Otter Polish — What You Need to Know

By Jeannie Fisher & Kathi Groves

HOW DID OTTER POLISH BEGIN?

The Polish Otter variety project began in 2011 with Mini Rex selected as the source of color due to its similar body type. The first and second generations were fairly consistent and expressed good type although too large and coats were inconsistent. As the third and fourth generations came around it was evident that coat, head and ear, and type were taking a step backward. The major reasons for culling during the early process were a wrong coat, type too large, long ears, or snipey heads. By the time the fifth and sixth generations arrived, the overall type was improving, and no longer were the occasional rex or satin coats popping out. With each passing generation, the coats are improving and their head and body type are now competitive with the recognized varieties. Currently, we are in or around twelve generations under our belt. Head, ear, eye, type, and fur are consistent however, we continue to strive toward improvement in both type and markings.

WILL THE OTTER GENE MESS UP MY POLISH GENE POOL?

There has been some concern about the Otter gene spoiling or tainting the existing Polish gene pool. I do not show a lot but when I do, a lot of my Polish is solid (self) out of my Otter lines. They have been winning the top 10 and higher at Nationals and Conventions. For those who are still questioning how they will blend into the gene pool let me recap this fact: I began the Otter Polish variety 12 years ago and speak from experience when I say there have been no problems that arise from the addition of the Otter variety to my herd. The Otter variety is compatible to breed to all currently recognized varieties of Polish except Blue-Eyed White which expresses the Vienna gene and will likely result in non-showable animals. Aside from that, they will work into the Polish gene pool quite nicely.

Despite what some might think it is quite simple… **ONE PARENT MUST BE AN OTTER TO MAKE OTTER!** If they do not exhibit otter they cannot carry it. People can simply choose to breed or not breed the Otter variety.

As a variety comparison, in 1999, the broken variety was accepted into the breed and there was much controversy within the club. Many breeders said we could get scattered white hairs and the breed will “lose its simplicity” by adding in the broken variety. Today, the Broken variety is now one of the most popular among exhibitors and generally maintains one the largest classes shown at most shows. So, to all those that are apprehensive about Otter Polish, look back on Polish history.

WHAT IS THE EARLIEST TIMELINE FOR SHOWING OTTER POLISH?

The current Certificate of Development for Otter Polish was issued on October 19, 2022, for black, blue, broken, chocolate, and lilac varieties. Otter Polish may currently be shown at any ARBA-sanctioned show with club approval and shown “AS EXHIBITION ONLY” against their

variety but not in the sanctioned Polish show. Animals are not eligible to compete for any higher award than Best of Variety and exhibitors must provide the judge with a working standard before the show.

The timeline for a PERFECT PASS SHOWING (3 successful presentations) is as follows:

- Step 1: APRC New Variety Exhibition: 2023 ARBA Convention (COMPLETE)
- Step 2: APRC Club Vote: Following the 2023 exhibition the club votes (COMPLETE)
- Step 3: If the club vote passes: First Presentation: 2025 ARBA Convention
- Step 4: If the first presentation passes: Second Presentation: 2026 ARBA Convention
- Step 5: If the second presentation passes: Third Presentation: 2027 ARBA Convention
- Step 6: If the third presentation passes: Variety Approved for show late 2027 – 2028

Keep in mind many other scenarios may take place prolonging the passing of a variety. For specific details on this process refer to the most recent publication of the ARBA Standard of Perfection COD process.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STANDARD OF PERFECTION FOR OTTER POLISH?

Below is the insert for 2021-2024 Edition ARBA Standard of Perfection. This standard may be updated as the otters go through presentations with the ARBA standards committee. The team is planning on working with the ARBA standards committee to remove the "No ticking is preferred" language.

Otter: Black, Blue, Chocolate and Lilac All varieties compete together.
Surface and Undercolor: The surface and undercolor of the head, outside of the ears, front of front feet, outside of hind feet, and the top and sides of the body are to be as described in the respective self varieties.
Markings: Black and Chocolate animals will have orange to creamy orange color markings, while Blue and Lilac animals will have fawn color markings. The belly, nostrils, eye circles, jowls, underside of the tail, inside of ears, back of the front feet and inside of the hind feet and legs are to be cream to creamy orange, highlighted by orange or fawn markings which meet the body color. The color between the belly and flank shall continue down the hind feet as it meets the self color of the body. The undercolor of the belly is to be as described in the respective self varieties. The triangle and collar are to be cream to orange. No ticking is preferred.
Eyes: As described in the respective self varieties.
Faults: Brown or rusty tinge on body color; orange to creamy orange in the areas other than patterned areas; mealiness on the ears, head, or muzzle; faded or indistinct markings; scattered white hairs over body.
Disqualifications from Competition: White spot(s). Lack of belly undercolor as described the respective self varieties.

WHO IS ON THE OTTER CERTIFICATE OF DEVELOPMENT?

The otter polish team includes Jeannie Fisher, Cole Simons, Natasha Semb, Shane Ringdahl and Chris Swartout. I completely trust this team will do right by the Little Aristocrat and introduce a new variety to be proud of. I often hear exhibitors say how stunning the Otter Polish are when seen at shows. This tells me we are on the right track and what we are creating will bring new interest as well as a new variety into the Polish Breed.