

Judges Report WMW Show 13th October 2024

Judge – Sian Allcoat

How lovely it was to be at the first show of the season and to see everyone after the summer break. There were lots of hugs and greetings and it was especially nice to see Anita who had been absent for much of last season due to health problems and also “young” Cameron who is returning to the show scene after a break of a few years. This had us older ladies clucking around him like mother hens!

This report will follow the format I adopted for the last 3 shows I have judged. I will not write about every chinchilla at the show although of course all received judges’ comments on the day. Personally, I find this helps with the flow of my judging and the audience does not have to wait while I make copious amounts of notes. Unfortunately, this does make me more reliant on my memory, so I am having to write this report the morning after the show while suffering with “judges’ thigh muscle strain”. However, it does not make this a short report since anyone who reads my articles in the gazette will realise, I am not known for my brevity!

Now to the judging and the animals. Since it was the start of the show season, the young standards were a bit thin on the ground, with just 6 females and 3 males. However, there were some very high-quality animals amongst them, with Kerry Bradburn and Andrew Lee getting firsts in each of the different colour phases in the young female groups. Kerry’s very young (a week under 5 months) medium dark female stood out from the group for its clarity, blueness and lovely silky fur. This chin took its first step towards the top by becoming Best Young Standard Female with Kerry’s dark young female, which had loads of eye appeal, coming in behind it as the Reserve.

Just three young standard males, 2 main bench animals from Kerry and 1 novice from Holly Fowler. All three were awarded firsts! The main bench entries from Kerry were, as you would expect, well prepared, blue, clear, well furred chinchillas. It was lovely to see a bright, medium colour phased male winning against the darker colour phases and in fact that chinchilla not only got Best Young Standard Male but also Reserve Best Young Standard behind her medium dark young female, which was a bit sharper.

Holly’s medium dark male was obviously well handled and loved and was prepared as best as it could be on the day. The male did have quality though in terms of blueness and density and therefore, I was able to overlook the condition and was still able to award it a 1st. Congratulations Holly!

We then moved onto the adult females, which were the biggest group in the show with 16 entries. There was quality there, but probably because of all the wet weather we have been having recently, many were struggling in terms of condition. This was particularly the case in the class of 6 mediums, so I had to withhold the 1st and 2nd ribbons, with the top award in the colour phase being a 3rd for Andrew for a chin with qualities but suffering from poor show condition like all the other females in the class. There were two firsts for Kerry in the Medium Dark and Dark classes. Both were very nice chins. but the Dark came out on top in this section since it was a large all-round excellent female that had a balance of qualities. Kerry’s medium dark 1st ribbon winner was then beaten to Reserve Best Adult Female by Denise Oaten’s dark female that came in as a second in its class to the winner of the group. It was another good all-round female, so well done to Denise.

Next were 7 Adult Standard Males with Kerry getting firsts with all three of her entries, all being lovely chins. The standout male was the extra dark D2 who was flashy, clear and blue with lovely dense strong fur. As I pointed out on the day, with the extra darks it is difficult to prepare them so none of the underfur is showing through the tipping, especially when they rub against the show cage.

However, with this chin the veiling was so complete and the fur strength so good, there was not a hint of it.

Of course, this exceptional chinchilla won Best Adult Standard Male and Best Adult Standard and then came up against Kerry's young female for the Best Standard award. This was a judge's nightmare since they were two very different animals, but equally as good as each other. The adult male being "complete" while the just under 5-month-old female being exceptional, but still obviously a baby. Our registrar Andrew Lee immediately offered me a coin to toss to see which would be the victor, it really was that close! After a few minutes of deliberation, I was almost tempted to take up his offer. The female still had a small amount of baby fur by her back legs but that cannot be considered a fault in such a young chin, however, she was very blue. At the end of the day, I had to make a decision and by the narrowest of margins the young female won Best Standard and the adult male got Reserve. The other two NCS judges at the show later told me that one would have gone with one and the other with the other, so you can so see how close it was!

We then moved onto the young mutations, a total of 12 animals with a class of Beige and a class of Wilson Whites; the others falling into the Any Other Colour (AOC) class. The 3 Beige were a decent group of very similar all round good chins, with Andrew taking 1st and 3rd and Joanne Rycroft in the middle with a 2nd. Unfortunately, in the Wilson White class I had to withhold the 1st and 2nd ribbons since the animals were down in colour and did not possess the clear, blue "Persil" white fur we look for in this mutation.

The AOC class of 7 rendered up only one 1st and that was for Kerry's young Black Pearl that had the colour and was also of reasonable size and conformation (the latter two being qualities that are often lacking in the Pearls). It was good enough to become Reserve Best Young Mutation behind Andrew's Beige.

After lunch, it was time for the Adult Mutations to be judged. Like the adult standards, some were struggling with show condition. The first adult class was a close class of 6 Sullivan Violets which took some sorting out. However, to be fair to the exhibitors, as the judge I needed to ensure that the class was judged as fair as possible, so it took much longer than many of the other classes. Eventually, Andrew's chin took top position closely followed by Heather Arnstein's which also had some blueness about it, losing out to Andrew's on condition.

The Beige class was another close class with good all-round animals, but some were starting to lack condition and finish and had just about started to go over the top (like only Beige's can do!). This unfortunately worked against them. Joanne's Beige came out top, just ahead of those of Denise's. A special congratulations goes to Joanne who has moved up to the main bench this season and this is her first main bench 1st ribbon well done!

There were 5 Self Black's (also known as Ebony), which were split into 2 colour phases, light and dark. The single light belonged to Andrew and predominately had standard type fur and a lighter off-white belly. As a judge, it is difficult to not compare this colour phase to the Standards, however, that we must. Since the chin had good size, decent fur and would be very useful as a herd improving animal for those focused on Self Blacks, I awarded it a 1st. In the dark colour phase, there was only one black all over chinchilla, the others having blended colours. Most of the class lacked a bit of size and conformation, but the darkest chinchilla in the class and which belonged to Denise took the first ribbon. This was not because it was the darkest, but because it was the overall best animal, with better clarity of colour and condition.

The AOC class of 12 resulted in 4 firsts. Two for Kerry, 1 for Andrew and 1 for Stephen Helmore. Stephen's first was for a Black Pearl which was somewhat lacking in size and conformation however, given the intensity of the colour, it was still able to earn a first ribbon. Kerry got a first for an 8-month-old Black Velvet which if I am being picky, I would have liked the veiling to come down slightly lower on the sides. However, as those that breed Velvets will know, it can take into their second year for the veiling to fully develop, so for a chinchilla of that age the veiling was decent and the colour good, so it deserved a 1st. The other two firsts in the group went to Kerry for a Wilson White and to Andrew for a Pink White. Kerry's Wilson White was quite exceptional. It was big blocky, clear blue white, with dense fur of a good fur type and beautiful white guard hair. By dense, I don't mean "dense for a Wilson White". Wilson Whites are notoriously known to typically have weak, "courser" fur that lacks density. This was not the case with this one and it easily took Best Adult Mutation and Best Mutation at the show. Second to this to take Reserve Best Adult Mutation and Reserve Best Mutation was Andrew's lovely Pink White which had size, conformation, fur density and clarity of colour. Although it was somewhat lacking in condition, it easily came in behind the Wilson White as Reserve Best Mutation, ahead of the winning young mutation.

Judging GSC and RGSC was relatively straight forward, although the Best Mutation was an exceptional animal, so were the two Standards and they had to take the accolades.

I really enjoyed the show and for me this always helps boost my enthusiasm for the hobby which, as we all know, is not without its up and downs. Congratulations to everyone especially those that got special awards which were Kerry, Andrew and Denise and to Holly for getting the "Judge's Choice Novice Award". The Standard Breeders award went to Kerry with 51.5 points and The Mutation Breeders award to Andrew with 34.5 points. Kerry also secured the Exhibitors award. Given this is her first main bench show, I have to say bad luck to Joanne for missing out by only 1 point on a 3rd ribbon for the Mutation Breeders award.

Despite a somewhat extended lunch (lots of catching up to do and things to talk about), the show finished around 4.00 pm and everyone was on the road heading for home by 5.00 p.m..Thanks everyone for coming and making it such an enjoyable day.

Sian Allcoat
NCS Senior Judge