

Judging Miniature Pinschers – a critique

Are judges sending exhibitors the wrong message? Please judge the dogs based on their ability to meet the criteria of the breed and what they were bred to do. Chatting with your friends ringside, or cleaning your fingernails sends us the wrong message. When going over our dog on the table, please don't tell us you "hate this breed", or "I never look at dogs over 11 ½ inches." Those types of comments should certainly be passed onto the MPCA Judge's Education Committee. Our standard has a 2 ½ inch height margin. The complete breed standard is on the MPCA web page at www.minpin.org. As I will only be touching a few key areas in this column, I strongly urge approved and provisional min pin judges and breeder/exhibitors to review this site and use this standard when judging/breeding our breed. When in doubt, call a wicket! The standard for height is 10-12 ½ inches at the shoulder. Please don't pass on a dog because you "guessed" at height. If you like it, measure it, and make sure the win will be valid. We, the exhibitors will respect you for it!

Miniature Pinschers are judged on the ground, NOT on the table. Use the table ONLY to check bite, eye color, for disqualifying faults (thumb marks, white marks over 1/2 inch, or disqualifying height), and for the presence of both testicles in males. As long as these important points can be determined, do not fault a Min Pin for moving during the examination. Because Min Pins are short coated, physical features and condition can be easily seen; judges do not need to touch every inch of the dog on the table.

Min Pins should be moved around the ring once before tabling. Because they are "high spirited", this helps to take the "edge" off. While gaitting, especially the first time around the ring, many Min Pins break gait or stop at least once to shake themselves; this is "breed normal" and should not be penalized. A Min Pin should move with head and tail up, however ears do not have to be up while moving. After the initial examination, judges who wish to re-check a point on a dog should ask the handler to place it back on the table. Reaching down on a Min Pin from above can be very disturbing, even though temperament is correct.

A Min Pin's head should not appear too large or too small for his body. From the front, the head appears narrow rather than broad and tapers slightly to the muzzle. Viewed from the side, the skull appears flat, not rounded or domed. The foreface should be strong, showing definite underjaw, have a slight but definite stop and be parallel to the top of the skull. The eyes should be full and oval shaped, not round or bulging. Eye color is as dark as possible in red and black & rust-red Min Pins, even to a true black. This includes the pigmentation around the eye. Chocolate Min Pins however, have self-colored eyes and eye rims. Common deviations include eyes that are too round. Too light eyes and yellow eyes are not desirable. Some chiseling under the eyes is desirable. The Min Pin should have a keen and alert expression. A black nose is required in all colors except chocolates, where the nose is self-colored. Lack of under-jaw (snipey muzzle), "cheekiness", short muzzles and broad or round skulls are undesirable.

Teeth should meet in a scissors bite. Occasionally a judge sees crowded incisors in the bottom jaw giving the impression of a faulty bite. One or two teeth slightly out of line should not be penalized if the bite is otherwise correct. Even bites are a common deviation. It is permissible for Min Pins to have less than six incisors in either the upper or lower jaw as long as the bite is correct, and the jaws line up properly. Undershot or overshot bites are undesirable.

The ears are set high and may be cropped or uncropped, but must stand erect in either instance. Since ear cropping is man-made, an otherwise excellent specimen should not be penalized for a poor ear trim. Ears that are cropped to long, may "wing out" slightly; again this should not be penalized. Lips and cheeks should be tight; loose flews and drooping lips spoil the clean outline of the head.

Faith K. Gordon, 15 Elkhart St., Lackawanna, NY 14218 maudminpin@aol.com (Thank you to the readers who have taken the time during the year to send an email, cards and even phone long distance to chat about a particular column. I'm deeply honored by your acknowledgments.)