

What is Polish Perfection?

David Gallagher explains how to find the perfect Pole...



After 40 years of breeding and exhibiting Polish rabbits I now find myself going back to the standard. Trying to explain areas that have shaped my breeding program over the past four decades. Of course nothing is perfect and that's why we do what we do. Hopefully this time served insight into the standard will help us all to get one step closer to that illusive perfect pole.

Firstly always remember that as judges we are fickle beings, being only interested in first impressions. Remembering this rule will help you on your way too many red cards but will not win stock shows, read on to find out what is expected...

TYPE

Balance is the watch word, any exhibit Polish or otherwise should exhibit perfect all round balance it is from this symmetry that champions are made. The ability to look and see something on the table that just takes your eye is often achieved from all round balance. The Polish is a miniature with a big presence on any table. Bucks should be refined like Arabian race horses yet have the power and strength of a shire. Does like dancing ballerinas, slender and graceful.

The Polish is a poser this is why we enjoy it so much. A character full of fire yet delicate to handle. The Polish should stand proudly at the top of any table. Ears straight, head up high, in a perfect line straight down those long slender front legs to feet that just touch the floor. When viewed from the side the back shape should appear as a perfect quarter circle beginning at the nape of the neck and turning through 90 degrees straight down to the bench. Anything less generally means the animal is too long so fails balance. A good test for this is to place one finger behind the ears of the Pole and see if the back line has begun to turn. Two or three fingers and the animal's are too long. Having said that more seasoned breeders will keep doe's that are a little longer for their better breeding characteristics. This is quite acceptable, as we don't show our breeding stock. The belly and chest should be well tucked up we are looking for refinement not a deep heavy looking exhibit.

The head should be well rounded but not as a ball, it should be short and not as we call cow headed a pleasant well rounded look that present the eye and the ears to the best of its ability is the ideal. Does are not as bold as bucks and this rather suits their graceful appearance.

Remember overall balance is the key, think race horse, not cart horse and always look for a sprightly, balanced exhibit.

EARS

When I am looking for a Polish I only look at ear shape for the first 10 weeks of the young polish's life because I find that the ears are the only part of a pole that doesn't change they only get longer. I expect that the ears should be carried erect touching all the way from base to tip and should not be creased or deformed in any way. The tips of the ears should be the same shape as your thumb end when viewed from the front. In mature stock I expect that the ears should be well furred all over and in whites the ears also should be white not pink. Ears are the first and last thing to leave the judging table without good ears carried straight and erect you have not made the first impression that makes the difference between winning and first of the table.

EYE

The eye should be bursting out of the upper half of the Polish head. The eye should be the dominant feature of the Polish. Remembering that the key to any good exhibit is overall natural balance the eye should be the looking glass into the animal. The eye will show the overall health of the exhibit, virility, and character. The eye in REW's should be bursting with fire a deep ruby red blood colour is the ideal with a very thin line of serration around the edge. Pink eyes are not acceptable we want RED EYED WHITES. With a colour you have any amount of patterns and shades to the fur to make the animal appear more attractive. So on a plain white canvas we have only the red eye so the bigger the better. If you take a line from the rabbits nose through to the base of the ears you should in a perfect example find the centre of the eye slightly above this line and equidistant between the nose and the ears.

COAT & COLOUR

The coat should be short approximately 9mm or 3/8 it should be of a fine nature with exquisite texture held close to the body. The Polish coat should be well furred and appear dense. We are not looking for a separate under coat and top coat here, just a quality dense fly back coat again full of life and not dull or jaded in anyway. Moulting is easily seen on a coloured exhibit but remember that white rabbits moult too so look for the appearance of waves and lines in the coat. Remember a fit rabbit in good condition the coat will move seamlessly you should almost feel it wisp against your fingers as you run your hand through the coat. You cannot assess an animal's coat with one finger this only shows speed a party trick at best. The coat should not appear harsh in any way remember quality, sprightly, fly back – full of life. For coloured exhibits follow the normal standards for colour and patterns. In REW and BEW there is only one colour shade of white and this should sparkle anything else is not acceptable.



CONDITION

Eyes shut – hands on. This is a golden rule; no matter how good you think your Polish is without condition you have a nice plain little animal. A fit Polish shown well in good solid condition will go far. It is easy to tell when the condition is right the Pole will appear as a little brick hard and fit, bursting with energy the coat will move in a sprightly fashion and will have an all over quality that gleams in the natural light. The animal's eye will be alert and full of fire. This simple rule and basic level of stockmanship will see you through many classes and if you are lucky enough to be called to the best in show table it goes along way with the other senior judges who may or may not be Polish experts. However exhibits should be well prepared but not over prepared as we are in the business of breeding quality stock. A perfect pole should only require basic preparation.

FAULTS & DISQUALIFICATIONS

Anything that does not meet the standard of perfection that we expect from this fantastic little animal. Also see guidelines mentioned in the BRC Standard book.

FINAL THOUGHTS

With all of that said I wish you the best of luck with this year's breeding and leave you all to digest my humble words – *hopefully they have been of some guidance.*

D. Gallagher & S. Smithey

