

## FROM TABLE JUDGING TO



## POLE-SITTING

This is an article about how Serama competitions are done in the Netherlands. The first game which was played with Seramas in the Netherlands was table judging as done by SCNA in the US. It was a new phenomenon in 2006 for continental Europe, which never was done before. These times have gone by a long time, it was a time everything was relaxed and the game was still a joyful gathering of enthusiasts and not yet a loud-ego issue which lead to soap-like situations. When the nagging started I went my own way, found travel companions and that's how the acceptance of the Serama happened by the Entente Européenne (European chicken club). This was important because a chicken is only a Real Chicken when it can be judged according to the conservative cage judging system was the comment on the table judgments. And so it happened, although it was a matter of the mountain coming to Mohammed and not the usual way, the other way around.

Table judgments continued and then a new game was invented: pole-sitting for Seramas. Instead of giving the Serama room (after inspection for excluding faults) so the bird can show itself in type and character, which are the USPs of the Serama next to size, the Serama were forced to sit motionless on a pole. The slightly nearsighted and less confident types (Serama) immediately sat down because they didn't understand what they had under their feet, especially not when its a slippery wooden pole. Chicken glasses are not for nearsighted Serama but for feather peckers...

With a bit pushing and pulling the Serama has to stand in the 'Standard' pose for a short moment, like a desk light, keep it and voilà there is 'Type' ... I want to stress clearly here that I don't have any comment on this practice, everybody can play his/her game the way s/he wants so you can tie them on skates or put them on a skateboard (already done, not original), it doesn't matter as long as you have fun (together).

## TO...



With Serama you can do all kinds of games due to their nice temper and small size. You can take them into the sandpit as buddy or play more serious grown-up people competitions.

It's a bit of a pity to convict Serama to pole-sitting because it's such a dynamic chicken which interacts directly with its surroundings and which you can be stirred up to show off and 'strutting its stuff'. Table judging though, like in Malaysia, by which in the outset in the Netherlands the Serama went through hands first to check for serious faults and to assure the bird it was okay in the strange environment and a direction what was asked from it. No problem, it's a game. In Indonesia judges are sitting behind a desk and the Serama is put on its own table somewhat away from them and can show itself without anybody touching it. Judges score the Serama after its spontaneous stance and movements.

This 'distant' way of judging is unknown here in the western world. Actually it's quite strange we didn't adopt this distant and free way of judging, there are enough movies on YouTube from Asia. I think we are here too much stuck in cage judging thinking and we want to examine the chicken into detail and therefore it is pulled, pushed, cuddled, fiddled, twiddled, shaped, squeezed, short: everybody is touching Serama!

This is literary because in the Asian countries they don't do this with Serama when they have to show themselves. Isn't it not more logical after adopting the Serama to copy the original way of judging as well so hands-



*Push, pull, squeeze on a slippery pole...*

# HANDS OFF !





## Hands Off Table judging by SCNA starting 2014

### General and First Round Judging:

- 1 Prior to being judged, the Serama can be kept in Special Show Coops or in personal carriers.
- 2 The judging area will be delimited with a rope or colored tape and will be a minimum distance of 5 feet or 1.5 meters between the show attendees and the judging tables for creating a boundary which all should respect.
- 3 Cheering, noise making and waving from the attendees during judging is allowed and encouraged. No objects can be thrown at the tables. The judge(s) can restrict certain behavior of the attendees and exhibitors if it negatively impacts the judging process.
- 4 The judge must have an electronic or mechanical timer set for 80 seconds during general first round judging. The timer will be started by the judge or clerk when the exhibitor sets the Serama on the table. After setting the bird on the table the handler should immediately step outside the judging perimeter.
- 5 The judge will score the Serama using their best knowledge and experience **BY VISUAL APPEARANCE** using the scorecard during the 80 seconds of the first round of judging. **NO TOUCHING** of the Serama is allowed by the judge or anybody else during the judging time. If a flyaway or tablejump is experienced, the handler should correct the Serama's position and retreat outside the judging perimeter.
- 6 The judge will only consider the

off from the Serama? A genuine 'Don't-touch-the-Serama-judging'? For the ones who will go nuts by this idea, after a conventional cage judging? Only touch the bird in a separate judging is what I mean.

The Hands Off Judging method will be reality at SCNA next year (2014) and will be the only way of judging in 2015.

This is a distinct alternative for conventional cage judging so there will be two systems next to each other which don't bite each other due to their distinct judging methods. So the Serama fancier can choose and even play two games if s/he wishes, this is a wealth of fun and joy and excitement and everybody will be happy.

It may be obvious that Hands Off Judging doesn't give room for splitting feathers, its like 'what you don't see from outside the cage isn't bad enough' judging as done in other Anglo-Saxon countries. There is no need for judging leg colours (can be done during conventional judging if you feel this is important), the colour of the nails and if a fault is very severe like a wry tail or wrong wing carriage, you can see it from a distance as well, and the only question had to be 'do we want this yes or no' .

The amount of tail feathers, a small fold in a wattle (not visible from a distance) doesn't matter because a Serama isn't a chicken like all the others and Hands Off Judging is not like conventional judging: looking for -small- faults. Perfection doesn't exist.



The ones who like it their Serama is written down can join the cage judging game. Hands Off Judging is an alternative for table judging which was rather hybrid but focus was always most on character and performance and not on posturing. The Serama is an active chicken, not a static drumstick. A Serama should perform and preferable with a maximum of freedom to do its things so it can be judged for what its best in.

The funny thing of this Hands Off Judging is the role of the owner/breeder/spectators in the judging process, there is room for interaction with the Serama and everybody can encourage the bird to show it from its best side(s). How this looks can be seen on the You Tube movies from Ryan Steagall,



Top: waiting for your turn, left donkey riding Seramas in the Netherlands, 2007.



Tennessee: [www.youtube.com/user/rsteag](http://www.youtube.com/user/rsteag) go to Serama Council of North America SCNA-Nationals, when you click this first movie the others will follow automatically.

Judging me be a very 'zearious buzinezz' for some, and for others its mainly pleasure and being involved in the All Serama Fun. And fun was the most important part in the Netherlands the first year the Seramas were on stage. Judging was only one part of all the aspects, it was about spontaneity, action, dynamics and interaction with the visitors on shows. I still see Henk walking with a borrowed donkey packed with Serama walking through the hall. Or this old grumpy

old man we just put full of Serama everywhere until the moment he started to laugh. For the ones who want to be genteel a white Wyandotte is a much better alternative instead of a Serama.

And to give my opinion: pole-sitting from the todays Dutch Serama doesn't make me comfortable when I see them. This method/game doesn't do justice to the (inter)active nature of this bantam. If it should be all so much Malaysian (Dutch Seramas must have a different type compared to the rest of Europe: the extreme type, which is NOT propagated by the Entente Européenne since it is detrimental for health) why not the original Hands Off Judging like is done in Malaysia? Put the bird on a table instead of a pole and let the Serama do its things the way it want to do it, that's how it started and hopefully the Dutch Seramas will get a chance to do it again.

observations during the 80 seconds and will not consider any other information or prior experience they may have knowledge of with that particular Serama.

- 7 At the end of the 80 seconds, the scorecard will be handed to the exhibitor or handler who will remove the Serama off the table and deliver the scorecard to the tabulator for recording the score.
- 8 In the case of multiple judges at an event during general first round judging, the show management can decide between two methods. Both methods have advantages based on the number of entries in each class.
  - a. Allow multiple Judges to score the same Serama on the same table. Additional scorecards should be supplied for separate scoring. In this case, judges SHOULD NOT discuss their scoring during these 80 seconds. The two scorecards should then be averaged by the showclerk or tabulator.
  - b Request each judge score an entire category separately, where the categories will not be split among multiple judges.
- 9 In all methods, the judge is encouraged to communicate with and explain to the clerk during the scoring process how the points were derived. This is designed to help with the training and form the 'critique eye' of the clerk if they are in the process of becoming a licensed judge.

## Tier and Final judging

- 1 Show management should determine the tiers based upon number of entries. All shows will require a minimum of two tiers to determine champions of each category and then a best of show. There can be more than two tiers in cases where number of entries would suggest further granularity in tiers. This is show management's discretion.
- 2 To prepare for tier judging, tables should be arranged at a distance of at least 10 inches or 25 centimeters between each table. Each of these tables will have a visible tag with a numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc.
- 3 Each Serama will be set on SEPARATE TABLES, where 3 to 5 tables are needed. In case of not enough tables, the tier can be done through process of elimination. The show management is encouraged to have posted a visible erasable board



The Serama encountered a lot of opposition the first two years in the Netherlands, especially table judging made the dinosaurs frown, plus the totally different positioning in the chicken market (pet). My fault, yes mea culpa, it was the last marketing stunt I employed. And to obey the critical remarks of the conservatives; with the help of the European Standard Committee in the person of Andy Verelst (who immediately saw the potential of the Serama for the chicken world) there came a Standard of perfection accompanied by 15 described (and illustrated) colours of which several totally new which can be bred true to colour and which are very common amongst the Serama population in Europe, all this was done for cage judging purposes. This All-in-One proposal was accepted by all European members of the Entente and thus the Serama because an accepted cage-judging-chicken May 2010.

Never before in chicken history a breed was first accepted in Europe before it was accepted in a country. Therefore there is one European Serama Standard with the purpose that all Serama in Europe are bred towards one breeding goal and can be judged all the same, this means unity and exchangeability. No German, Dutch, French type as in so many breeds in different countries. Where unity is hard to obtain or achieve, this is secured for the Serama from day one it was accepted. This is according to the goals of the World Serama Federation Jerry and I once rigged for the same reasons. WSF lost its function when the Entente took the Serama by the wing. The European Serama has been made possible by the Entente Européenne, properly according to the rules.

France and Italy accepted the Serama immediately in all colours for the first coming show season. Other member states wanted to make some national scent marks first and demanded a full acceptance procedure. Meanwhile there are enough countries in Europe where the Serama is a performer and a cage-judging-bird. Exactly as the conservatives wanted. The Entente saw there would be a huge chance lost if the conservatives continued to nag the Serama while the visitors, breeders, audience loved the birds.

Table judging and the typically Dutch game of pole-sitting is a different game and it has nothing to do with classical cage judging. You can't join rules of two different games. So the tennis players can't demand the players of football do this according to the rules of tennis and the other way around.

For the Serama there exists more than one judging system (as everybody wished), none of them is good, or bad, or better than the other, its just different games like tennis and football and you can choose what you like most. Everything is possible if its allowed by the show organisation and as long it is animal and human friendly.

The Serama in all judging systems are the same birds due to one Standard.

So: Hands Off Judging or Freestyle Performing is another variant and quite some fun for both bird and breeder.

or white sheets of paper where to write with a visible marker the cage numbers of the birds needed to be present at the judging area for the next tier.

- 4 The clerk will make entries to the Tier Placement Cards with the leg band #, table # and distribute them to the judge(s). All the Serama in the tier will be set on separate tables assigned by the show clerk at the same time where a timer of 90 seconds will be started. The judge(s) will have 90 seconds to observe and choose the placement of the birds on the 'tier form' previously distributed. In case of multiple judges, the SHOULD NOT communicate with the other judges during these 90 seconds.
- 5 Judges will consider in their placements only the CHARACTER AND PERFORMANCE of the Serama during those 90 seconds, no other previous information or performance will be considered nor the physical appearance as type, length of legs etc.
- 6 If multiple judges are observing the tier, then the show clerk or tabulator will calculate the average between the placements. The lowest points will be the highest in placement.
- 7 After the average has been calculated, if two or more birds have the same number of points, then the clerk will request the scorecard from the first round of judging and will start to compare line by line from the top to bottom until the highest score is found. The bird that has a higher score in one category on the scorecard will be considered the winner.





Just imagine a hall where only roosters crow and suddenly there is this noise of yelling, cackling, chinking and clapping. What's going on there? Ahh... its Serama folks, bit weird types, come lets go and take a look.

Sniggering conservatives titter behind their hands and quietly they're a bit jealous of the fun and enthusiasm. Well, its a bit different than dull scuffling between the rows of cages meanwhile listening to people's health stories...



PHOTOS: Ryan Steagall

