

New Varieties in Australia

how do they become recognised.

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Many fanciers ask, "How does a new breed become recognised?" It surprises most who ask that the Australian National Cavy Council (ANCC) has a process for this to occur. This process has been in place since the Standards Review Panel (SRP) was established in 2001. While the ANCC distributed the information about the SRP and its role to all affiliated clubs and councils, that information was not distributed to all cavy fanciers very well. The purpose of this article is to try to correct this situation.

New breeds will essentially come from two sources; 1) they will be genuine mutations, or 2) they will be recombinations of existing genes to form new varieties. Examples from the past of mutations that have come to be recognised breeds include, Crested, Satins, Rex and Self Slate. Examples of breeds that have become recognised after genetic recombinations include, Argente's, Texel and Self Saffron. Because of the two different ways that new breeds can occur, the SRP has two pathways in which new breeds can be developed. One for genuine mutations and another for genetic recombinations.

Genuine mutations

Genuine mutations need to be a distinct variety with no possibility of confusing it with another breed, particularly poor examples of other breeds. The genotype of the new breed must be understood and the gene(s) responsible for the new breed explained. For example a mutation at a previously unknown locus, such as occurred with Crested, Satin and Rex, or it may be a new mutation at a known locus, such as Black and Tan at the Agouti locus or Self Slate at the Pink eye locus. The information should identify through breeding records if the gene is dominant or recessive or if it is co-dominant, such as Self Cream, Dalmation or Roan. It also needs to provide information such as whether it is lethal if it is co-dominant. A most important consideration to the fancy is that it must be developed to a level where it is consistent with the expectation of exhibition quality breeds.

Recombining existing genes

New breeds can be developed by recombining existing genes. Often after mutations are established there are a number of new breeds developed in this way. An example is where the Rex mutation was applied to Longhaired breeds. From these recombinations we now have Texels, Alpacas and English Merino's. Because we already understand the genes involved in recombinations the process is a little more straight forward for these types of new breeds. In the past these types of new breeds have been quite readily adopted in Australia and it is likely that this will continue to the case in the future. While adoption of such breeds is more straightforward there is an onus on judges to ensure that breeds that become recognised in this way are consistent with the expectations of exhibition quality breeds.

The road to recognition

There are four steps involved in the development of a new breed; 1) Working Title, 2) Developing Breed, 3) Guide standard, and 4) Full Standard. In the first two steps they are unstandardised, in that there is no formal standard by which the breed is judged. The latter two steps are standardised, in that there is an accepted standard by which the breed is judged.

Unstandardised

Working Title: To gain a working title a breed must meet three criteria:

The phenotype of the breed must be distinct from all other recognised breeds;

The breeders that are promoting the breed must outline the objectives for the breed and the basis used to form those objectives. They must also present a working standard to reflect those objectives;

Demonstrate through breeding records and physical evidence that the breed, breeds true to type, or is co-dominant.

Developing Breed: When a breed is recognised with a Working Title the next step that breeders face is to work toward being recognised as a Developing Breed. There are also three criteria that need to be met to satisfy this level of recognition:

The breeders must present a set of guidelines to judge the cavies by, which are accepted by the SRP;

Demonstrate that the objectives set for the working title have been met;

Identify the gene(s) that determine the breed. Or demonstrate that the breed is produced in a predictable Mendelian manner.

Standardised

Guide Standard: If and when the SRP is convinced that the breed is worthy it will be awarded a Guide Standard. This will be achieved by the breed demonstrating its credentials in the unstandardised classes and by improving in both quality and quantity. As the name implies there will be a standard by which the cavies are judged, although no points will be allocated to the criteria at this stage. It is at this stage that the breed goes into competition against other breeds within its group and must demonstrate that it can compete with them. Breeders and judges need to fine-tune the standard to prepare for a full standard to be awarded.

Full Standard: To gain a Full Standard a breed must meet the following criteria:

Has been a guide standard for a minimum period of three years;

Have an identified genotype(s);

Demonstrate that the breed is of a standard to compete successfully with other fully standardised breeds.

Each progression in the process toward becoming a recognised breed must be recommended by the SRP to the Annual Delegates meeting of the ANCC. The delegates will vote at the meeting to either accept or reject the recommendation. The recommendation, with the reasons outlining it, must be distributed to the states for consideration, 60 days prior to the Annual Delegates Meeting. Any questions or points of confusion must be directed to the SRP through a State Council or its equivalent.

Unstandardised Classes

To enable breeds that are recognised as having a Working Title or Developing Breed the 2001 Annual Delegates Meeting established an Unstandardised Class at the National Show. If the number of entries permit this may be split into separate classes. To support this move by the ANCC to provide this pathway it is hoped that all affiliated clubs and councils will also provide an Unstandardised Class so that the progress of worthy new breeds is not stifled within your state.