

Judges Report – Chieveley October 13th 2019

Judge : Siân Allcoat

What a start to the day. I was very much looking forward to judging the show but within a few minutes of leaving, I knew it wasn't going to be an easy journey down to Chieveley! It was absolutely hammering it down and the rain was relentless. Luckily, I am someone who hates to be late so I had allowed plenty of extra time but that was soon eaten up when I joined the M40 just 15 miles into my 80-mile journey. On the slip road, just two cars in front of me, was a motorway officer's car and they immediately set up a rolling roadblock. For about 12 miles we went along at 50 mph and then came to a stop at the accident clean up site. After about 25 minutes of being stationary, they came to the first cars in each of the three lanes (which included me), to inform us they were not moving the traffic yet but they were going to drive closer to the accident site (which was visible) to see what progress was being made. Off they went, myself and the driver in the outside lane patiently stayed put as per their instructions, but the driver in the inside lane followed the motorway officer's car. Of course, this resulted in lots of drivers swapping into the inside lane and there was some beeping of horns at myself and the outside lane driver, who had done what we had been instructed! It didn't give the lane hoppers much of an advantage, at best they gained all of about 15 seconds since they had to stop again! Of course, by this time I was getting rather concerned. The satnav now said I should arrive at 10.38 a.m.. I made a call to Stephen explaining the situation, and of course, as usual, he was very understanding (he had had a nightmare journey from Devon as well). A few minutes afterwards we were on our way and I tried to make up lost time in the driving rain. Just 20 minutes later on a dual carriageway, I saw the two cars in front brake and swerve, only to find there was debris strewn across the road, it appeared to be metal that had come from a damaged central barrier. It was a bit like a video game (which I am a useless at), but luckily, I managed to avoid it and eventually arrived at the hall "shaken but not stirred" and thankfully prior to the animals being benched.

The number of exhibitors was small (4 main bench and 1 novice) but I have to say they had made a grand effort in mustering up as many chinchillas as possible for the show. Well done and thank you! In total there were 49 animals and it was great to see lots of non-exhibiting spectators, including many new faces, so the show actually had a very good feel about it. At least I wasn't judging to an empty hall and the audience were encouraged to ask questions, comment and talk, which thankfully they did.

We started with a class of Medium Dark Young Females. The 1st ribbon went to Heather Boncey for an animal that was well prepared despite being out of condition, it was reasonably blue in colour and on balance was the best overall animal in the class. It was good enough to go on to be the group winner. The second went to Andrew Lee and, while it was bluer than the 1st ribbon, it was small for its age and it also had a very small area of fur on the back that was bent over at the tips rather than being upright. The 3rd, again from Andrew had reasonable colour but I would have liked it to be clearer, it was of decent size and conformation, but had soft fur that was lying down. The HC went to Stephen Helmore, unfortunately, the chin was very out of condition with choppy fur and she was also down in colour.

We then moved on to a class of Medium Young Standard Females. This time Stephen came out top with a young female that was in good condition and had been well prepared. It had nice strong upright fur although the belly could have been whiter. It was good enough to go on to win the Reserve position in the group (RBYSF). Congratulations to Stephen. The 2nd, 3rd and HC were all from Andrew. The 2nd was in fact a brighter, bluer chin than the 1st but the fur was very soft on the side. However, at 4½ months old this could somewhat change. The 3rd was unfortunately in poor show condition, it needed more veiling and the fur was breaking quite badly around the hips. While Andrew had done the best he could with the HC chin, it was wedgy and down in colour being somewhat casty.

In total there were 13 young standard males, 5 in the medium dark class and 8 in the dark. We again started with the Medium Darks which was a class of 5. Andrew got 1st, 2nd, 3rd and one HC with Stephen also getting a HC. The 1st was somewhat on the small size for its age, but made up for this since it was a nice clear blue colour, it was in show condition and had been well prepared. In Fact, it was good enough to take Best Young Standard Male and Best Young Standard. The 2nd had reasonable to good colour, had been well prepared and was of acceptable, but not good, size and conformation. The veiling was somewhat lacking in the hip areas. The 3rd was again of good colour and had a nice white belly and while the conformation was o.k., it was far too small for its age which meant it could not be placed higher in the class. Andrew's other chin in the class had reasonable conformation and size, but the fur was breaking on the hips. The HC from Stephen was an overall decent chin, however, it just needed to be brighter and bluer.

The biggest class of the day was the Dark Young Standard Males, totalling 8 animals. To be honest it was one of the more challenging types of classes to judge, with no animal being outstanding good or outstandingly bad, versus others in the class. Given, they were all young chinchillas, condition and how they develop and grow could change how they are placed versus each other in future shows. After much deliberation, the winner of the class came from Andrew for what was the marginally best overall animal in the class, having no major faults. It had reasonable colour, fur density, size conformation etc.. It was what I would describe as a good overall chin and if it had been a female, based on how it presented itself on the day, it would be worth breeding with. This chin went on the take Reserve Best Young Standard Male and Reserve Best Standard. The 2nd chin was again a decent animal and was in fact brighter than the winner, however, the fur was soft on the hip. The third also had reasonable colour but again, like the 2nd ribbon winner the fur was soft and open on the hips.

Then onto the adult females we went, a class of 4 all of which were in the dark phase. The 1st and 2nd ribbons winners were again very close. In the end the winner was Andrew for a chin in good show condition that had been well prepared. She could have been bluer/clearer but overall it was the best chin. The 2nd was from Hannah Mitchell, this chin had good fur density, was of reasonable colour but the fur was breaking up on the sides. These two chinchillas went on to win Best Adult Female and Reserve Best Adult Female. The 3rd, once more for Andrew, had somewhat weak fur which was lying flat on the sides. The colour was ok although somewhat "casty" over the tips. The HC should have won Heather a "special" award for commitment to the interest of the region! Luckily, I had my "kind judge" head on for that class so she was given an award. She was a huge (myself, the stewards, Heather and the audience estimated about 950g!), blocky, well furred female that was well out of prime and when she bent forward appeared to have a band of rubbed fur on her neck which I commented on looked as though she had been wearing a collar! After the class had been judged and

the chin was going no further, Heather admitted she was an 8 (or was it 10 years old?) female that had never bred and she had taken the collar off her the day before. It is a real pity for Heather that she hadn't bred since she obviously had quality and as I told the audience on the day, chin exhibiting is like a "beauty contest", and like people, as they get older the "hair/fur starts to dry and lack lustre" etc etc. (which I can relate to so much!). However, if she had been a human, the chin would have won a "glamorous grandmother" contest at Butlins Assuming she had been able to produce a child!

There was only one Adult Standard Male and this was an Extra Dark Male from Heather. This standard immediately stood out from the rest of the Standards in the show having lots of eye appeal, being big, blocky, with bags of good length blue fur. The down side was it was not in good show condition and the chin could have been better prepared (I later found out it had been in breeding), but the quality of the male stood out from the rest. Therefore, on balance it had to become the Best Standard in Show.

Since we had completed the standards early, we then immediately moved on to the mutation classes and as usual, we started with the Young Wilson Whites, of which there were 3. This was a class of contrasting animals. The 1st for Heather was by far the clearest animal but unfortunately lacked size for its age. The 2nd, again for Heather (same date of birth as the 1st ribbon winner so assumed to be litter mates) had good size and conformation, better fur density but was definitely down in colour, not being as clear and as "white" as the 1st ribbon winner but that is chin breeding for you! The 3rd from Andrew was of reasonable colour but unfortunately was somewhat wedgy and had soft open fur.

I then judged a class of 3 Pink White youngsters. The first ribbon went to Andrew. The chin had a nice clear colour, lovely dense fur, the conformation was acceptable but it was on the small size, however, still worthy of a 1st ribbon and Reserve Best Young Mutation. Heather was awarded a 2nd ribbon, for a good chinchilla with nice colour, that had been well prepared but was just not in top show condition. The HC also from Andrew, had reasonable size and conformation, the clarity was ok but unfortunately the fur lacked strength.

Next up was a class of Sullivan Violets, all from Andrew. These were awarded a 1st, 2nd and HC. The top in the class was an animal with a good bluish colour and a nice white belly, the fur density and strength were both reasonable. The 2nd was also relatively clear but unfortunately, the fur was soft around the hips. The HC had better density than the 2nd ribbon winner, but was not as clear with a brown tinge on the tips of the fur.

The AOC class produced two 1st; one for Andrew for a young beige and the other for Hannah for a Black Velvet. Hannah's Velvet was blue black with a lovely white belly. The fur density was good, as was the size and conformation and it had been well prepared. Andrew's Beige was well presented, with a good clear colour and a white belly. The conformation was good and although it had some baby fur around the sides, it was a very good chin that became the Best Young Mutation and Best Mutation. I awarded three 2nd ribbons, one to Andrew for a Black Pearl, one to Hannah for a Self-black and one to Heather for a Brown and White Cross. The Black Pearl had bags of eye appeal, and for a 4 month and 4-day old chin of this mutation, was a good size with ok conformation. The fur density was good and the belly, typical of this mutation, was very white and was in marked contrast to the very black fur on the back. The only reason I withheld the 1st was, that on closer inspection

when you looked across the tip of the fur there was a slight brown hue. The Brown and White Cross was also a decent animal, it was well presented and had reasonable fur density, however, although the colour was reasonable, it did not have the clarity of colour that makes a chin sparkle. Hannah's Self Black or Ebony was 5½ months old and while the clarity of colour was satisfactory, the fur strength needed to be better.

There was just one novice entry in the show and that was in the young mutation class. It was a lovely Pink White Angora from Sue Sturdy, which was well worth a 1st ribbon either in the Novice or Main Bench classes. I brought back Andrew's 1st ribbon and RBYM Pink White onto the table to compare the clarity of colour and there was nothing in it! Sue's Angora was very well presented and had obviously been kept in good clean conditions, the size and conformation were also good (I did lift the cage up to check it was weighty and not just all fur!). The fur length was fairly even except around the neck where it had a "partial" mane either side. This chin got the Judges Award for Best Novice animal and this was not due to lack of competition, but also because it deserved it on merit..... it was far from being the 1st chinchilla off the table when judging for the Best Young Mutation. Well done Sue, a great result for your first ever show!

We had a total of 8 Adult Mutations in the show, with a good class of 4 Pink Whites. The 1st in the class was a chin bred by Hannah. A really nice PW that had been well prepared and had the lovely clear bright colour we look for in this mutation. The fur was upright and dense, it having the strongest fur in the class. The only criticism was that as an adult I would have liked it to be slightly bigger, but it was of a reasonable size and well worth breeding with. The 2nd ribbon winning PW from Andrew had better size and conformation and was clear in colour, however, unlike the winner of the class the fur was weak on the sides and was breaking up over the hips. The HC again from Andrew, had dense fur that looked short. It had Ok size and conformation but needed to be clearer in colour.

The AOC Adult Mutation class produced the Best Adult Mutation and Reserve Best Mutation for Hannah for an Ebony and the Reserve Best Adult Mutation for Andrew, for a Black Velvet. Hannah's Self Black/Ebony was a beautiful animal, which had been well prepared. It was a good blocky chin with good fur density and while the colour was very dark, there was a very slight brown tinge to the tip of the fur that meant it had just started to "go over" and was therefore unable to compete for the very top prize on the day. That was a pity, since it is obviously an outstanding Ebony, however, we have to judge what we see on the day. The Black Velvet was a good chin with good density and clarity of colour including a lovely white belly. The major criticism was that it could have been better prepared but despite that, it was worthy of a 1st ribbon and a special award.

We then came onto the judging of the Grand Show Champion. Heathers Standard male was brought back onto the table, as was Andrew's young Beige. It was immediately obvious that the presentation of the standard had suffered in the intervening 3 hours or so. To be fair to everyone, it was decided to put both chins under the show lights (which often "lifts" the fur) and to draw the raffle. Five minutes or so later (by the way, I didn't win a prize in the raffle so it was obviously not "fixed"), I then had to judge and pick the GSC. My heart told me it should be the Standard since it was a superior quality chin which, now knowing its age (c. 4 years old), I am sure would have "walked it in its day"..... and it is the chin I would have chosen to take home. However, as always, judging is a balance and we have to judge what we see at the show. Andrew's Beige was well presented, clear and despite the baby fur on the hips "looked the part", while the standard had quite frankly had

“started to look its age”. We had invited questions from the audience since there were new faces there and one of the questions asked was what do you judge on, potential or actual. Of course, it is “on the day” so on balance Andrew’s Beige had to take it although that is no slight on Andrew’s animal..... it is a very good chin. So big congratulations to Andrew for a well-deserved victory, not only for achieving the GSC and other special awards, but also coming out top on the standard and mutation breeder’s awards and also the Exhibitors prize. A great result Very well done.

Congratulations to everyone who exhibited on the day, it was nice to see everyone got a “Special” award. Also, thanks to those that attended but did not exhibit, you certainly helped make it a very good day out and also to Andrew’s wife for providing a lovely lunch of Bolognese pasta (which I really enjoyed) and coping with the kitchen duties alone (which is no mean feat!)

Siân Allcoat

NCS Judge

