

# Introduction to NCS Cockatiel Shows

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The main season for NCS-affiliated cockatiel shows is from September through November although shows are held year round. For every cockatiel lover, including those who don't enter the competitions, shows are good places to meet other people who are interested in raising quality cockatiels, and to learn from the judges, who themselves are experienced cockatiel breeders, what features contribute to the making of a beautiful cockatiel. The best educational value, of course, comes from entering one's own bird(s) into the competition and learning what the judge has to say about it (them). The following may be useful information:

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## WHAT HAPPENS AT A TYPICAL COCKATIEL SHOW?

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The size of a cockatiel show varies according to the number of participants bringing birds for competition. The number of entries typically ranges from 50 to 150 birds. Birds are entered for competition between 7:30-9:30 A.M. and judging begins at 10:00 A.M. (but check with each show chairman for precise schedule). Exhibitors are classified as either novice or advanced. New and relatively new exhibitors enter their birds in the novice division. Novice birds are judged first, usually from about 10 A.M. to noon.

Most judges will explain the qualities being evaluated and the process of judging at the beginning. In addition, most judges will take time to explain the basis for his/her ranking of the birds in the novice division. Usually there is a break for lunch, following which advanced birds are judged (from about 1:00 to 3:00 or 4:00 P.M., depending on the number of birds entered and the speed with which the judge works). Judges usually concentrate on the job of comparing the larger numbers of advanced entries and do not usually provide as much verbal explanation in this phase of the show. **Thus, if you want to get the best educational value from the judge, be there at the opening of the show (usually 10:00 A.M.) for the judging of novice birds.**

Each bird may be brought to the show bench to be evaluated several times, competing against other birds at sequential levels, somewhat akin to a basketball tournament. The final outcome of the show will be a ranking of the top ten birds (the "top bench") including the coveted best-in-show (BIS) award. The top bench ranking is preceded by a ranking of the top ten advanced birds (the "advanced bench") and the top ten novice birds (the "novice bench"). These rankings are made by comparing the best birds from each "section" in the novice or advanced "divisions". There are seven sections in each division. These sections are normals (greys), cinnamons, lutinos, pearls, pids, whitefaces, and

rare. All birds, including combination color varieties, such as cinnamon pearl or whiteface pied birds are included in one of these 7 sections (as will be defined in the show catalog). The ranking of best birds in each section is achieved by comparing the best birds from each class in the section.

There are a total of 336 possible classes defined by a) the novice or advanced status of the exhibitor, b) whether the bird is old or young--young defined having the current year's leg-band, c) the sex, d) the specific color variety or combination and e) whether the bird is a grandchampion or not. For a couple of examples, mature normal grey males entered by novice exhibitors comprise one class in one section and division, mature whiteface pied hens entered by advanced exhibitors comprise another class in another section and division.

A show begins by a comparison of each novice entry in a given class, considering each class in sequence. There may be several birds in a particular class. On the other hand, since the number of classes far exceeds the number of entries in an average show, it will be evident that many classes will have no entries at all and that a class might often be represented by only 1 or 2 cockatiels.

The top three (or sometimes four) birds in each class are ranked (if there are that many entered). When all classes in a section have been judged, the winners of each class then compete for ranking in the section. The winners of each section later compete for ranking in the novice division. This whole sequential process is then repeated for the advanced entries. The end result is a ranking of top ten novice, top ten advanced, and following the final competition between novice and advanced benches, the top ten overall (top bench).

Before and during the judging, birds are kept behind the show bench and are not available for public browsing. At the completion of judging, the winning birds are briefly left on the bench for public viewing. Shortly thereafter, exhibitors will be loading up their birds, and this also is the best time to try to see closeup both the winning birds as well as some of the unusual and rare colors which may not have made it onto the top bench. **Thus, if you are a spectator wanting to see the most gorgeous cockatiels, be there at the completion of judging (2:30 to 4:30 P.M. depending on the number of entries and speed of judging).**

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## WHO ARE THE JUDGES?

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The club hosting a cockatiel show will have contracted with a member of the NCS Judges' Panel to judge the show. All members of the Judges' Panel have had extensive past experience in both breeding and successfully exhibiting their own cockatiels. To become an NCS judge, a pre-requisite is to achieve champion or grand-champion status for a specified number of his/her own cockatiels. Applicant judges then must pass a written exam and complete training as an apprentice judge. The current members of the NCS Judges' Panel are listed in every issue of *The NCS Journal*.

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## WHAT FACTORS ARE BEING JUDGED?

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Cockatiels are judged according to the "NCS Standard", the details of which are sometimes printed in the show catalog and periodic issues of *The NCS Journal* or are available from the NCS web site. The most important factors relate to the degree to which the bird conforms to the standard, i.e. the conformation of the bird. Conformation includes features such as overall size and body proportions, size of crest, straight back-line, lack of faults such as crossed flight feathers, etc. A second group of factors relate to the condition of the bird (e.g. sleek feathering, no missing or frayed feathers). A third aspect is deportment (the bird must stand on its perch and maintain proper posture). Coloration (depth and uniformity) and staging also are considered. Note, however, that the NCS Standard does not favor any particular color variety over another.

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## SELECTING AND PREPARING YOUR COCKATIELS FOR EXHIBITION:

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For the owner of a single cockatiel, the choice of which bird to enter is easy. For the owner of a flock, however, the first step in preparing to exhibit cockatiels is to select the "show team". The conformation of each cockatiel should be evaluated--Conformation of the bird involves innate features that cannot be modified in an existing bird, but can only be developed through selective breeding. Once your bird(s) with the best conformation have been identified, their condition and deportment can be developed. To enhance a bird's condition, for example, broken or frayed tail or crest feathers can be removed so that they will be replaced by new ones. It takes 8-10 weeks for the replacement of a lost feather--thus one must begin the process of "conditioning" long before the show. Frequent showering or misting will keep the bird clean and will add sheen to the feathers. Deportment can be improved by getting the bird accustomed to spending time in and being carried about in a show cage (a process referred to as "show-cage training").

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## ENTERING YOUR BIRDS IN A SHOW:

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At present, most shows permit any cockatiel to be entered, whether it is banded or not, and irrespective of what organization issued the band. (To receive points toward eventual champion or grand-champion status, however, the bird must be closed-banded with a traceable band, e.g. an NCS or ACS band, or a band which has previously been registered with the NCS-point secretary.) Cockatiels bred (and banded) by an advanced breeder must be shown in the advanced division, even though owned (purchased) by a novice exhibitor. Official show cages are not required but are highly recommended and are used by nearly all advanced exhibitors. The floor of the cage should be covered with a layer of cockatiel seed mix--the specific brand doesn't matter, but avoid seed with red dyes--a wet feather will become stained with the dye and detract from the bird's condition.

Each bird entered in a show must be identified by a numbered cage tag. Cage tags and entry forms are obtained from the show secretary either the evening before or early on the morning of the show. The exhibitor fills out each cage tag with his/her name/address, the band number of the bird, the description of the bird, i.e. its color variety and sex, and the corresponding section and class #'s in which it will be judged (as defined in the show catalog). The tags will then be folded and stapled closed so that the judge sees only the tag # without any exhibitor identification. The entry form also must be filled out with the tag numbers and all the corresponding identification information. One copy of the entry form will be given to the show secretary and a duplicate will be retained by the exhibitor.

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### **HOW CAN YOUR COCKATIEL BECOME A CHAMPION OR GRAND-CHAMPION?**

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Cockatiels which place on the top bench of a show (and have closed, traceable leg bands) will earn "points". The number of points depends on the rank achieved on the bench and on the total number of cockatiels entered in the show. For cockatiels bred on or after January 1, 1996, championship is attained when the bird has achieved best-in-show at least once, and has earned at least 35 points, some of the points coming from at least three different judges. Grand-championship requires 75 points from at least four different judges (and must include at least one best-in-show award). For birds bred in 1995 or earlier, an older set of rules applies; the older requirements are somewhat less difficult to achieve.

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### **WHY BOTHER?**

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Participating in cockatiel shows can be both fun and educational. You'll have the chance to meet lots of people who share your love of cockatiels. In addition, you'll develop a better eye for what makes a gorgeous cockatiel. If you're breeding cockatiels, your participation in shows will help you select your best-conformed birds for future parenting. And its icing on the cake if you come home with plaques or ribbons.

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### **INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION REGARDING SHOWING PARROTS**

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Much of the aforementioned general information about showing cockatiels will also be applicable to showing larger parrots. The following is some specific information pertaining to showing parrots.

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### **THE SOCIETIES WHICH SUPPORT PARROT SHOWS:**

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There are presently two bird societies with which any parrot show may be affiliated. The Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors (SPBE) has been in existence for many years and until recently was the only society promoting competitive shows for parrots. About three years ago, the North American Parrot Society (NAPS) was formed in California and, because of political strife within the SPBE, many show clubs have switched affiliation during the past couple of years from SPBE to NAPS. Some clubs remain affiliated with SPBE. The standard against which each species of parrot is judged is reportedly nearly identical between SPBE and NAPS.

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### **RULES OF ENTRY:**

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**Wing-Clipping**--An important difference in rules of entry is that SPBE does not permit entries with clipped wing feathers. Clipped birds are permissible in NAPS, provided that the method of clipping conforms to NAPS guidelines. For example, I'm told that the outer three flight feathers on each side must be left unclipped.

**Leg-Bands**--It is acceptable (to both SPBE and NAPS) to enter a parrot with or without a leg-band. Either a banded or unbanded bird is eligible to place on the top bench and is eligible to be awarded best-in-show. However, in order to earn "points" for top-bench placement, which will accumulate from successive wins and potentially culminate in a championship or grand-championship title, the parrot must have a "traceable" band. Unlike cockatiel shows, in which closed bands are required, for parrots, either open or closed bands are accepted. Either open or closed bands may be obtained from the AFA, SPBE, or NAPS. The obvious advantage of an open band is that it may be applied to an adult bird, whether wild-caught or domestically bred. For each of these societies, band purchase requires society membership. Both SPBE and NAPS recognize the validity of bands from all three societies. However, it will be necessary to register (for a small fee) the bird and its band # with the society awarding points, if that society was not the society which issued the band.