

YOUNG CAVIES

My start in the fancy

Helen Hopkins from Grantham in Lincolnshire, the Abyssinian Cavy Club's most consistent and successful exhibitor of the past few years writes about her baptism to the Cavy Fancy.

"It was in the summer of 1993 when I looked after my friend's guinea pigs for two weeks that I found myself wanting some of my own. I enjoyed looking after them so much that I pestered my Mum and Dad to let me have one. My Mum didn't want me to have one as she wasn't very keen on them. Finally my pestering worked and the next Saturday we set off to our local pet shop. There we purchased an Abyssinian Brindle boar which I called Bobbles. My Dad made me a cage for Bobbles and my Aunt bought me a book about all guinea pigs, it said they got lonely on their own. So then we purchased another Abyssinian, this time a Roan sow which I called Freda, soon there were seven, plus more!

In May 1994, I joined the Abyssinian Cavy Club. May was my first show at Desborough, I entered two Abys in the Pet section. One of them won a rosette for Best Pet. Tina Tennant was then the secretary of Desborough, as she lived at Oakham. I received my Abyssinian Cavy Club handbook at this show from Tina Tennant. My parents and I met Julia Robinson at this show, who pointed out essentials for showing Abys in the purebred section, as opposed to the pet section. The remainder of 1994 I concentrated on local shows. In 1995 I went to about half of the Aby shows and won the Junior Shield at the Adult Stock show for Best Junior Exhibitor. I didn't go to the Young Stock Show. That year I also won the Junior Points Competition.

In 1996 I decided to concentrate on the Aby shows rather than the local shows. That year I went to all the Aby points shows except Devon and again won the Junior Points Competition and several of the open sections, namely the Self, AOC and Novice. I have received help from Julie Robinson and still do, also Ian McQuire of Lincoln who stopped breeding Abys in 1994 and from whom I purchased some stock and cages etc.

My Mum has now got used to the guinea pigs and likes them as much as I do. I have two brothers who do not show Abys themselves but they do enjoy going to the shows. My parents are willing to take me, but my Mum and Dad sometimes have to stay at home with my brothers as they have hobbies as well.

I like my guinea pigs very much, they all have names and are fed with good greens as I work on a vegetable stall on Grantham Market. My Mum's favourite guinea pig would have to be Marlin (an Adult Self) as she saved him from dying when he was born. I let my Mum name him for, this she called him Marlin after her guitar. He is often played to by this guitar as my Mum is a music teacher. Many other Aby breeders have helped me and still do, and I field if I (or my parents) ask questions to any member, including judges, that they are all very helpful with lots of advice, especially the committee members.

I have had a few disappointments along the way, but it would be nice if a few more Junior members were regularly at the shows, as at the moment there are not many. Generally the shows are well run, not too expensive, with nice rosettes, placement cards and prize money. So pester your parents to take you to shows!"