

# QUARANTINE

## Introducing new cavies into your stud

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*Quarantine is a serious issue which many people don't understand. Any animal introduced into a shed, from any source, should be isolated to a certain degree. Any source*



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*means any pigs which are coming into your shed – whether they are new stock bought from a show, another breeder or a pet shop; or whether you bred them and they are coming back to your stud for temporary minding; or you are minding another fancier's stock while they are away on holiday. Borrowed boars or sows for breeding or cavies you are in the process of transporting to another fancier should not be introduced into your shed right away, either. Really, any cavy which does not already live in your shed, should be considered 'introduced'. Technically, all of your show animals should be kept separately from your other stock because they may bring something 'nasty' home from a show – whether you can see signs of it or not.*

*Whether to quarantine and to what degree you take it is a personal decision. This article by Jennie Johnston may help you decide on which management practice to employ. I personally quarantine all animals coming into my shed – even if they look healthy – for at least one week, usually two. I try to keep my breeding stock separate from my show stock and I bear in mind two things which my vet, Dr Sandy Hume, advises: (1) mixing the ages of stock throughout the shed is putting the older animals at risk, because it is usually the youngsters who get sick first; and (2) I don't treat for mites (i.e. use Ivomec or dip) on a routine basis, but only if I see symptoms. Ed [Jo Livingston].*

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**B**RINGING NEW cavies into your stud from any source carries with it an element of risk, but for the majority of breeders and exhibitors it is necessary to have new blood on a regular basis.

Many breeders would say that they only buy animals from reputable studs and therefore don't bother with quarantining the new stock, and frankly, if it looks healthy and free from parasites, neither do I. I do treat the newcomers with Ivomec, just to be sure, as by the time symptoms of Sellnick mite are obvious you already have a big problem. I admit though, that I am taking a big risk.

At the moment serious diseases that could be spread to your animals seem to be rare in Australia, and most carry obvious symptoms, but that may not remain the case. There are serious diseases that cavies can contract, some of which are transferable to humans or other pets, that could quite conceivably become a problem in Australia. Breeders would be wise to adopt a quarantine policy in their

stud for all new stock to protect their animals.

### Buying stock

The first step in disease control would obviously be only to buy animals that are healthy in appearance, with no hair loss, diarrhoea or discharge from nose or eyes. Any raspy breathing should be treated with suspicion and underweight animals should be bypassed – their immunity may well be

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compromised. It is a good policy to buy from reputable breeders, and if you are unsure about a stud, ask around in your club if their animals are healthy. I would also be hesitant about buying animals sight unseen unless you have someone knowledgeable to check them out for you first. You should really wash your hands and change your clothing after handling new stock – before handling your own, but as this is not practical at a show, in general I would say, if there is anything slightly wrong with anything you pick up at the show, wash your hands well with soap and hot water (or use the antibacterial hand gel supplied at the judging table) before handling your own animals or anyone else's! Avoid handling strange animals close to your body as your clothing can carry some diseases.

### Bringing them home

It is unwise to put new stock in the same carry cage as your own animals – even more unwise to put them in the same compartment to bring them home. If you know you are collecting animals, bring a spare cage for each new animal, unless they are from the same stud, and keep them separate from your own animals. This is even more important if you are collecting stock for someone else from a stud you are not familiar with.

When you get the new animals home, I would treat them with Ivomec, unless you know that this has been done recently, then follow this up in 10 day's time. As soon as possible, wash the cavy in an antiparasitic, anti fungal wash and at the same time check it over carefully.

### Quarantine in the caviary

New stock should be kept in an area completely separate from the main caviary. There should not be air flow from the isolation area into the main stock. Ideally, new animals should be kept in separate cages that are of a material that is easy to clean, such as plastic. Timber is impossible to clean properly if you get a contagious disease in a new animal. Water bottles and feed dishes should be kept separate from the others and washed in a different area.

I would recommend wearing disposable gloves when



## ISOLATION AREA NECESSITIES

- » **For cleaning** of cages, bowls, etc.: products such as 'Imaverole', 'Halamid' and bleach. Follow the directions on the product.
- » **For hand washing:** 'Hibiclens' is an excellent product, used with a nail brush to scrub the hands.
- » **Disposable gloves for handling sick cavies.** And possibly a plastic apron to go over your clothes.
- » **Heat source** for sick animals, i.e. a temporary incubator or hot water bottle wrapped in thick towel. **A**

handling a cavy with a contagious disease. It is easier to remove the gloves than to try and scrub the hands.

Most importantly feed and attend to your own animals completely before you attend to the quarantine area. Do not go back and forth between them and your own animals.

If you take a bucket of feed into the quarantine area, leave it there. Feed dishes and water bottles should be able to

be sterilised, or thrown away in the event that you have a problem. Porous food bowls such as terracotta are not suitable for this situation.

I would be inclined to keep the new animals separate for at least a month before adding them into the new stock. This may not be long enough for some diseases, so if there is an outbreak of a disease in Australia, be advised by your vet or agricultural authority of the appropriate quarantine time.

If you suspect that one of your own animals is ill, it will be necessary to isolate it. If you don't separate the cavy from your others, there is a chance that the disease will have spread before the symptoms are diagnosed. It is much easier to treat one cavy than the entire shed. The same rules apply for contact. Feed and attend to the healthy cavies before the sick one and do not go back and forth between them.

### Sterilization of equipment

In the event that you have a sick cavy in your isolation area, you will need to sterilize, clean or throw out the equipment that has been used during treatment.

Water bottles and food bowls can be sterilized by boiling for 2-5 minutes, as can the rubber stoppers and tubes. Baby sterilising solutions are suitable for most glass and plastics - check the products for suitability for other materials. **A**