

GROOMING TIPS FOR WINTER WASHING.

By: Melanie Barnes

I have been a professional pet groomer for fifteen years, Along with being a cavy exhibitor for over 30 years. I can share some of my knowledge to help with cavy grooming.

Many exhibitors use an excuse that it was too cold to wash their cavies for the show. Grooming is a very important part in showing cavies, presentation makes up for a lot of points the judges are looking for.

In summer its OK to put your cavy back in the pen a little damp with just a towel dry after washing, but you risk your cavy getting a chill doing so in the colder months. A simple way to dry your cavies is to purchase a small fan heater. I have purchased some for around \$20 from Big W and Mitre10. After washing place your cavies in a carry box. The Garry Johnson style (metal) ones are best as the warm air can rotate around and dry all the pigs from the one heater. Place the heater in front and place the towel over the top of the cage. This is important as it keeps the warm air in the cage! I like to use this method and I find by washing all my cavies one after the other, that by the time I have finished shampooing the 4th cavy the 1st cavy is dry enough to return to the cage.

TIPS Choose a pet shampoo that is soap free, these are gentler to the coat and skin and are easier to rinse out. Shampoo can be diluted before use, use an empty plastic bottle. (soft drink ones are great with the pop top, or just pierce a small hole in the lid). Dilute some shampoo



before use with a little warm water. (Don't keep diluted shampoo – it will go off) Use 2 tubs when washing cavies – one with water to wet them in and the second to stand them in while shampooing. Some dirty- greasy cavies will need 2 washes. A quick rinse in between is all you need then lather up again! Always rinse the shampoo out of your cavies coat thoroughly. If you don't have a shower type rinse nozzle where you bathe make sure you rinse the cavy twice in at least two tubs of clean water. Shampoo residue in the coat will take longer to dry and leave a film on the coat that will make it dull and take away the silky feel.

If using a hair dryer to dry cavies, always use the low heat setting. The hot setting is too hot for animal hair and will damage and burn the coat. I found a hair dryer stand to hold my hair dryer. For me this is great to have both hands free for holding the cavy and to be able to dry and brush the coat. Always brush - blow dry the coat in the direction of the hair growth for straight coats and against the lie of the hair for rex type coats. For smooth coats a bristle brush will “polish” the hair as you brush it, giving that extra sheen for the show table.

