

## **GFSA – Ask the Judges**

The judges selected for this series of articles are Larry Christensen, Peter Ponzio, John Parker and Scott Taylor. We will have guest judges occasionally assist in judging specific varieties. Each of these judges has had years of experience in the goldfish hobby, and have acted as judges and breeders of goldfish. A new breed with new fish will be presented each issue, and the judges will rank the fish and provide commentary for their selections.

For the first several articles, we will present pictures of fish from various magazines and books which represent high quality fish for the breed in question. Eventually, we hope that breeders and dealers will send in photographs, so that we can present new varieties to review.

Each judge will assign a rating of 1 – 5, with 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest rating. The results will be tallied and presented in a table at the end of the article.

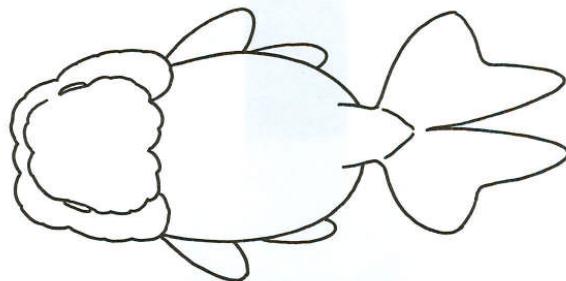
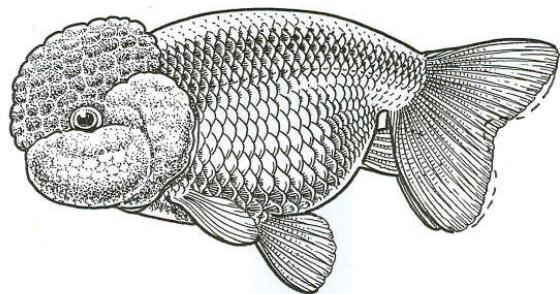
This month we have Tony Reynolds helping for us, with Larry taking a few months off. In this month's column, we will look at Lionheads. The Lionhead was the first dorsal-less fish developed with head growth. The Phoenix or Egg-fish was probably the first fish developed without a dorsal fin, and occurred as a natural mutation. This mutation was bred for the dorsal-less back profile over the years. At some point, another mutation developed which produced head-growth in fish. Over successive generations, the head growth, back profile, and lack of dorsal fin were fixed into the breed we know as the Lionhead. The breeding and fixing of this variety occurred in China.

The Lionhead is a distinctly different fish from the Japanese Ranchu. Lionheads are long fish, with a rectangular or boxy appearance when viewed from the top or side. The area where the caudal peduncle joins the body is somewhat narrow, and does not have the muscular development seen on the Ranchu. The back profile of the Lionhead is rather flat when compared with that of a Ranchu, and the tail fin joins the caudal peduncle at fairly straight angle. The distinguishing characteristic of the Lionhead is the headgrowth, which in fully developed specimens can be quite a sight. The headgrowth should cover the cranial region (top of head), the gill region (opercular), and the cheeks. The growth or "wen" looks like a raspberry, and is extremely full.

As mentioned above, Lionheads are large fish, and do well in outside ponds. The headgrowth requires a large amount of protein for proper development, and Lionheads should be fed live foods when possible, or high-protein foods to

stimulate the headgrowth. Due to their massive "wen" development, Lionheads often have trouble maintaining an upright position in the water when at rest; this is not a sign of trouble (as some people new to keeping these fish first suspect), but is a natural consequence of their development. Lionheads usually have an easier time swimming than do Ranchus, owing to their straighter back and tail position, which is straight out from their back, rather than being angled, as in the Ranchu.

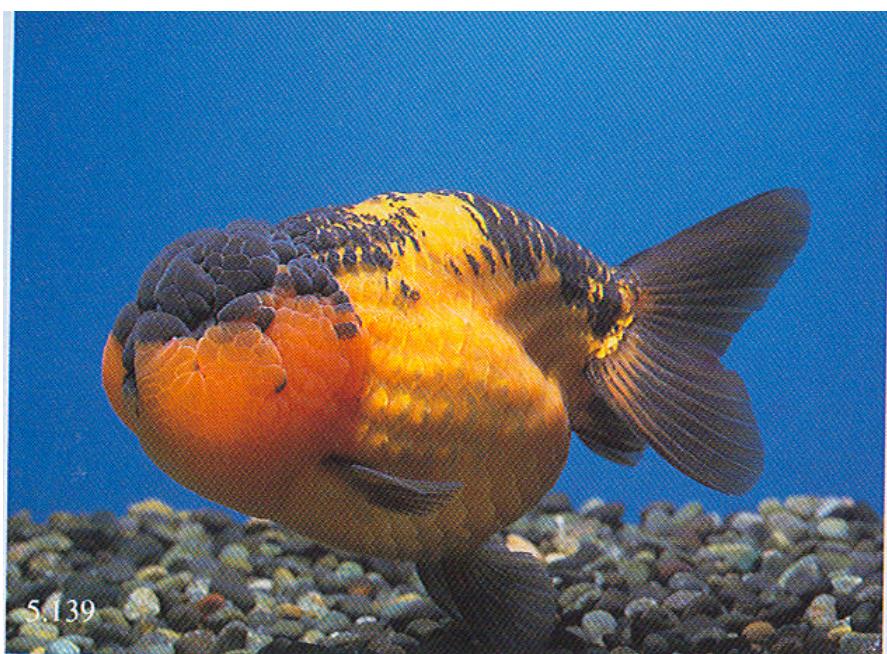
A line drawing, taken from the GFSA breed standards, is presented for the Lionhead, so that readers may become acquainted with the breed. As a final point, most fish shows in the West are judged in aquariums, which present fish from the side profile. Lionheads, like Ranchus, can be judged from the top, but they produce a much less interesting view than does the Ranchu.



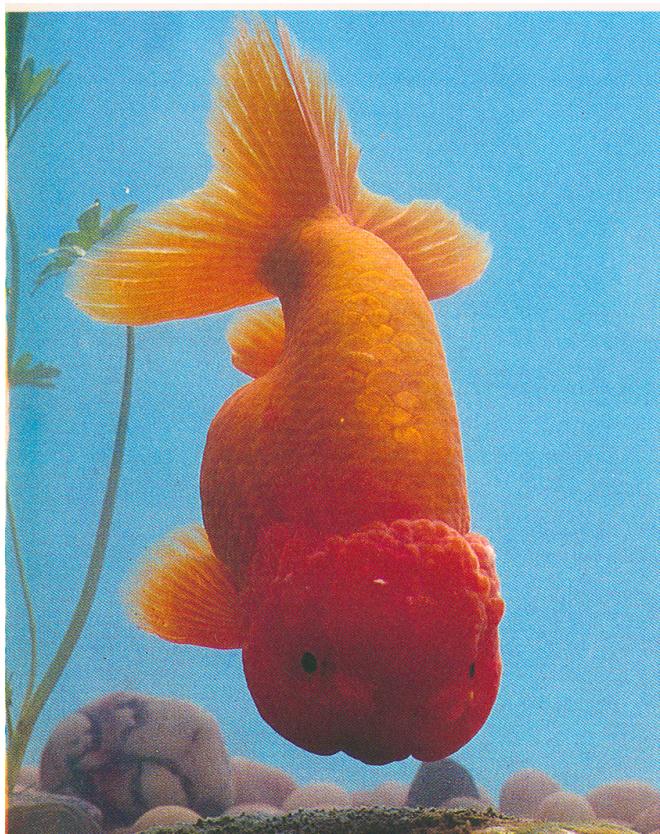
*Chinese Lionhead*

The tail can be partially or completely split, the pectoral, ventral, and anal fins should be paired and proportional. Acceptable scalation for the Lionhead is metallic (most prevalent), nacreous (commonly called calico), and matte. Colors can be orange, red, red and white, white, black, metallic blue, black and white, black and red, natural, and chocolate. Lionheads with a pale yellow body and bright red head were once common, but are fairly rare these days – they are spectacular looking when seen. Calico Lionheads seem to be less prevalent than other colors, but are seen occasionally.

Fish 1 – Red & Black Goldfish, from *Goldfish in Hong Kong* by Hanson Man



Fish 2 – Red Lionhead from Tetra's *Chinese Goldfish*



Fish 3 – Red & White Lionhead from Tetra's *Chinese Goldfish*



Fish 4 Red & White Lionhead, photo courtesy of Terry Cusick



Fish 5 – Red & white Lionhead, photo courtesy of Terry Cusick



## **Judge's Rating and Comments**

### **John Parker**

### **Peter Ponzi**

Each of these fish is a good example of a Lionhead, which makes the competition difficult. Three of the fish are red and white, one is red and black, and the final fish is all red. All the fish have good "wen" development, and a straight back profile. Four of the five fish have the short fin growth that is seen on Lionheads; while one has slightly longer fins than are normally seen on these fish (this might be a reversion to the Phoenix type fish mentioned earlier in the article).

#### **First Place Fish – 5 points; Red & Black Lionhead, fish 1.**

We seldom see Lionhead as accomplished as this fish. Many Lionhead have long, thin bodies and heads which appear to large to be supported by their frames. I believe that we are seeing an inferior kind of Lionhead being imported into the U.S.; this may be due to the lack of demand for high-quality fish. If we had fish such as this being imported, I believe that the Lionhead would gain in popularity.

Judging goldfish starts with an appreciation for the overall look of the fish. It should exhibit good breed characteristics, a good frame and excellent deportment. This fish exhibits all these characteristics. Look at the body shape; it is full and robust looking. The back is arched correctly, the fins well-matched, and the headgrowth is outstanding. Add to these characteristics the beautiful coloration, and this fish stands out from the crowd.

#### **Second Place fish – 4 points; Fish 3, Red & White Lionhead**

Choosing the second place fish was much more difficult than choosing the first place fish. I went back and forth between the second and third fish, but ultimately decided on the third fish – but with great difficulty.

This fish is red and white, with a nice, full body, good paired fins, with just a hint of bumpiness in the back profile. The headgrowth is outstanding, filling all three regions of the head, and the red coloration is intense, almost approaching the blood-red seen on some Ryukins. This, like the first place fish, is a good example of a mature Lionhead, and specimens like these two would go a long way toward making the Lionhead more popular.

### **Third Place fish – 3 points; fish 2, Red Lionhead**

As I mentioned above, I debated placing this fish in second, but awarded second place to the red and white fish. Why? This is a good Lionhead, but is not as accomplished as the second-place fish. Although the caudal (tail fin) is better on this fish than the second place fish, the body is slightly longer, making the caudal peduncle appear elongated when it attaches to the tail. The headgrowth on this fish, while nice, is not as full as on the second place fish. Finally, while the red color is deep and even, it is not as showy as in the second place fish. All in all, this is a very good Lionhead, and I'm sure that most people would be happy to own this fish.

### **Fourth Place – 2 points; fish 5, Red and White mottled Lionhead**

This is an interesting fish for several reasons. The face is striking, and gives the fish a chubby, happy-looking aspect. The coloration is unusual, with a mottled combination of red and white. The fins appear longer than the standard Lionhead type; this fish may have been bred back to a Phoenix (egg fish) to achieve the longer finnage. This is a very nice Lionhead, but it is up against some stiff competition. Unfortunately, because of the competition, this fish falls to fourth place.

### **Fifth Place – 1 point; Red and White Lionhead, 4<sup>th</sup> fish**

Here is another fish that most people would like to own; unfortunately, it is up against very tough competition. This fish has very full hood development and intense coloration. The fins appear paired, and of good size. The back profile is where the fish develops problems, and this is again due to an elongated caudal peduncle. As we mentioned in the opening section of this exercise, Lionheads have a tendency to develop long caudal peduncles that can sometimes make the fish appear too elongated. This fish has such a peduncle, along with a back that slopes too much, making the fish appear unbalanced.

**Tony Reynolds**

**Scott Taylor**

### **Judge's Consensus**

Looking at the attached table, we can see that fish number 3 captured first place, followed by fish number 1. Fish number four finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, with fish number five in 4<sup>th</sup>. The final black Ranchu remained in 5<sup>th</sup> place.

Fish 1 – Calico Ranchu

Fish 2 – Black Ranchu

Fish 3 – Red & White Ranchu

Fish 4 – Black Ranchu

Fish 5 – Calico Ranchu

Fish #	John		Peter		Tony		Scott		Total
	Place	Points	Place	Points	Place	Points	Place	Points	Points
# 1									
# 2									
# 3									
#4									
# 5									