

Ideas for Cavy Learning Activities

Advanced Level

Need more ideas for your cavy project? There are hundreds of things you can do! This list is organized by topics that match the chapters in the 4-H *Cavy Resource Handbook*. You are being asked to complete **at least five** activities each year. Use this list and your imagination, and then write your ideas in your *Cavy Project and Record Book*. Have fun!

General

- Develop three skillathon station activities related to cavies.
- Create a library on cavy literature including magazines, books, websites, 4-H material, etc. Make these available to new or younger 4-H cavy project members.
- Visit an elementary school with your cavy. Using visuals, discuss how youth can join 4-H and take cavy projects.
- Create a blog about your cavy and update it throughout your project year.
- Start a 4-H cavy Facebook page.
- Join an online discussion group to discuss your cavy with other cavy fanciers.
- Become a 4-H PetPAL. Teach your cavy to pass the Socialized PetPALS Test. Visit people in healthcare facilities with your cavy.

Animal Care and Well-Being

- Develop at least three animal care activities related to cavies.
- Visit a pet supply store and make a list of all of the equipment, supplies, and food available for cavies. Present this information at a club meeting.
- Observe your cavy 20 minutes a day for one week. Make these observations at various times and under different circumstances (cavy in cage; cavy in exercise area, cavy on show table, cavy wanting food, etc.) Chart (1) the kinds and number of vocalizations during that period, the circumstances, and the cavy's body posture. Share at a club meeting.
- Record your cavy making different types of vocalizations. Define each type of vocalization. Share at a club meeting. Edit and post on YouTube.
- Make a video of the proper way to handle and examine a cavy. Post on YouTube.

History

- Learn the biodata of cavies. Discuss why knowing this is important.
- Select six biodata you feel are most important to know and explain why.
- Select three references to learn more about the history of cavies. Compile the information from these references and add to what is printed in the Resource Handbook.

Anatomy

- Learn about your cavy's digestive system, design a visual of the steps in digestion of feed, and present it at your 4-H club meeting.
- Create a poster or PowerPoint slide set of cavy body postures, describing each one. Show this at a club meeting or cavy clinic.



- Compare the skeletal anatomy of a cavy and rabbit. List the similarities and differences. Describe how you would know a cavy skeleton from a rabbit skeleton.

Selection

- Compare and contrast the hair coat of a normal coated cavy, a satin cavy, a texel and a teddy. Chart the similarities and the differences.
- Learn the scientific classification of cavies.
- Visit a cavy breeder. Discuss with him or her how to select for different temperaments, behaviors, colors, coat patterns, textures, etc.

Housing and Equipment

- Organize a community service project to make cavy cages (using cubes and Coroplast) and cavy toys to donate to a local humane society or animal shelter.
- Help another member design a cavy-proof area in his/her house as well as an outdoor supervised exercise area.

Records

- Teach another 4-H member how to ear tag a cavy.
- Design a record keeping system for your cavy that complements the 4-H project records.
- Help a younger 4-H member complete his/her cavy records by offering recordkeeping explanations, encouraging timely and accurate data input, and answering questions. Review these project records after completion.

Nutrition

- Describe three diets NOT recommended to feed cavies. Describe three diets recommended to feed cavies. Discuss the nutritional differences.
- Compare the nutrients in grass hay versus alfalfa hay. Discuss which is best to feed cavies and under what circumstances.
- Research guinea pig feedstuff on the Internet. Select three different rations and three different hays. Compare and contrast each type and defend your decision of which you would feed to your cavy.
- Read your cavy's food label. Make a list of all the ingredients included in the diet. Select five ingredients and research the nutritive value of each.

Health

- Select six diseases and/or health problems of cavies and learn more about them. Research these conditions in relation to your cavy.
- Research information about streptococcus and staphylococcus bacteria and discuss how to reduce susceptibility of cavies to these bacteria.
- Make a video presentation (YouTube, PowerPoint) discussing how to ensure a cavy stays healthy.

Reproduction

- Describe the two breeding programs commonly used to produce cavies with the desired qualities to meet the ARBA Standard of Perfection.
- Study and learn information about cavy genetics from the ACBA Newsletter and Guidebook. Make a presentation on cavy genetics at a club meeting.

- Develop a cavy genetics skillathon station. Present this at a 4-H club meeting. Teach others about cavy genetics from information in this skillathon station.
- Select one boar and one sow. Develop a chart listing the F₁ and F₂ generation's possible genotypes and phenotypes.

Grooming and Showing

- Help organize a cavy showmanship clinic and/or contest.
- Teach cavy handling and showmanship at a clinic.
- If cavies are not evaluated at your county fair or at pre-fair judging, work with your Extension professionals and Fair Board members to begin a cavy show at your fair.
- Name and describe ten ARBA cavy faults and ten disqualifications from competition in an ARBA show.
- Make a video of proper cavy showmanship techniques. Post on YouTube.
- Interview an ARBA cavy judge to find out how they evaluate cavies. Follow up with a thank you note.

Marketing

- Design a caviary. Discuss why you selected a specific number of sows and boars, and your plans for marketing the offspring and cull animals.
- Develop a small business plan to see how you could raise cavies for profit.
- Marketing cavies for research can be a controversial topic. Investigate using animals in research and document pros and cons.
- Facilitate a discussion at a 4-H meeting about marketing cavies for research. Summarize members' beliefs and opinions.

Careers

- Interview someone who has a career in the animal sciences field, not interviewed at the intermediate level. Report on what you found at a club meeting. Send them a thank you note.
- Select and research three careers in animal sciences not researched at the intermediate level.
- Visit two colleges/universities that have animal sciences departments or animal sciences courses electives. Compare and contrast the offerings of each.