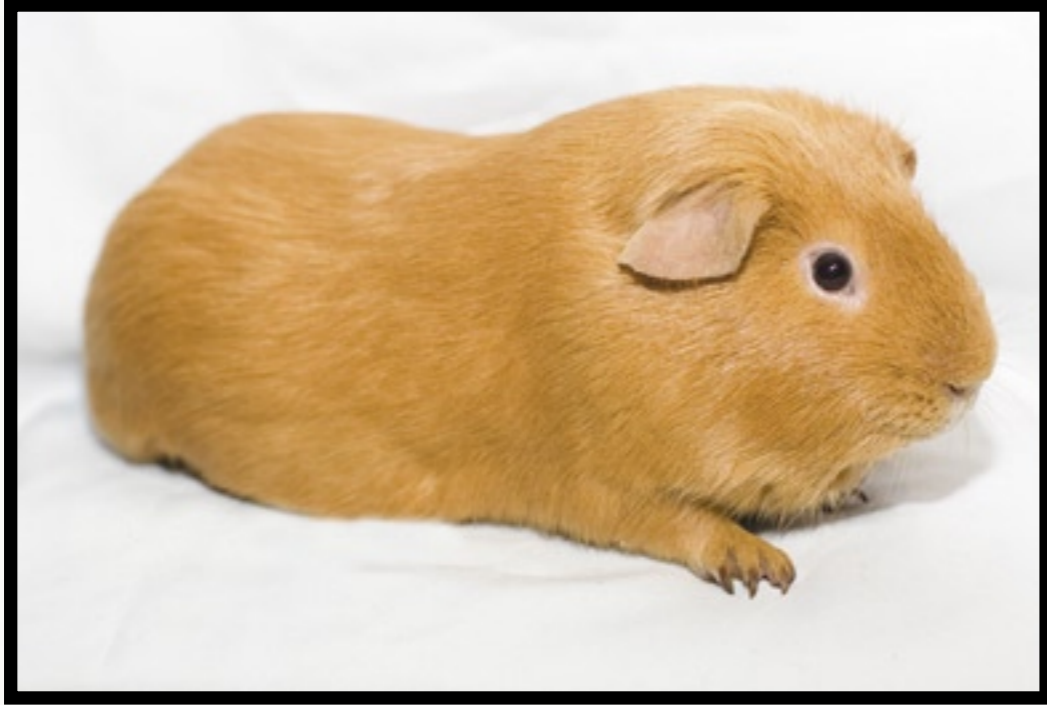


If the Condition's Not Right - Don't Show

By Kathryn McKay (Willowmist Stud) © 2013



Look at the two cavies pictured above. Neither have any glaring faults that would disqualify them from the show table. Yet one of them, even if it was the only one of its breed on the day, would more than certainly make most judges question whether to award it a Best of Breed.

Have you worked out which of the two yet? Their colour seems appropriate for their breeds, the DE Golden Satin on the right has a good degree of satinisation and the Buff Self is free from flakiness. They are both boars and as such have "boar" heads. Not something a judge will penalise them for. They are both about the same age - about intermediates. They both have shoulder development and in fact the Satin has better ears. Now what is the difference?

The Buff Self on the left is in "condition". He is carrying a good amount of weight, made up of firm muscle, not obese, but not underweight. The Satin on the right is not in "condition". He has a gaunt, almost hollow look and his head appears a bit too big for his body. He has lost weight as can be seen by the loose skin under the neck. If you pick him up he will have a floppy, empty feeling. He is not dying and he is not sick as such, but he certainly should not be presented to a judge on the show table in this condition.

Condition in the show cavy is an important part of the art of showing. The trick is to get the right amount of condition so the animal is fit and firm to handle, without being obese. They should feel heavy when you pick them up, with strong muscling. In the Australian National Cavy Council Book of Standards condition can come under its own heading or under type or presentation depending on the Breed. In Satins type is worth 18 points and is broken into head type and body type. Body type: body - to be short and cobby with very deep broad shoulders, firm, fit and of a good size appropriate to age. In Presentation in the Satin standard (worth 7 points): must be fit, clean and firm to handle. So you can see the importance of condition in the Satin standard. In the Self standard, Condition itself is worth 10 points. Condition is described as: to be fit and of good substance, with plenty of firm flesh, to have good size appropriate to age. Type, again broken into head and body type, is worth 25 points. Purely from an exhibition point of view it is important to have your animals in good condition for showing.

However it is not just about winning ribbons and Best of Breeds. If your cavy is not in good condition on show day the extra physical stress associated with showing and transporting can place its health at risk. Most cavies will drop a little in condition just from being transported to a show. That is why it is important to have your show animals in absolutely tip top condition to counteract this problem. The longer the trip the more at risk they are. Make sure they have access to food and water during the trip to the showgrounds. This is especially important if it will take more than 20 minutes or so to get there.

If you have a cavy that has lost condition the first, most important step is do not show it. Showing it puts its health at risk and you may even lose it. Missing a few shows while you feed it back to the appropriate condition and weight is the better option. Do not think that a week on a new diet will be enough time to put on enough condition to cope with the rigours of showing. It could take two to three months of feeding an appropriate diet to nurse an under conditioned cavy back into the right range for showing.

If all your cavies are looking under conditioned or you are having judges tell you that the animals need more weight on them you may need to reassess your feeding program. Feeding show cavies is not cheap. They eat a lot of food and they need to eat continually. You can't expect to have your cavies in condition on a couple of carrots a day. The other issue is if you have a cavy that is underweight check that it doesn't have teeth problems or some other medical condition that is stopping it eating properly. If it has cage mates check that it is not being bullied and prevented from accessing enough food. Also make sure you are feeding your cavy and not any worms it is harbouring by administering an appropriate worming treatment.

A good daily diet for a show cavy might include:



Plenty of Fresh Grass (the more the better)
Grassy Hay
Mixed Fresh Vegetables (a cup per cavy)
Good pellet/mix (a cup per cavy)
Handful micronized lupins
Unlimited access to fresh drinking water



You know you are feeding enough if there is a small amount of dry food/mix left over every day. If the food bowls have been licked clean you need to feed more.

