

BETTA SPLENDENS 'PATTERN' JUDGING GUIDANCE

The following is intended for guidelines only. The final pointing will remain the opinion of the individual judge.

By definition, pattern is related to colour and colour is related to pattern. So, to clarify the position a little, when judging the 'colour' category of the fish, we are looking at the clarity and intensity of the colour or colours in the fish or, if you like, the quality of the colour. When judging pattern, we are more concerned with the way in which the colour or colours are arranged on the individual fish.

In the past, we have seen *Betta splendens* as a single variety. The choice of colours was essentially limited to red, blue and on occasion, green. The only other colour available was the 'Cambodian' which is a creamy-white bodied fish with red fins. With the exception of the 'Cambodian', the only fish that was acceptable for show standards was a single or self coloured fish - a mixture of red and blue, for instance, was considered to be very inferior.

Things have changed and moved on at an alarming rate and, no doubt, will continue to do so as breeders develop more and more varieties and colour combinations.

Betta splendens are now readily available in an almost limitless number of colours and shades from albino and white to black. There are reds, blues, greens, yellows, orange, lilac, turquoise and all shades of these colours, for example: light blue, steel blue, royal blue, etc. - you name it, you will be able to find it somewhere. In addition, there is clear or no colour, this is usually referred to as 'Cellophane'. Multiple colours have become completely acceptable, even desirable.

Because of this, it is necessary to adopt robust judging methods that can best accommodate new developments as and when they occur.

The colour and pattern of *Betta splendens* can generally be separated into three main groups:

SINGLE OR SELF-COLOURED FISH

As you would assume, fish in this group are limited to a single colour. Points for pattern in this group are allotted to the solidity and evenness of the colour and that it extends completely across the body and out to the extremities of the fins. The more uneven the colour (areas of lighter or darker shade) the more points should be deducted.

TWO-COLOURED FISH

Fish which contain two distinct and contrasting colours. For example, light blue and mid blue should generally be considered as a lower grade self-coloured fish rather than two-coloured - the colours must contrast with each other sufficiently to form a pleasing pattern. Fish of this group can fall into at least three sub-categories:

Bi-Colour:

A bi-coloured fish has a single colour in the body and a separate and contrasting colour in the fins. For example, the 'Cambodian' which has a creamy coloured body and red fins. Any combination of two contrasting colours is acceptable. Points for pattern should be allotted to the solidity of the colours and how well defined the margins are between the two colours. Points should be deducted for the body colour bleeding into the fins and vice-versa.

Banded or Butterfly:

Butterfly is the term usually given to a fish where the fins have banded colours. In a perfect example, the bands should appear on all fins and form an oval shape surrounding the body of the fish. The colour of the bands around the fish should have an obvious contrast with the main colour of the fish. Any combination of contrasting colours is acceptable and it is perfectly acceptable for one or more bands in the fins to be 'clear' or devoid of colour. Pattern points are awarded for

the contrast and crispness of the banding pattern and how evenly and uniformly spread around the fins it is. Points should be deducted for the main colour bleeding into the bands and vice-versa.

Marbled:

As the name suggests, a marbled fish is one where the body and fins have a base colour with a second contrasting colour forming a marbled pattern over it. In the best fish, the marbled pattern should have sharp, crisp and well-defined borders and should form an even and pleasing pattern throughout the body and fins of the fish. Points for pattern should be deducted for unevenness of the marbling across the entire fish, a lack of balance in the intensity of the marbling and for less well-defined borders between the colours.

MULTI-COLOURED FISH

Fish which contain three or more distinct and contrasting colours. As with two-coloured fish, the colours must be distinct and contrasting, for example, three varying shades of blue should generally be considered as a lower grade self-coloured fish rather than multi-coloured - the colours must contrast with each other sufficiently to form a pleasing pattern. Fish of this group tend to fall into sub-categories:

Banded or Butterfly:

As with a two-coloured fish, the term Butterfly is usually applied to a fish where the fins have banded colours. The fins can contain more than one band and it is acceptable for each band to have a different and contrasting colour. It is also acceptable to have more than one band of the same colour. In a perfect example, the bands should appear on all fins and form an oval shape surrounding the body of the fish. The colour of the bands around the fish should have an obvious contrast with the main colour of the fish. Any combination of contrasting colours is acceptable and it is perfectly acceptable for one or more bands in the fins to be 'clear' or devoid of colour. Pattern points are awarded for the contrast and crispness of the banding pattern and how evenly and uniformly spread around the fins it is. Points should be deducted for the colour in any one band bleeding into other bands or into the main body colour of the fish.

Koi or Marbled:

Marbled fish of three or more colours are often referred to as '*Koi Bettas*'. In exactly the same way as the two-coloured marbled patterns, in the best fish, the marbled pattern should have sharp, crisp and well-defined borders and should form an even and pleasing pattern throughout the body and fins of the fish. It is perfectly acceptable for colour patches to overlap but their borders should still remain sharp and well defined. Points for pattern should be deducted for unevenness of the marbling across the entire fish, a lack of balance in the intensity of the marbling and for less well-defined borders between the colours.

IN CONCLUSION

It should be noted that the above guidelines are by no means complete or comprehensive. Other colour patterns will doubtless continue to be developed and will almost certainly find their way onto the show bench. In these instances, Judges should use their own discretion whilst still applying any relevant part of the above guidelines. In general, any pattern that is 'pleasing to the eye' should be awarded with superior points.

As a warning, several 'made up' names seem to be emerging for various colours and patterns of *Bettas*, names such as 'Mustard Gas' and 'Blue Cambodian'. Very often these names can be invented by breeders and dealers to enhance the sales of their fish. These names can sometimes be a useful guide to aid in the description of a fish and, very often, over the years, they can become permanent and recognised. A fish is not, however, to be considered in any way superior, simply because it has a name where others may not.