

Selecting a Wool, Skein & Garment Judge

An ideal Wool, Skein & Garment Contest judge is one who is well-versed in fiber arts. This should include many spinning techniques, crafting techniques including knit, crochet, weaving, and felting. The ideal judge has experience with many fiber types both natural and synthetic. The ideal judge has used many dyes including chemical and natural. An ideal judge understands the differences in all 4 recognized ARBA Angora breeds and what makes each one unique. The ideal judge should have an idea of handle for the 4 breeds and appreciate appropriateness of yarn and garments made from each breed. The judge does not need to be credentialed.

Guide to Judging a Wool, Skein & Garment Contest

Wool

Wool Fleece is to be judged according to the ARBA Standard of Perfection, without color restrictions. Fleeces are to be placed loosely in a large zipped bag and evaluated as a whole. The Fleece should be consistent throughout and skirted for proper presentation.

Density is the most important factor and is composed of the number of follicles in any given surface area (evaluate this to the best of your ability off the animal), the thickness of each shaft for both guard hair and underwool, and the crimp giving volume to each lock.

Texture should be appropriate for the breed and is composed of the handle of the wool, appropriate proportion of guard hair to underwool, the tactile comfort factor created by the density and balance, and overall smoothness and feel of the locks.

Balance & Condition per ARBA Standard, should be well balanced and fairly good length, with differential between the guard hair and underwool. A dense fresh fleece may be shorter in length than a lifeless, flat, long fleece.

Density and texture are the important factors, but they should be coupled with a uniform length. The underwool should be strong and springy without stress breaks in the staple or signs of molt, parasites, vegetable matter, urine, or dander.

The guard hair should be glossy and alive, not brittle or dry. Points should be reduced for inconsistency of crimp and second cuttings not removed. No preference given to plucked versus sheared fleece.

Skeins

Skeins should be presented neatly twisted and tied as appropriate, suggested 2-4 (no points allotted or reduced for ties). The weight of the skein may determine lengths of skein-wraps (1 yard vs. 2 yard).

Skeins should be untwisted for full evaluation and hung up to determine balance. Balance is to include Twist per Inch, Angle, Presentation & Strength. Condition is to include Handle, Color, & Luster.

The skein should feel fresh and alive and be springy, not crisp, limp or brittle. The texture should be appropriate for the breed(s), display a halo and be non-shedding.

The end-use should be appropriate for the weight, twist, and texture of the skein.

Garments

The original yarn quality should be evaluated based on the guidelines above. The needle or hook size should be appropriate for the gauge of the yarn. Stitches should not be too tight so as the fabric cannot breathe or be flexible, nor too loose unless a lace-appearance is desired.

Woven fabrics should have the appropriate warp to as not distract from the weft and not so tight as to create a stiff fabric. Needle-Felted objects would evaluate the appropriate gauge needle was used or that wet-felt is consistent and even throughout.

Garments that were fulled (knit or woven then felted) will be evaluated on primary gauge followed by felt technique. The overall design and difficulty of the pattern should be considered.

Technique evaluation should include the overall craftsmanship and skill, neat edges and hidden seams, and consistency of stitch/weave. Wet- and Needle-Felted objects would include blended needle poke sites, non-shedding, and strength to the overall structure.