

under the sun

Peter Cottontail is Ideal As Pet Or Food

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

If secretaries, fish and pizzas have their own special weeks, it should come as no surprise that we have just lived through National Rabbit Week.

What might be news is the superior quality of this floppy-eared animal as a pet, a dinner entree and a show beauty.

Pam Bates of Maple Creek community and Linda Canterbury of Shallotte are among enthusiasts of both rabbits and guinea pigs, also called cavy. Both are members of the Coastal Rabbit and Cavy Breeders' Association that exhibited both animals last weekend at

Independence Mall in Wilmington.

A few minutes spent touching, holding or watching the gentle, fluffy creatures could turn you into a rabbit-lover, as Pam and Linda have become. On display at the mall were all sizes, colors and fur types, ranging from an adorable Netherland dwarf, about the size of a man's hand to a brown and white rabbit as large as a dog, collapsed lazily in her cage. At 17 pounds she was decidedly overweight, said Pam. "It's because she's always kept inside," she explained.

Pam got hooked on rabbits after she gave two of them to her daughter. "Then I heard about shows for rab-

bits and decided to take ours to one of them."

Now, a year later, she has 100 rabbits and two awards, and is active in the CRCBA, organized last year. It meets monthly in Bolivia at the Government Center to give members a chance to share information about rabbit breeding and showing, as well the raising of cavy or guinea pigs.

The organization includes members from as far away as Myrtle Beach, S.C. and Fayetteville, but of the 68 members, about 25 live in Brunswick County.

"There are several reasons we like to breed rabbits," Pam explained. "We raise them to show, to sell as meat and to enjoy as pets."

Pam leans toward show animals. "I just paid \$100 for a wooly, and wouldn't bring one that valuable to this exhibit," she said, explaining that the crowd of strangers and being confined in cages smaller than they're accustomed to is stressful for the rabbits.

She looks forward to showing her new pride and joy, perhaps at the national convention in Ohio in November. "We're planning a show in Brunswick County soon, too," she added. "People will come from all over the state, and we'll have 700-800 rabbits."

The animals are an ideal food source, Pam said. "Rabbits are lower in cholesterol than any other meat, the lowest in calories, and are high in protein. They're all white meat and taste like chicken. There's a big demand for them now; we sell them to a packing plant in Pageland, S.C., because there are no plants in this state. You can make money from rabbits. A doe (female) can be bred every 30 days."

Pam claims rabbits make the best pets, too. "They're easy to handle and have real personalities, and they're easier to take care of than dogs or cats because they don't need much food and you don't have to walk

them. They get trained to a litter pan like cats do, but are best kept outside."

The menu for rabbits is not quite like the diet we remember from the "Peter Rabbit" story. It is not lettuce and other garden goodies that nourish them, but pellets, sunflower seeds and vitamins. "Only this special rabbit food should be given to them," Pam insisted. This food is relatively inexpensive. A 25-pound bag of pellets that costs about \$3.50 will last one rabbit six weeks.

This animal has endless virtues to recommend it. Even its droppings are an asset to the lawn, Pam said. "They don't decompose for a year and don't burn the grass. They just keep on fertilizing it."

The organization and last week's exhibit recognizing National Rabbit Week also focuses on another favorite pet, the guinea pig. Some who raise both, like Linda, prefer the smaller cavy.

While rabbits come in over 50 different breeds, there are only ten breeds of guinea pigs. "This is the perfect 'first pet' for elderly people, apartment dwellers, or anyone who wants to devote minimum care to an animal," proclaims the National Rabbit Week booklet distributed at the mall.

The little balls of fur are gentle and placid, tolerating almost any handling by children. A cavy breeder at the exhibit told of taking hers to a local school where she put on a "guinea pig wedding," with the animals dressed like bride, groom and minister. "Both children and animals had a good time," she reported.

Most members of CRCBA have some of both animals, but plans are being made for a separate organization for cavy breeders.

Those interested in raising either rabbits or guinea pigs can attend the next CRCBA meeting August 3 at 3:30 p.m. in the Government Center in Bolivia.



GABRIEL, A FRENCH ANGORA rabbit, is shown proudly by his owner, Pam Bates, at a recent exhibit celebrating National Rabbit Week.

Summer Breezes

With the hot, humid weather of the last several weeks those along the beaches can appreciate the meaning of those summer breezes. Though the air being moved is hot, the winds bring relief from the unbearable heat by blowing across our bodies.

In wooded areas we know we find a cooler environment not only because of the shade formed by the trees and shrubs but because of the process of transpiration in the trees. As the leaves lose moisture to the heat, a cooling takes place causing air to circulate. Likewise, large paved areas such as shopping centers and airports become heated faster than the surrounding grassed and wooded areas nearby. As the pavement absorbs heat from the sunshine, heat



Bill Faver

rises and pulls in cooler air, creating an updraft which helps bring in the summer breezes.

On the oceanfront with no trees and only beach grass, there is little to protect the sands and the critters from the intense heat. The land masses change temperature more quickly than the ocean. When this happens, we have land breezes or still mornings gradually increasing

to ocean breezes when the land heats up. As the day progresses, the breezes often intensify as the heated air rises over land and pulls in cooler air from the ocean. These air movements help create our usual summer breezes.

And, of course, we have breezes from the thunderstorms, bermuda highs, and even tropical storms out at sea. When thunderstorms and tropical storms are close to us the "breezes" can become damaging winds capable of serious destruction.

We welcome the summer breezes to a hot and dry land. Our peak-load air conditioning experiences rescue us from the heat out there in 95-100 degree weather. Our summer breezes make it bearable when we do venture out in the sunshine.

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