

Judging Cockatiels

by Ken O'Steen

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Before the American Cockatiel Society was founded, Cockatiels, along with most other "hookbills," were shown in Exotics as "foreign birds." This made it tough on the judge as well as the exhibitors.

The American Cockatiel Society was founded in 1977, one of the purposes being to set a "standard of perfection" that all breeders of this very popular bird could strive to attain.

Top priority of the founding members of the society was to form a panel of qualified judges who had bred and would exhibit cockatiels. This is still true today. All ACS judges must breed, band and exhibit cockatiels to maintain their ACS judges' position.

The judging of cockatiels, which may look like a mystery to novice exhibitors, is really straight forward.

1. The birds are judged according to age and sex in class. Winners in each class are then compared in their section.

2. The sections judging consists of the normal grey being compared to other normals, pided judged against other pided; lutinos, pearls, cinnamons and rares likewise are judged within their own section.

3. Finally, the best birds of each section are brought together for best of division.

Novice birds are judged separately from the advanced division. They have the opportunity to work into the advanced top bench placement for awards and points.

All ACS judges compare the birds with the ACS Standard of Perfection in mind. A point standard has been formulated as a reference guide for exhibitors and judges alike. But it is by a one on one comparison that a final decision is made.

The ACS Standard Point System

Conformation: 60 points

Size: 20 points. Overall length of bird (ideally 14" not including crest.)

Crest: 10 points. Length (ideally 3") and density of equal importance.

Body Substance: 10 points. Depth and breadth.

Proportions: 5 points. Relationship of head size to body, to tail, to wings (ideally 7,7,7)

Wing Carriage: 5 points. No drooping shoulders or crossed wing tips.

Tail: 5 points. All feathers fully grown and in place, clean and unfrayed.

Head: 5 points. Large and well rounded. Eyes bright and alert. Brow well pronounced. Beak clean, normal length and tucked in. Cheek patch uniformly round and brightly colored. Bib deep.

Condition: 15 points. Bird in obvious good health, tight feathered and immaculate.

Department: 10 points. Steadiness and posture, basically the result of thorough show training.

Color and Markings: 10 points. (A detailed description of each mutation preference is available in the ACS Standard of Perfection Booklet.)

1. Uniformity of Color. 5 points

2. Depth of color or degree of markings. 5 points.

Caging: 5 points. All advanced exhibitors must show birds in the ACS standard type show cage. The cleanliness and general condition in reference to upkeep will be weighed by the judge. Novice exhibitors may show in an appropriate sized, solid bottom cage. (As a reference, the dimensions of the standard cage are 17' high, 18' wide, and 10' deep. A cage size near to these dimensions would be acceptable.)

The tangible awards for winning and placing on the "Top Bench" vary from show to show, but generally plaques, ribbons, rosettes, and trophies are awarded. Some shows may offer cash as an added incentive. A point system has been devised, by the society, to record the points earned by competing birds. Champion status may be achieved with a "Best in Show" win in a major show. Grand champion status may also be achieved if the bird meets the Society's criterion. To earn points for placement in a show, a bird must be banded with a closed, traceable band, however, an unbanded bird may earn other awards, such as the ACS Best Novice plaque. I feel it is safe to say each and every exhibitor will come away from a show as a winner — for the knowledge acquired as well as the contacts and new friends made.

Most bird shows are held in Sept.,

Oct., and Nov., of each year. The dates, and other show information will be listed in many bird publications as well as the ACS Magazine. The ACS Annual Specialty Show, which rotates around the country each year, will be held Oct. 24, 1992 in Tampa, Florida. The Suncoast Avian Society will be the host club for this year's show. Between 150 to 200 cockatiels are expected from around the country. The very best are expected to compete for top honors. Make plans now to attend and learn what has been achieved by some of the best breeders in the country. ●

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