

Judges Report – North Region Show, Birdwell 15/01/23

Judge- Siân Allcoat

Following on from a meeting of the National and Regional committees it was decided to trial a slightly different format in some of the shows, the first being at the North Region show at Birdwell. I arrived at the hall at approximately 10.00 a.m. and was pleased to see that the North Region had embraced some of the ideas and had already had most of the standards benched ready to be colour phased.

We started colour phasing the standards about 15 minutes after my arrival and the process of doing this while exhibitors continued grooming and benching their mutations I believe worked really well. This meant when the show officially started and the audience were seated, we could go straight into the first class. Another major change to how the show was being conducted was to trial a different type of judges' report. In the past, as a judge, I have made notes on every animal so that as well as comments on the day I have given a written report on each chinchilla exhibited. This inevitably dramatically slows down the judging process and for me personally, the flow of judging, so this report is going to be the first of my "general ones". Apologies if the animal/s you entered does not get a mention, but hopefully the judges' comments on the day will give you all the information you need.

As usual, in the morning it was the turn of the Standards to be judged. As we all know, recently we have experienced a very cold snap followed by a much milder, very wet period of weather and this had thrown many of the animals into a priming frenzy. Trying to keep chinchillas in show condition in wet, damp conditions is a nightmare. The damp seems to penetrate the fur, sometimes causing it to break in lines. This is especially noticeable with the dark and extra dark standards since the white bar underneath becomes very noticeable. Of all the colour phases, they are no doubt the hardest to disguise poor condition.

There were only 4 young standard females and 2 young standard males. A 1st

and 2nd were awarded in the Medium Dark class of young females, the 1st being owned by Andy Marshall and the 2nd by Andrew Lee. With no other 1st in the young standard females or males, these chinchillas automatically became Best young standard and Reserve Best Young Standard. Both chinchillas were of good overall quality but were unable to compete with the adult standards in the show.

There was a good turnout of 16 adult standards, evenly split between 8 females and 8 males (1 male and 1 female being in the Novice section). The Medium Dark female bred by Heather Arnstein won Best Adult Standard Female and the reserve was from Andrew. The best female was a good all-rounder and was in much better condition than most of the standards at the show. She had also been well prepared by Heather, so well done to her. Show condition when picking the Best and Reserve Best Adult Standard, left me in somewhat of a dilemma since the Best Adult Female did not have the qualities in terms of blueness and density of fur of the Best Adult and Reserve Best Adult males both from Sandy King, but both of them were badly out of condition. After much humming and haring and balancing up qualities (condition being only one) both the males had to take it and became Best Standard and Reserve Best Standard. Congratulations goes to Sandy who later told me the winning Standard had been taken out of breeding that morning, hence the reason why he was not in top show condition.

We stopped for a leisurely lunch but before I ate my delicious lasagne and cake (thank you Jane and Heather) I had the pleasure of judging and talking to two juniors and their mums who had brought along their lovely chinchillas to the show. One was a Beige carrying RPA called Icicle and was owned by Grant Rycroft (aged xx ) and the other a big blocky standard called Tails owned by Cara. Grant has a specific interest in Angoras and wants to breed "fluffy kits". This will be his own breeding project and he has a very good start with Icicle. A very nice chin with good colour, size, conformation and density and strength of fur. We discussed whether or not he should put her with another RPA carrier

as soon as she is old enough and my advice was "Yes, go for it, if you have a suitable carrier at home". The quality of the chin was definitely good enough to breed Grant some lovely Angoras and I had no hesitation in awarding him a well-deserved 1st ribbon.

Next, it was the turn of Cara and 2-year-old Tails. Tails apparently had been bred from a big standard female and dad, also a Standard, who I was told was rather on the small size. Tails had obviously inherited more in terms of size and conformation from mum, rather than dad. He was a nice big blocky chin with good fur density, he was certainly not down in colour, being quite bright. He was not in show condition but then he was living with other males and apparently, they have a habit of occasionally chasing and mounting each other when playing, hence, why the fur on his tail end was rather choppy. However, there was no doubt that Tails had quality and again he was worthy of a 1st and a chinchilla worth breeding with.

So well done Grant and Cara and I look forward to seeing some of Grant's fluffy kits and Tails' offspring in a future show.

After lunch we went onto the mutations. In all honesty, in general, the overall quality and condition of the mutations at the show exceeded that of the Standards. There were 11 young mutations (8 main bench and 3 novice), most being judged in AOC (Any Other Colour) classes. The only class of 3 or more in the mutations was a class of Wilson Whites and what a good class it was, there wasn't a poor one amongst them. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd were bred by Sandy and the HC by Andy Marshall. So well done to them. Getting a "Persil white" Wilson White is not easy, but the 1st ribbon winner from Sandy was just that. A nice big blocky chin, with good stand-up fur and density which was probably helped by the quite heavy scattering of attractive standard guard hair throughout the back. A chin with lots of eye appeal.

In the young mutations, there were also firsts for Andrew Lees' Beige and Pink White and in the novice class for Gemma Halliday's Self Brown, so well done

to them. Sandys' Wilson White quite easily took the Best Young Mutation award and the reserve to this, was the Beige.

We then moved onto the main bench Adult Mutations with firsts for Andy's Wilson White, Heather's Self Black and Andrews' Pink White and Beige. All four were very good chinchillas worthy of 1st ribbons. Of note, is the fact that Heather's Self Black was a lovely "every hair shiny black" chinchilla but unfortunately, for an adult, it really lacked size which ultimately held it back. Although I do not breed Self Blacks (Ebony), from what I have been told they have a tendency to be slow growing hence if the chinchilla was just over the 7-month mark, then it may have quite a bit of growing left to do. In the novice young mutation class there was a 1st for Joanne Rycroft's Beige that was good enough to be awarded the Judges Choice Novice Award over the other 1st ribbon winner in this section, Gemma's young Self-Brown. So, congratulations to both of them on their awards. When judging for Best Adult Mutation, Andrew's Beige had to take it being a lovely good sized, blocky chin with good density and colour and being in show condition on the day. The Reserve was his Pink White.

Andrew's Adult Beige and Sandy's Wilson White then came up against each other for Best Mutation. This was not an easy one to judge since there was a gnat's whisker between them. Both being lovely big blocky animals with good clarity of colour and density and being in top show condition. In the end, I had to resort to "a chinchilla is a chinchilla, is a chinchilla" i.e. they should all be judged on the exact same criteria. Hence, Andrew's Beige just pipped it since almost inevitably, the white fur in Sandy's Wilson White wasn't quite as strong.

My next judging task was to choose Grand Show Champion and this was between Andrew's Beige and Sandy's Standard Male. This was where the condition of the standard really showed up. It was up against a high-quality chinchilla in much better show condition. Ultimately, the Beige was awarded Best in Show not just because of its show condition, but it also had advantages in terms of size and conformation, so on balance, had to take the top award.

In choosing the Reserve Best in Show, I was conscious that I do not think I have ever attended a show (or know of one) in the UK where there has not been a standard among the top two chinchillas in the show. However, this did not influence my decision and Sandy's young Wilson White walked away with the Reserve Grand Show Champion, having many of the same advantages as Andrew's Beige over the top Standard.

Thank you to the North Region Committee and everyone who attended on the day for making me feel welcome and for ensuring a lovely relaxed show.

Siân Allcoat

NCS Senior Judge