

# The American Cockatiel Society Show Standard

by Nancy Reed

## PREFACE

The following ACS Cockatiel Show Standard is presented for the '78 show season. As this is our first year in having an official Cockatiel Standard, there are some rulings that must be tried in practice and perhaps corrected or updated in the future. We have endeavored to cover obvious aspects and foresee future aims in breeding expectations of the Cockatiel, and thus present what we hope is a comprehensive and helpful foundation for the Cockatiel Show Standard. We would greatly appreciate feedback following the '78 show season, especially in regards to strengthening and further defining specific areas which we may not have foreseen.

It has also been mentioned that we point out, most especially to novice exhibitors, that at present birds *need no to be banded or even bred by exhibitor*. Also, that the purpose of a Standard is to aim for the "Ideal" Cockatiel. It is not expected that any *one* bird will meet *all* criteria. Therefore, do not discount showing a basically good bird only because of some minor fault(s). How many times has one heard someone say, "My bird at home would have beaten the winner!" If a perfect bird is shown under a Standard, then the Standard's aims are not high enough! Perfection should be unobtainable, therefore, we show our best, in hopes that our bird is better than the next guy's best. And that's what makes competition fun: getting closer to the ideal than someone else. If only an ideal bird can be shown, there should not be a single bird in any show!

The Cockatiel will be judged on the show bench by the comparison method. This means judging each bird individually against the next, rather than judging each bird individually against a chart of specified point distribution. By comparison and process of elimination, the best bird finally emerges.

However, having a Standard Point Chart *for reference* is valuable to both the exhibitor and judge in placing the proper emphasis on the various aspects that are to be considered at show time. At this writing



we have not finalized such a chart.

For the interim, without specific points allotted, may we suggest the following aspects given in order of importance: Conformation, Condition, and Deportment (steadiness on perch, "showmanship"). These are generally agreed to be considered the three most important factors to be judged. Continuing in order of importance would be Coloration and the

cleanliness and suitable proportions of the show cage.

Using such a "breakdown" chart is most especially handy when choosing which birds to take to a show. For instance, a major fault in color would be as detrimental as say a major (or possibly even a minor) fault in conformation.

## GENERAL CONFORMATION

The Cockatiel Standard drawn by Dr. Walter LaVoy should be closely observed, as a visual illustration is always better than a lengthy verbal description.

The Cockatiel is illustrated as a long bird, of graceful proportions, but of good substance (full bodied). Measuring from the top of the shoulder curve to the tip of the wing should equal the measurement from the top of the skull to the vent, and again from the vent to the tip of tail. In other words: length of wing, body, and tail should be the same. A goal of a 14" bird (not counting crest) is desired.

**Crest:** Being the main physical trademark of the Cockatiel, this should be given specific consideration. It should be long (goal: 3" on a proportionately large bird), but at the same time, of good density, graduating evenly from the longest filaments down to the shortest towards the rear of the skull. It should be a very showy feature, curving proudly yet gracefully from the top of the cere, and the "fillers" fanning out to give fullness.

**Head:** This should be large and well rounded (especially no flat spot on top or back of skull). The eyes should be large, bright and alert, and placed at mid-point between front and back of skull. The brow should be well pronounced, and especially when the head is viewed from the front, should protrude enough to indicate good breadth between the eyes, and an almost "hawk-like" appearance. The beak should be clean and of natural length, and tucked in to the extent that the lower mandible is only partially visible.

The cheek patches should be uniformly rounded, well defined, (no "bleeding" of extraneous orange feathers) and brightly colored (most especially on males). On adult male Cockatiels that will exhibit a yellow head, the color again should be bright, clear of extraneous grey or orange feathers (with the exception of young males going through the transition moult), and sharply defined where the yellow meets the border of the main body feathers. A deep bid is preferred. There should be pin feathers in evidence.

**Neck:** The Cockatiel has a relatively long neck when compared with say, Lovebirds and English Show Budgies. Especially when the Cockatiel is in alert stance, there should be a very *slight* curvature above the shoulders, and a *small* nip above the chest area, giving the bird a braceful outline and eliminating the appearance of a "bull" neck or the "ramrod" posture of some psittacine species. However, conversely, an exaggerated "snake" neck would be reason for fault.

**Body:** The body of the Cockatiel when viewed strictly from the side angle, can be somewhat deceptive, as only a well rounded outline of the chest will indicate whether the specimen has good substance. A more frontal view (or back) shows more truly the great breadth through the chest (and shoulder) areas of an adult specimen of the species. (Young take approximately a year to "fill out"). It is this strong muscular development that enables the Cockatiel to be such a strong flier, a natural characteristic of the species. Look for a high, proud, full chest (more prominent in hens); a slender, tapering abdomen; and a wide, straight back (no hum or sway): a large bird, yet sleek.

**Wings:** These are large, wide, and long, enveloping most of the body in side view. The wings should be held tight to the body, tips close to the tail, no drooping of shoulders or crossing of wing tips. (This last feature is sometimes difficult to achieve as most Cockatiels, when excited, as on the show bench, will cross the flight tips). The wing patch, on those types that display them most prominently, should be wide (goal:  $\frac{3}{4}$ " at widest point), well defined, and clear of extraneous darker feathers. All flight feathers should be in evidence. Covert feathers, as they fan out over the shoulders and central area of the wing, should illustrate their growth pattern clearly.

**Legs and Feet:** These should hold the bird erect at approximately 70° off the horizontal. The feet must grasp the perch

firmly (two toes forward and two back), be clean, and claws not overgrown or missing.

**Tail:** The long tail flights are what give the Cockatiel its grace through length (combined to a lesser degree with the long crest feathers and wing flights). The longest flights should be the extension of an imaginary line straight through the center of the bird's body. A humped back will cause the tail to sag too low, and a "swayed" back might elevate the tail higher than desired. The feathers themselves should be straight, clean and neither frayed, split, or otherwise out of line, and all flights in evidence.

### CONDITION

While conformation is more directly a matter of heredity and thus good breeding, exhibiting a bird in top condition is a reflection of proper care and feeding: incentive for a bird to preen himself to perfection. The obvious factors in this category are clean and tight feathers: no frayed or missing feathers, no half grown or pin feathers. As mentioned above, the beak and claws must be of suitable length (not overgrown), and no unnatural roughness or scaling on the cere, beak, legs or feet. A bird in prime condition can often minimize minor faults in that perfect plumage is so immediately obvious and striking, while faults in other categories must be searched out. A bird in superb condition gives the judge an immediately favorable impression.

### DEPORTMENT

In good show stance, a Cockatiel should indicate a central line approximately 70° off the horizontal. While posture would also be considered a matter of conformation, personality and proper show cage training can make the difference between a bird simply perching out of necessity, and a bird which radiates confidence: "Hey, look at me!" Call it showmanship.

The main reason that the Cockatiel has become one of the most popular cage birds today (even discounting the challenge of mutations), is due to his gentle, confiding, and comical personality. This aspect must *never* be cancelled out in future breeding and exhibiting with only emphasis being stressed on physical appearance. However, conversely, this does not mean only tame pets have a chance in this category (as they whisper, "I love you" in seven languages to the judge). No! Any bird can and must be adequately "show trained"; that is, placed in a show cage for varying periods of time weeks before the show

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date, acclimatized to the closeness of the cage, and become unafraid of people peering at him at close range. The bird must stand willingly on the perch, trained to move from perch to perch *without panicking*, and ideally show a bit of individuality (hopefully not stubbornness to perform).

Often this category can be the downfall of an otherwise superior specimen, and it is the fault of the *exhibitor* in not taking the time and patience to adequately show

or several random white feathers in the usually solid grey areas of plumage), such birds should not be shown in the Normal class. If such a class is not offered, then ticking or "bleeding" (extraneous orange feathers outside the general circumference of the cheek patch) will be allowed, but faulted accordingly.

**Pieds:** Heavy pieds are preferred, but not with the aim of eliminating so much grey that the bird does not show good

**Pearl hens:** Extensive "heavy" markings (lacing) are preferred. Over the back area (nape of neck, back, and wings) where the pearling is in most evidence, the pattern should be uniform, with no splotching. On the shoulder, it is both natural and desirable that the pearling be most concentrated. The markings should be well defined, showing a suitable amount of grey for contrast.

**Pearl males:** Our ultimate aim (and it will take many years of careful breeding) is to breed male Pearls that will retain their markings in adult plumage. Therefore, males with any degree of pearling will be considered more desirable, and judged accordingly in the coloration category. It is also preferable that these markings be more truly "Pearl" markings, rather than simply spotted, to differentiate the mutant males from a ticked bird.

**Cinnamons:** The aim is for more brown (Cinnamon) hues, as in contrast to the grey of a Normal. In other words, this mutation should be intensified, achieving a true fawn brown, and eliminating all grey overtones. Other markings would be judged as on a Normal.

**Fallows:** This is such a new mutation in the U.S., that the majority of us have not seen enough birds to compare. Our thoughts would be to intensify the apparent tendency for yellow suffusion that would further separate and identify it from a Cinnamon. (The red eyes definitely pinpoint it as a Fallow, not a Cinnamon). Other markings would be judged as on a Normal.

**Cross-Mutations:** These will eventually become more plentiful at shows, but for the present will be commonly grouped in the Any Other Variety (AOV) category. These will be judged by combining the color standards for both mutations involved. For instance, a Pied-Pearl cross-mutation would be judged considering the Pied Standard, and the Pearl Standard, and finally as a combination of the two.

**Split and Ticked Birds:** Often a bird which is genetically split to a mutation will show a varying degree of "ticked" markings denoting its "hidden" genetic makeup (usually on nape of neck). Split Pieds are more prone to such markings on their body, legs or feet, and other type mutation splits to a lesser degree. Some feel it only fair that an otherwise well-proportioned bird not be faulted in competition by having to be entered under the Normal classification's judging standard (no ticking). In a specific class, these markings

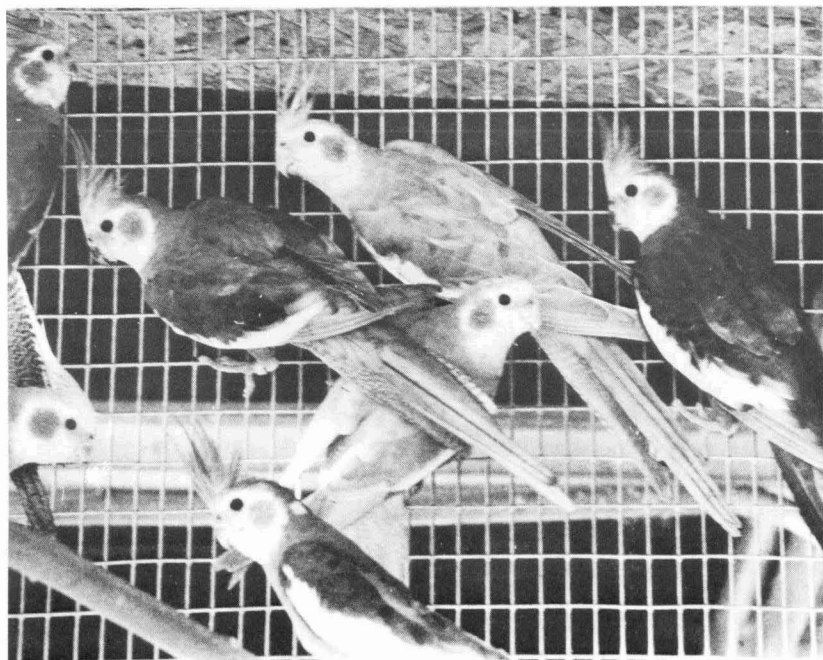


Photo by Nancy A. Reed

*Normal and Cinnamon males.*

train. Steadiness of the bird cannot be overemphasized! A good bird that huddles on the floor or is so flighty that he cannot be studied at length, can hardly be judged on *unseen* qualities.

### SPECIFIC CLASSIFICATIONS ON TYPES

The following categories concern specific coloration aspects of the Normal and Mutant Cockatiels. While definition is necessary for each type, it is to be remembered that coloration is not as emphasized on the show bench as it may appear to be in the written standard. Size and conformation, condition and steadiness, are always the most important factors.

**Normals:** The lightness or depth of grey will not be a factor in judging, rather the emphasis will be placed on the uniformity and quality of the overall color.

In shows that specifically have a class for ticked birds, (i.e., birds showing one

contrast. A guide of 40% to 60% pied marking should be used. However, symmetry of markings is of top emphasis over the percentage of piedness, and will be the **major** factor in judging the coloration aspects of Pied birds. It is preferable that most tail and wing flights be clear, with the ideal aim of totally clear flight feathers.

**Lutinos:** (Albinos, Whites, etc. We still do not have an overall "name" that the majority is in agreement with): This mutation is a problem, as there are breeders who are working towards more white, and those wishing to intensify the yellow. Therefore, in all fairness to both sides, coloration will be judged on added points for an exceptionally white or yellow bird.

Baldness has always been a problem with this mutation as it appears to be a dominant factor. Our aim is for no bald spot. But, for the present, on a comparison scale, points will be deducted in accordance with degree of baldness in each bird on the show bench.

should be considered "faults", as they are, in essence, genetic factors.

ACS members and Standards Committee are at a stalemate on this classification. Votes are evenly cast between not allowing ticking at all, to specific classes for ticked and/or split birds. Therefore, for the present, the decision will be put to the choice of individual clubs in their show classifications: whether to include a class for marked birds, or to place them in the Normal's class with faulting.

### SHOW CAGE

We would like to emphasize that it will be some years before we make a specified Cockatiel Show Cage mandatory. There is still discussion as to minor details, and because of the expense involved, we cannot expect exhibitors to invest suddenly in all new equipment. Our suggestion to those purchasing or building new cages is that they use common sense — a cage that accommodates the bird adequately and proportionately.

Two perches perpendicular to the front are preferred, and of 3/8" diameter. An example of adequate show cage proportions are 18" wide x 9" deep x 17" high. Decisions on feed and water sources, and cage color are split, and therefore, will be the exhibitor's choice. Some preferred seed on floor and water cup on front bars; or "built in" cups; some specified light blue for cage interior; others white. Matt finish of paint had a slight edge over glossy or semi-gloss, and black was preferred for exterior.

Again, *anything goes* at this point. Use what you think best; then we can eventually decide what works best.

### BANDS

ACS offers their own registered bands to members. However, many ACS members also feel a loyalty to their own local club when purchasing bands, and to have to band a bird twice is superfluous. Therefore it is suggested that members register their ACS bands with their local club for 1¢ each. This way the local club isn't out anything, and the bird does not have to wear two bands to be recognized by both clubs.

### CONCLUSION

Dr. Walter LaVoy is to be sincerely thanked for donating his time, enthusiasm, and talent in rendering our visual Standard for the Cockatiel. Ernest Hart is also to be credited for his help through his initial drawing and verbal description in getting our "show on the road".

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