

## **A Bantam Judging Contest By Lyndon N Irwin**

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A new activity for junior members at the 1979 Southern Missouri Poultry Club show was a Bantam Judging contest. It seems that here in the Midwest at least, -poultry judging contests are basically commercial Leghorn oriented. Our contest was conducted similar to these contests but consisted of five classes of bantams for the young judges to place.

To enter the contest, anyone from eight years old through their senior year in high school, filled in an entry form included in the catalogue. This was done to give us an idea of the number of contestants to expect. The contestants all judged the same classes but for purposes of awards were divided into two categories - junior and senior. Juniors included elementary and junior high students. Seniors included high school contestants (Grades 9-12). Contestants were encouraged in the show catalogue to study their standards before the contest but were not allowed to use them during the contest since everyone would have one.

The actual mechanics of the contest were not too difficult. Five classes were selected. Each class consisted of four bantams of the same variety and sex. This year we had classes of Light Brahma cockerels, Black Belgian d'Anvers pullets, Porcelain d'Uccle cockerels, Birchen Modern Game pullets, and White Sultan cockerels. The contestants did not know ahead of time what breeds would be used. We attempted to select breeds that were not extremely rare in our area. If they had been available I would have used classes of Old English, Seprights, Cochins, etc.

Some of the birds were brought especially for the contest, others were auction birds and others came from the show after they had been judged. It is desirable to use classes that are not real close. We felt that a couple of were classes were too difficult. We did attempt to get some birds with disqualifications such as side sprigs, stubs, etc. With the type of score card used only one disqualified bird can be used in each however, before the contest, a licensed judge (John Wunderlich) officially placed each class. These placings were of course kept secret until the contest was over. The contestants then were brought to the area to judge, We attempted to keep them spread out to avoid not more than two contestants from judging the same class at the same time. Volunteers were available to assist the contestants in removing the birds from the cages if they wanted help. The contest continued until all contestants had placed each class. Then they turned their score cards in for grading

Score cards used had all possible placings for a class of four birds and the contestant marked what he felt was the correct placing. For example, if he felt that Bird #3 was the best in class, #1 was second, #4 was third and #2 had a disqualification the placing 3-1-4— 2 was marked on the card. This placing was then compared with the official judge's placing and a numerical score of 0-100 was assigned. The numerical score is derived from a standard placing evaluation sheet used in all poultry judging contests. The scores of each contestant are then totaled and the highest total wins.

After the cards had been turned in, probably the most valuable part of the contest occurred. Each contestant returned to the judging area and Judge Wunderlich went over each class with the contestants. He stated how he placed the class and then handled each bird again and pointed out strong and weak points to the contestant to justify his placings. He also solicited comments from the contestants as to why they had placed a particular bird as they did. This was the most gratifying part of the contest as the contestants (and their parents and other exhibitors) listened intently to Judge Wunderlich's reasons and it was obvious that they were really learning something about the fine points of bantam judging. They were enthusiastic about the contest and some of the contestants remarked that they were going to begin preparing for the next year's contest by studying their standards earlier.