

Ferret Shows in the U.K.

By Sheila Crompton

In the United Kingdom, we have two basic types of ferret shows: an open show, which is more like a championship show in the United States, and the club or society closed show, which is for members only and is generally less competitive than the open show. Aside from being larger, a championship show is really no different than a closed show; no points from a championship show are carried over to another show. In addition, a ferret does not have to qualify to be shown at a championship show.

Ferret shows in the U.K. were originally started in the ferrets' nonworking season. These shows gave ferret keepers a chance to meet each other and have a chat and probably a drink, because the show might have been held at a public house. These early shows were usually very friendly affairs, more of a social gathering. Unfortunately, shows are becoming more competitive (for the worse), and some folks want to win at any cost. The "pot" hunters, given the chance, will ruin the British ferret by breeding for color and conformation, evoking similar prob-

lems as those caused by breeders trying to breed the "perfect" dog.

The usual classes are polecat (sable) hob and jill, albino hob and jill, sandy (cinnamon and champagne) hob and jill, and colored (i.e., any color not covered by the previous three classes) hob and jill. We do not have separate classes for whole and neutered hobs; because hobs in the U.K. are not castrated until they are at least six months old, they tend to have the same muscle tone as entire males. There are also the age-related and specialized classes—for example, a kit class for ferrets up to 12 months old, a veteran class for ferrets more than 5 years old, and a class for disabled ferrets. Some shows might also include a class for working pairs.

A number of shows use stewards to collect the ferrets from the keepers so that the judge does not know to whom each ferret belongs. This method seems to be the fairest, as the judge cannot be influenced by knowing the keeper.

A judge will mark the ferret on temperament (any ferret that bites will be disqualified); the condition of the

coat, feet, eyes, ears, teeth (some judges will ignore the broken tip of a fang, as working ferrets sometimes have damaged teeth); color; and conformation (i.e., is the animal shaped like a ferret and neither too fat nor too thin). Some judges prefer big hobs and small jills; some like small hobs and jills; some like really dark-colored polecats; and others will knock a point off if the ferret is too dark.

I must admit that, when judging, I tend to look at ferrets with an eye to the working aspect. A ferret that smells like a ferret will beat a ferret that smells like a powder puff.

AFA Volunteer Wish list

Fundraising/Marketing Coordinator: Responsible for generating and implementing ideas for sustainable income for the AFA.

This includes:

- ad solicitation for AFR and other AFA publications,
- working with other AFA committees, implementation of new AFA programs and/or products
- solicitation of corporate donations and sponsorships for shows and other special events,
- solicitation of endowments, bequests, one-time donations.
- This list is not intended to be all inclusive; the possibilities are limited only by your imagination!

This position pays 15% commission on all net \$ realized. Must be able to make calls and

contact during regular business hours—perhaps an individual who is retired? Ideal candidate is a creative, outgoing individual with prior marketing/fundraising experience.

CPA: To assist AFA Treasurer as needed with non-profit tax, accounting and financial issues. Time commitment varies throughout the year; just be able to answer phone or email questions here and there.

Desktop Publisher: Formatting of AFA brochures, flyers, posters, advertisements. AFA publishes a series of brochures and flyers on topics of interest to ferret owners, a Symposium Proceedings book for AFA's Veterinary Symposium.



Gavin DeBonte holds TCF's Honey Delight of HFLR, the winner of the Point Speciality Class at the Ferret Expo 2001 in York, PA. Gavin is the son of Glenda Greggs, Honey Delight's owner. Photo by Patty Asheuer. (See page 7 for show results and more photos.)