



The Point in Points

Tips in applying standard weighting or emphasis during Judging
By Armando Cabrera, ARBA Judge

Using the point system as a guide instead of just looking and interpreting what we are seeing as good, very good, etc., is a key step to appropriately judge each breed and variety.

Recently, while working a judge assist, I was explaining the differences in Americans when it comes to varieties and how they are weighted differently. As an example, I explained how self-Americans carry 30 points for color and 30 for type, which equals out to 60 points, or 60%, out of 100 total point which heavily weighs color and type in evaluation and placement of self-Americans. If you take those same two areas (type and color), the weight or emphasis in placements in Solids & Agoutis amounts to 40 points, in Marked varieties the weight is 25 points and in Tan Patterns the emphasis is 45 points.

With the above differences in just those two areas of the cavy, there is no possible way that an animal with a type fault or a color fault should be penalized the same. You're probably thinking about now, but Armando, we don't judge on points, we judge visually. You are correct, however that visual judgment should be based on our point system; otherwise, if you are judging based on say, "heads," and very little else is considered, then you are not upholding our ARBA Standard and therefore not using the Standard of Perfection guidelines to evaluate the breed or variety. This statement doesn't mean that we will always interpret the same, and come up with the exact same winners, but as long as you are following the standard, and weighing the good and the bad in accordance to their point distribution, it is your opinion based on your interpretation of the standard, but again, as long as you are consciously following where the points are distributed in our Standard of Perfection. So let's look at some points to help you look at this in a more "real" light.



We'll use the American breed as our base breed for this article. I like a good head on an American, and I'm sure most of you with Americans feel the same. However, I have seen beautiful specimens with great type, condition, coat, color, markings, etc., be dumped for having a long and/or narrow or plain head. I believe a bad head should be faulted, but unless the competition is extreme-

ly tight, it should only affect a couple of placements at best. Meaning losing to first or ending up 3rd instead of 1st in a class, IF it's only the head you are faulting. Here's how I would analyze it. If the head is very undesirable, and its part of type, and takes up about 20-25% of the body type, it should only be worth about 7-½ points for self's, 6-¾ points for Solids & Agoutis, 3-¾ points for marked and 5 points for Tan Patterns. Therefore, no more or less than the total points should be weighed against an excellent or poor-quality head. This means that based on points of a marked variety, such as a Dutch, it should be able to win if everything else is GREAT, including markings, but has an undesirable head. If total points for the head in a marked variety breaks down to 3-¾ points of say 5 points, if you want to round up, you would have a 95 to 96-¾ pointed Dutch American losing BOB because of an ugly head. I don't believe that Dutch breeder's efforts are being recognized, if we are not judging those animals based on their standard that heavily weighs other features, such as markings.

Now when it comes to similar breeds, like Americans and American satins, we as judges and breeders have to shift gears in our brain to evaluate them appropriately. A couple of years ago, I recall judging two very nice dalmatian satins, both in the same class, and stating that if this was an American class, sow A would win, but since it was an American Satin class, sow B won. Why? Sow A had much better spots and markings than sow B, but sow B had decent spots/markings but much better coat and type. The difference is that in Americans the spotting/markings are worth 50 points and in satins spots/markings are part of color, or less than 25 points, IF you split them 50/50 in your mind. The aforementioned means that spotting and markings are worth 12-½ points and color quality is 12-½ points. If you want to give 75% of the same points to spots and markings that would be worth about 19-¾ points total, both examples are much less than 50 points given to marked Americans. Again, the emphasis is weighed differently, therefore results should be different.

The above methodology of thinking through the evaluation process, will help provide a more equalized method of judging both the breeds and varieties that are less common varieties that don't always get the credit they deserve. This is a good reminder that not all breeds and varieties are the same and therefore evaluating them should be a process that reflects those differences.