

CAVIES and REPRODUCTION

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21 Shilling Cavies

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Female baby cavies are capable of conceiving at a very early age. Three weeks old is quite normal. Do not house baby females with an adult boar as they are promiscuous and can become pregnant. Male baby cavies have a juvenile impotency and are not capable of fertilisation until 10 weeks old or later. Yes, they display sexual behaviour but cannot reproduce.

A sow will come on heat every 15 to 17 days throughout her life. Apart from when she gives birth. She then has a post partum oestrus about 2 hours after her babies are born. After that she will not come on heat until 21 to 23 days and will then recommence the cycle of 15 to 17 days.

The gestation period is 63 to 72 days. Round about 10 weeks which is longer than a cat or a dog. The babies are born as miniature adults and are seen cleaning themselves at birth also eating on hay or similar. Mother's milk is only essential for 4 days but desirable for longer. A period of 2 weeks or more is strongly advised depending on the progress and weight of the pup. 200 to 250gm is recommended. At 3 weeks old the pup should be around three times its birth weight.

PARTURITION

Beware of allowing a sow to give birth to her babies if she is in with other pregnant sows. The other sows will assist with the cleaning up of the newborn pups and will therefore ingest the hormone oxytocin. This hormone is in the membranes (birth sac) of the newborn and is nature's way of producing contractions for birth and for establishing lactation. If pregnant sows get a dose of this hormone they will likely come into premature labour.

Also note the fact that sows have a post partum oestrus so if a boar is present at parturition she will almost certainly become pregnant again.