

## **What Are Those Judges Looking For?**

**By Tonna Thomas**

It is Show Time! What are those judges looking for when they exam and pose a rabbit? The obvious is type and/or markings beyond any disqualifications. In addition to type and/or markings, we look for a well-groomed and conditioned rabbit with a coat of fur.

Many factors are taken into consideration when a rabbit stands out above others. As the judge is examining the rabbit, one of the obvious items we are looking for is type, balance, fur and condition. Not to say that clipped toenails and the cleanliness of the rabbit also makes an impression on the judge. Remember a rabbit with long nails cannot place its feet flat on a table as they could in their cage. You are also insuring the rabbit will have a lower probability to losing a toenail with clipped nails and the judge appreciates not being scratched. Also checking sex on a dirty rabbit is not high on our the list for judges to do.

In the course of examination, the judge is not only checking for general disqualifications, but also breed disqualifications. There are ailments, general, structural and then breed disqualifications. These are all listed in the ARBA *Standard of Perfection*. Every breeder should have own one of these books.

The first item judges look for is the general type of the rabbit. A rabbit that has been handled and taught to pose at home will go further in the class than one that will not sit still. It is easier to compare two or three rabbits at a time when they are posing, than fighting with them to hold their pose. Nothing is more frustrating for a judge to know they have a good rabbit and it does not pose. I cannot emphasize handling your rabbits enough. I have often made the comment when placing an unruly animal lower in the class than maybe it should have been placed, "I know it has better type than it is showing me". I have to look at the big picture; will it pose for Best in Show?

There are many times a "slick" rabbit with a slight fault will win over a rabbit with type but not finished in fur. For instance, in several commercial breeds fur is worth 15-20 points. When we as judges stroke a coat that is in its prime, the rabbit receives more credit than one that is not finished. Again, looking towards the end of the day and Best in Show, a slick animal will stand a better chance than one that is not finished in fur.

The next item judges are looking for are the extreme distinct features whether it be markings or type. What are the good and bad features of the rabbit? It is easier to add up what is correct on the rabbit than what is incorrect. Those that have the outstanding features tend to stick in the judges mind.

I hope this gives you an insight on what judges are looking for while judging. Again, I cannot emphasize enough to work with your rabbits at home. All animals need some training or manners, even rabbits.