

A JUDGE CONSIDERS THE PENALTIES



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In addition to the formal contract which exists between a judge and the Club for which he officiates, there is a further implied contract between the Judge and the Exhibitor. This binds the Judge to evaluate the exhibits, strictly, fairly and impartially, in accord with the established Standard for each breed and further binds the Exhibitor to accept the decision of the Judge.

The obligation of the Judge to impose penalties for faults present in the exhibits, or for general lack of merit is, and must be, his greatest responsibility and is most certainly his most onerous duty.

These penalties are in three degrees, the most serious of which is to Disqualify. This removes the cat from competition, and the class is judged as though the entry were not present. Some causes for Disqualification are clearly spelled out in Article III of the May 1, 1968 Show Rules, and you will see that the application of this penalty does not lie solely in the hands of the Judge. An entry may be disqualified by the Veterinarian, the Show Committee, or by the Central Office. Most often this latter cause lies with the Exhibitor. Within the province of the Judge lies the application of this penalty for causes listed in the "Disqualify" section of the Standard for a particular breed or color. Each Exhibitor should be well aware of all causes for Disqualification, as must be all Judges.

The next most serious penalty is to Withhold Winners—the undoubted moral responsibility of the Judge, if, in his opinion, the exhibit lacks sufficient merit to carry the title of CFA Champion. That an exhibit is alone in its class does not lessen this responsibility, and to award "Winners" in cases of doubtful merit is a grave disservice to everyone concerned to say nothing of casting doubt on the ability of the Judge to evaluate the exhibit against the Standard. Surely the dedicated Breeder wants no awards made on a basis of lack of competition when a candidate lacks sufficient merit at that time to earn that award, and realizing the harm done them by cheap kittens of Champion parents, these Breeders may one day demand that classes have three, four, or five entries in each sex in order to merit a Winners Ribbon being awarded at all. This proposal would be completely untenable, of course. One might have his BEST IN SHOW alone in its class. No less a moral responsibility of the Judge is to withhold all awards from exhibits lacking merit, whatever their category—Champion or Grand Champion. Recently, judging a class of Patterned cats with a single entry which was a Champion, I withheld all awards

on the basis of lack of strength in the ground color and the absence of the required pattern. I was severely taken to task by the Exhibitor who stated that my decision discredited the very competent Judges who had given this cat its points for the Championship. Was the exhibitor right? Should I have assumed that this cat at one time did have the proper markings which had disappeared, perhaps with maturity? Or did I accept my responsibility in evaluating the cat as I found it at that time?

With many cats earning titles of Champion and Grand Champion long before reaching full maturity, who is to say that some will not develop faults which are serious enough to warrant withholding of all awards? Are these titles to confer immunity from application of deserved penalties?

Perhaps the most difficult of application is the requirement to PENALIZE by deducting from an exhibit a portion, or all the points allotted to a specific feature of the Standard for the exhibit when it lacks perfection in that particular detail.

What is to be done with an entry called a Tortoiseshell which is really a red and black brindle? What is a Blue Persian with a Cream toe and a dab of Cream color on its chin? Assuming that overall type measures up well enough, do we really have a Champion Tortie or Blue Cream, or should these cats be left at home and their value utilized in a well planned breeding program? Do you really think this sort of exhibit is worthy of the title of Champion, or of the title which only the greatest degree of perfection should earn, Grand Champion? Should not the cats who do not conform to the color standard for their classification be transferred to AOV? Is there any other honest decision which can be made?

Equally complex are the problems arising in judging the Short Haired breeds. Among those with relatively few representatives benched are the Russian Blue and the Havana Brown. We must assume that the pedigree is sound and the registration valid, but can we, in clear conscience, give a win to a Russian Blue with a domed head, yellow eyes, and a coat not even remotely "plushy"? Do all our Havana Brown Champions have the required breaks, one at the whiskers and another distinct stop at the level of the eyes? Are the paw pads and nose leather of a rosy hue? These are merely examples and it is not my intention to single out these breeds, both of which are beautiful and special indeed in their conformation to the standards established for them.

How do we evaluate the Blue Persian whose coat has been plucked so completely that only the sound, light undercoat remains? Do we give points on color and take them off on coat? And then do we consider the full coated, but unsoundly colored Blue Persian of equally good type as "too unsound"? Isn't plucking to this degree "intent to deceive the judge," or is it legitimate grooming technique?

What of the Chinchilla and Shaded Silver Persians as well as the American Short Hairs of these colors who at times conform to the standard for neither? Shouldn't all awards be withheld from the Champion or Grand Champion until the exhibit meets all requirements

of the standard? Again, these are only examples. The same considerations apply equally to all breeds, all colors, coats, condition, and the many other features which make for a beautiful, well-balanced exhibit.

I have asked many questions to which, in twenty years of judging, I have found no satisfactory answers. Perhaps you can provide them.

Exhibitor: Is a Winners Ribbon, or other award more important to you than an honest, accurate evaluation of your cat in accordance with its standard by the Judge whose opinion you sought when you made your entry?

Judge: Does your integrity allow you to do less than CFA expects of you in your interpretation of these standards, and the application of the established penalties?

Please, give these thoughts serious, objective consideration, and let our CFA Champions be TRULY Champions. Let's have our CFA Grand Champions be entirely worthy of this highest title the cat fancy can bestow.