



# The 4-H Poultry Project:

## AN INTRODUCTION

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## **Introduction**

A 4-H poultry project is an exciting and educational opportunity for 4-H members. It requires very little room, expense, or daily chore time. It is also a short-term project, especially when compared to horse, cattle, swine, sheep, and goat projects. Chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys are also much smaller and easier to control and handle.

## **Selecting a Poultry Project**

There are two main types of poultry projects: exhibition birds, which are also used for promoting a specific breed or breeds, and market birds, which are used for egg production (layers) and/or for meat production (broilers). The exhibition project is designed for club members with an avid interest in poultry, production of birds, and the poultry industry as a whole. The layer and/or broiler projects are designed for club members interested in poultry but to a lesser degree. The broiler project participant purchases chicks, feeds and cares for them, fits and grooms them,

shows them, and finally sells the birds while the layer project participant raises the birds to produce eggs, which are then sold to help finance the project.

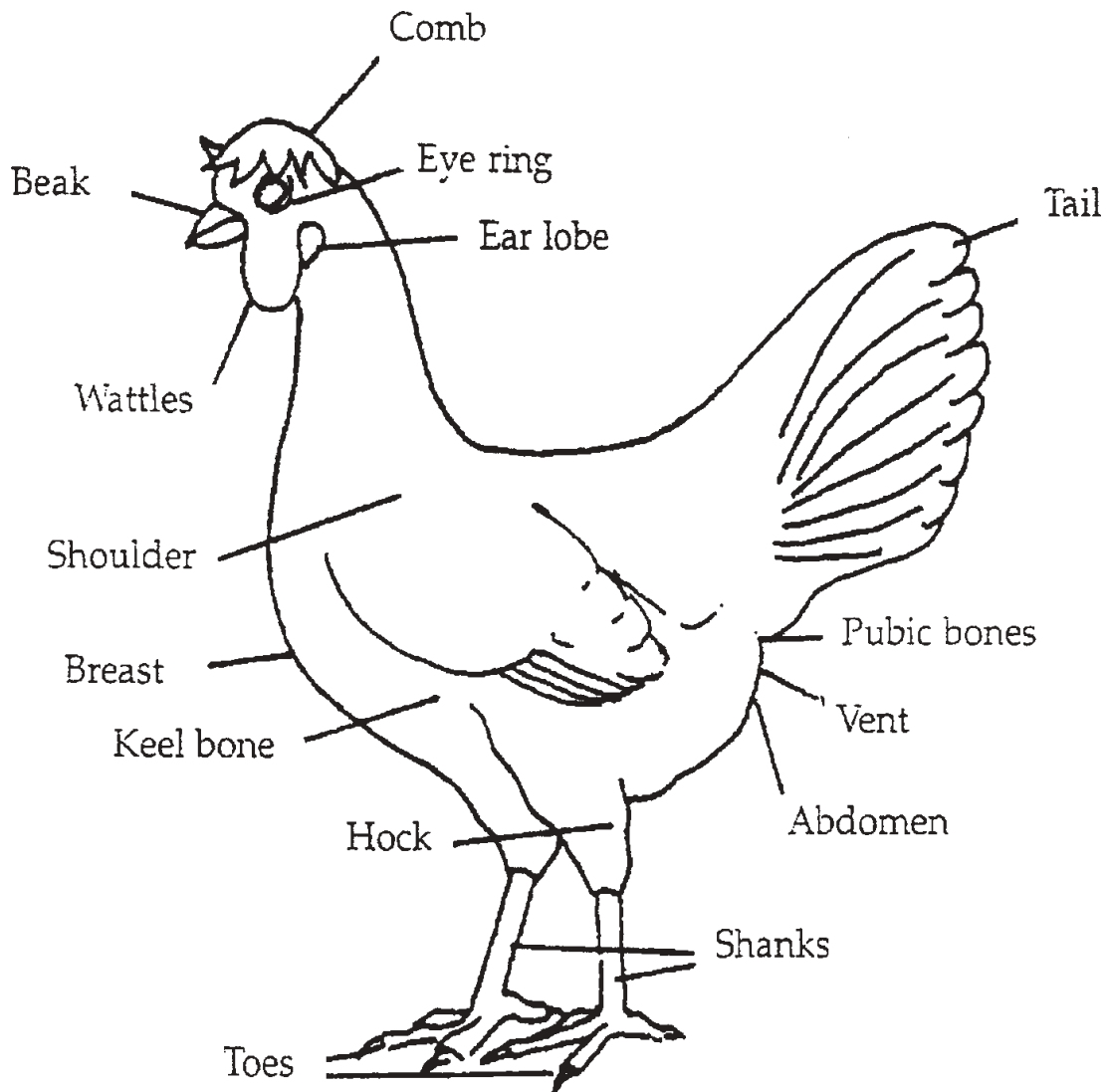
A club member who chooses the exhibition bird project also feeds, cares for, fits, grooms, and shows the birds. However, in contrast to broiler project participants, exhibition bird project participants exhibit breeding birds (chickens, ducks, geese, or turkeys) which are not sold at a county fair youth sale. A club member is able to return home with these birds and to continue to care for them to produce eggs and hatchlings. These eggs and hatchlings are then kept to show, to sell to a market, and/or to sell to other club members for their projects.

The poultry project is one of the most popular 4-H projects in the United States. Birds grow fast and cost less to raise than most other types of livestock. A poultry project requires less room, less daily chore time, less expense (for both feeding and housing), and is a short-term project (for broilers).

## Parts of a Chicken

Selecting a bird to show is as important as the feed and care given to a bird once it comes home. A poultry project should begin with healthy and high-quality birds.

Before one can identify and select a high-quality bird, it is necessary to know what such a bird looks like. The first step in this process is to learn the important parts of a bird. Chickens are the most popular poultry project; therefore, a chicken will be used to illustrate these parts.



## Poultry Terms

Understanding the vocabulary used by poultry producers, exhibitors, and judges is also a necessary step in learning about poultry selection and production. Knowing the terms listed below will be of great assistance when communicating with people in the poultry business.

**avian:** a general word that refers to all feathered birds

**bantam:** small or miniature breeds

**beak:** the horny mouth part of chickens, turkeys, and other land birds

**bill:** the horny mouth part of ducks, geese, and other waterfowl

**bird:** an individual of any avian species

**broiler:** a chicken that is less than eight weeks old which will be tender whether it is fried or broiled; sometimes it is also called a fryer

**breed:** a group of animals with common ancestry and with similar characteristics that are passed on from generation to generation

**breeder:** the owner of birds that are mated

**brood:** to care for a batch of chicks, ducklings, goslings, etc.

**chick:** a newly hatched or young chicken of either sex

**clutch:** a group of eggs in a nest

**cockerel:** a male chicken less than one year old

**comb:** a fleshy prominence on top of the head

**coop:** a place where birds are housed and raised

**crossbred:** an animal with parents of different breeds

**down:** very soft and fluffy feathers on young birds

**drake:** a male duck of any age

**duckling:** a newly hatched or young duck

**embryo:** a developing bird prior to hatching

**exhibition birds:** birds that are shown for breed characteristics such as color, conformation, and other traits

**flock:** a group of chickens, ducks, or turkeys

**fowl:** a general word that refers to most domestic birds

**hatching:** the process of a hatchling coming out of an egg

**hen:** a female chicken more than one year old, a female duck of any age, or a female turkey of any age

**gaggle:** a group of geese

**gander:** a male goose of any age

**gosling:** a newly hatched or young goose

**keel:** the lower cartilage portion of a breast bone

**layers:** poultry (usually chickens) used for egg production

**molting:** shedding or losing feathers

**pigmentation:** the color of the shanks, beak, eye ring, and vent

**poultry:** a general word that is usually used to refer to birds that are typically found on a farm

**pullet:** a female chicken less than one year old



**purebred:** an animal with same-breed parents

**rooster:** a male chicken more than one year old

**shank:** the part of a leg between the hock and the toes

**standard bred:** normal or large-size breeds

**tom:** a male turkey of any age

**vent:** the opening through which an egg is laid

**web:** the skin growing between the toes on ducks, geese, and other waterfowl; the skin between the joints of a wing

**yolk:** the yellow part of an egg

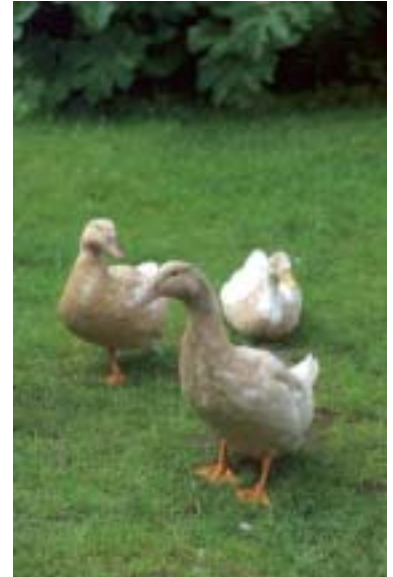
## Poultry Breeds

Tracing the history and development of poultry breeds is an impossible task. However, certain dates and timelines can be established. It is known that when Christopher Columbus landed in America in 1492, he found many types of poultry that were unknown in Europe and Africa.



Records indicate that he took turkeys, which are native to North and Central America, back to Europe. Records also show that when the colonists landed at Jamestown in 1609, they brought certain kinds of poultry and that when the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, the Pilgrims brought

domestic birds from Europe. Other records reveal that Light Brahmas, Cochins, and Langshans were imported to the United States from China and the East Indies in the early 1800s. Interest in poultry grew, and numerous new breeds were developed, leading to the establishment of poultry shows and a standardization of breed characteristics and descriptions.



Breeds of chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, and other types of poultry are distinguished by the characteristics that make them look different from other birds of the same species. Another way of saying this is that a breed is a group of birds with common ancestry and with similar characteristics that are passed on from generation to generation. This is why a baby of a certain breed will always look like its parents.

Pekin ducks are white, and the babies of Pekin ducks are always white. Mallard ducks are smaller than Pekin ducks and have a bright green mark on their heads. Babies of Mallard ducks always grow up to be smaller than Pekin ducks and have a bright green mark on their heads. Barred Plymouth Rock chickens always have feathers that are striped with black and white colorings, and the babies of Barred Plymouth Rock chickens will always grow up to have this same color pattern. Broad-Breasted Bronze turkeys are a dark gray to black to brown color, and their babies will always have this same coloring. White

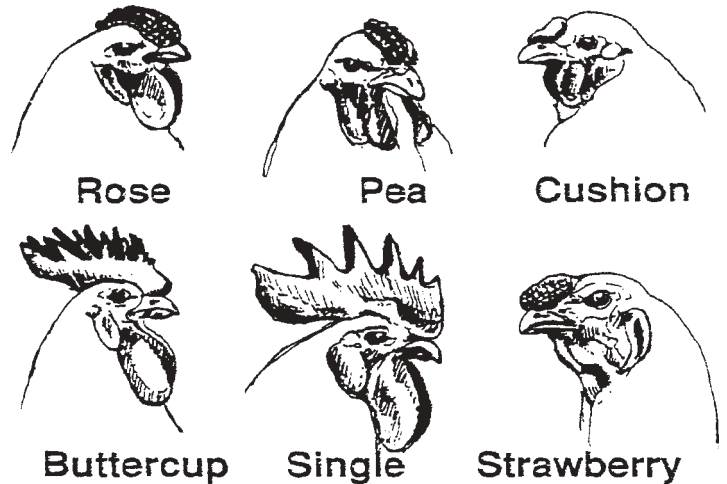


Chinese geese are white, and the babies of White Chinese geese are always white.

Some breeds of birds have yellow beaks or bills, and some have other colors such as brown or black. The shanks and toes of many birds also vary in color. Some are yellow, some are brown, some are black, and some are other colors. As one can tell, there are many things that go together to make up the characteristics that determine the breed of a bird. Therefore, it is important to learn the characteristics and features of a breed to be raised.

Along with the items mentioned in the previous paragraphs, chicken breeds can also be determined by the characteristics of their combs. The comb is a piece of skin that sits atop a chicken's head, and it has six distinguishable shapes. These shapes are used to assess or determine the breed of a chicken. Therefore, it is important to learn the shapes of each type of comb. The names of the six types of combs are rose, pea, cushion, buttercup, single, and strawberry. The following illustrations will help to show the differences between each type of comb.

Why is it important to learn the various breeds of poultry and the characteristics that go into determining a breed? The answer is very simple – one must know what a certain breed looks like in order to buy the correct breed. Also, there are breed characteristics that cannot be seen. Some breeds are raised for egg production (layers), and some breeds are raised for meat (broilers). Either way, it is important to know which breeds are raised for each type of production. Otherwise, someone might purchase a layer breed when he or she really wanted to buy a breed for meat production. Of course, the situation could be reversed and instead of buying the laying



type for egg production, someone could purchase the meat breed. Both cases would result from not knowing the characteristics of the various breeds.

To help individuals learn the characteristics of the various breed of chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys, a system of classifications, qualities, descriptions, and other distinguishing factors has been established by the American Poultry Association. Due to the fact that this association is the recognized authority and reference for poultry in the United States, it is recommended that all individuals interested in poultry obtain a recent edition of the book entitled *The American Standard of Perfection*.

The book divides chickens into a system of classes, breeds, and varieties. A class is a group of breeds which originated in the same country or area of the world. The name of a class gives an indication of where a breed began. The classes are divided as American, Asiatic, Continental, English, Mediterranean, and all other standard breeds. There are also special classes such as Game Bantam, Bantam, Rose Comb Clean-Legged Bantam, and many others.

Most of the chickens grown in commercial poultry production systems are from the American, English, or Mediterranean classes. Breeds in the American class have yellow skin and unfeathered shanks. They adapt easily to different conditions and are used to produce both eggs and meat. Popular breeds in the American class include Dominique, Jersey Giant, New Hampshire, Plymouth Rock, Rhode Island Red, Wyandotte, and a few others. Breeds in the English class are used mostly for meat production. These breeds include Australorp, Cornish, Dorking, and Orpington. The breeds found in the Mediterranean class are noted for egg production. The breeds that fit into this category include Ancona, Leghorn, and Minorca.

Regardless of the specie of bird (chicken, duck, goose, or turkey) that someone is interested in raising and/or exhibiting, it is important to know the characteristics of the different breeds. Therefore, it is recommended that those interested visit with exhibitors, producers, judges, and other poultry professionals. It is also recommended to view books like *The American Standard of Perfection*, which contains illustrations and descriptions of various breeds.

### **Housing, Care, and Feeding**

Successful poultry producers have to take care of many details in order to ensure that their animals are comfortable. After all, a comfortable bird is more likely to be healthy and grow efficiently. The better a producer provides for the proper feed, water housing, and health needs of the birds, the healthier they will be. Therefore, they will produce a greater amount of eggs and meat in a shorter period of time.

No matter how old or healthy a bird is, it will not do very well without a proper place to live. A bird needs a proper home (usually called a coop) as well as proper care, feeding, and watering. The basic requirements of poultry housing are very simple:

- space for resting, feeding, water, and movement
- protection and escape from the weather and from predators (dogs, opossums, foxes, coyotes, and many others)
- adequate ventilation to avoid stale air and moisture buildup

Space requirements vary according to the specie and type of bird. The larger the bird, the more space it needs. Smaller birds, such as bantams, only require two to three square feet of floor space, egg production birds require about three square feet of floor space, and larger chicken breeds and ducks require four to five square feet of floor space. Very large birds such as geese and turkeys require even more room.

Brooding relates to the management, care, and feeding of young chicks, ducklings, or goslings. Hatchlings that are raised with good brooding practices and procedures will grow faster and be healthier. Cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing a brooding house and equipment should be done before each new set of hatchlings arrives. When using a disinfectant, be sure to follow all of the safety instructions and allow it to completely dry before placing four to six inches of bedding in the brooder. The bedding material should be dry, clean, and absorbent. Materials such as wood shavings, sawdust, chopped straw, or similar materials are recommended.

Heat is easily provided by hanging a heat lamp 15 to 18 inches above the bedding. The heat lamp should be a 250-watt infra-red bulb, and it should be turned on the day before the hatchlings arrive to allow time for adjustments. Do not hang a heat lamp by its electrical cord. Use a rope or a chain.

*Safety note: To avoid a possible fire hazard, an adult should set up heat lamps.*

Waterers and feeders should also be placed in a brooder after the disinfectant has completely dried. It is recommended that they be alternately placed around the edge of the brooder and not placed directly under a heat lamp. Also, fill the feeders and waterers the day before the hatchlings arrive. Figure A provides an illustration of these procedures and recommendations.

During the first few days, it is extremely important to watch the birds very closely. Change the water and feed each morning and each evening because it is very important to always have clean feed and fresh water available for birds. It is also very important to adjust the temperature. The recommended temperature for the first few days is about 90 degrees. However, by observing the hatchlings, it can be determined if they are or are not comfortable. If they crowd under the heat lamp, they are cold. If they move away from the heat lamp, they are hot. If they are scattered and dispersed in the brooder, they are comfortable. By watching the hatchlings, one will know whether to move the heat lamp closer to the birds (which increases the temperature) or to move the heat lamp away from them (which decreases the temperature). Figures B, C, and D illustrate each of these situations when viewed from above.

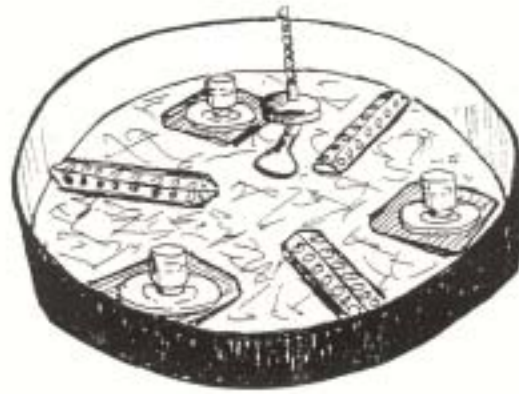


Figure A – Brooder set-up recommendation

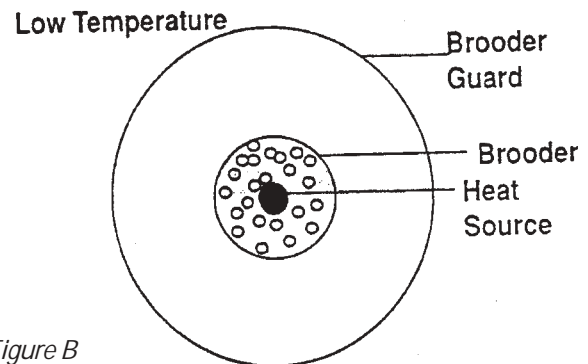


Figure B

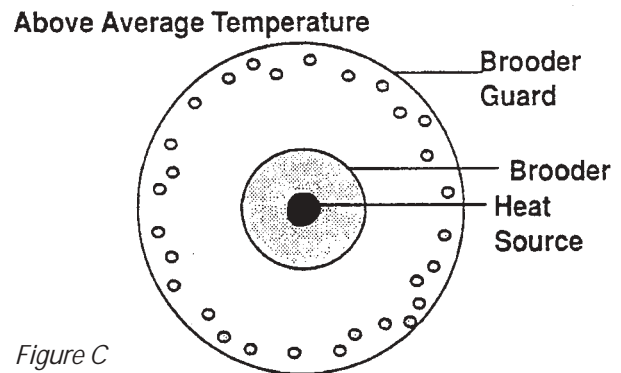


Figure C

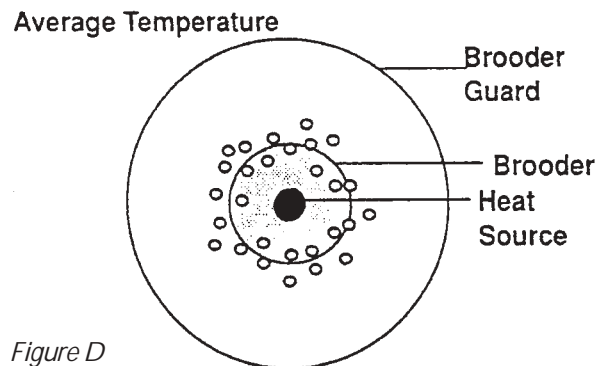


Figure D

The nutrition requirements are different for each species or type of bird. It is important that layers be given feed designed specifically for them, and it is important that broilers be given feed designed for them. It is equally important that ducks, geese, turkeys, quail, guineas, etc. are provided with feed designed specifically for them. Many types of feed are available. Therefore, be sure to doublecheck the feed tags to make sure that the correct type of feed is being purchased.

It is recommended that broilers receive feed with a protein content of at least 24 percent. Twenty percent is recommended for younger pullets (under 8 weeks old), and the guideline for older pullets (8 to 20 weeks old) is 16 percent. The recommendation for laying hens is 15 percent. However, regardless of the type of bird being raised or the feed recommendation, it is extremely important to always provide clean and fresh feed and water.

Providing the proper brooding environment is the most important starting point regardless of whether one is interested in raising birds for meat production or for egg production. Therefore, it will be assumed that the chicks were given a good start in a brooder. If the chicks were in a brooder for two to three weeks, then there



are another four to six weeks of growing time needed to achieve the final broiler weight of seven to eight pounds (live weight). This time period will vary according to the care that the birds are given and according to the breed or cross breeding of the chicks.

However, regardless of the care provided, there are certain guidelines that should be followed. The temperature should be regulated according to the comfort of the chicks. The temperature at the beginning of the project should be about 90 degrees. After the first week, decrease the temperature by five degrees, and then decrease the temperature by two to three degrees every third or fourth day until the temperature is between 70 and 75 degrees. Also, be sure to change the bedding in order to keep it clean and fresh and to provide artificial light 24 hours a day.

Hens and pullets lay more eggs as the number of hours of light increases on a daily basis. Therefore, under natural daylight conditions, they will lay the most eggs in the spring and summer of each year. Making the chickens think it is spring or summer will assure the production of more eggs for a longer period of time. This can be accomplished by using electric lights. It has been found that layers need about 15 hours of light per day (do not allow the light period to decrease), and a 40-watt lightbulb will provide enough light for approximately 100 layers.

Other than controlling the lighting, layers require about the same management, care, and feeding as is needed for raising broilers. This includes keeping the bedding clean, dry, and fresh as well as providing plenty of fresh feed and clean water. The



amount of egg production achieved is a direct result of the care and management provided. However, under normal conditions, pullets will start laying eggs at about 22 weeks old, and hens will average laying approximately 260 eggs per year.

By feeding according to the guidelines discussed on the previous pages, by following the recommendations listed below, and by providing light 24 hours a day to help the hatchlings grow faster (a 40-watt bulb will supply enough light for brooders up to 20 square feet), one should have very few feeding problems and a more successful and enjoyable poultry project. For questions or concerns regarding the care or feeding of poultry, contact a county Cooperative Extension Service office for assistance and advice.

- Finish preparing a brooder at least one day before the arrival of hatchlings.
- Provide clean and fresh feed.
- Provide clean, clear, cool, and fresh water.
- Provide vitamins in the water.
- Provide medications as needed. These are usually best given by adding them to water. Be sure to remove medications in time for the withdrawal time that is stated on every package of medication.

- Rinse feeders and waterers on a daily basis and wash them at least twice a week.
- Adjust the temperature as indicated by the behavior of the birds. The temperature may have to be changed several times each day.
- Provide adequate ventilation.
- Keep bedding clean and dry. Remove and replace wet and/or dirty bedding.
- Gradually change from one ration to another. Mix them together (first more of the original and then more of the new one) and make the change over 3 to 4 days.
- As much as possible, control rats and mice since they can spread disease.
- Isolate a flock, limit visitors, and keep dogs, cats, and pets away from a coop.
- Only keep birds of a similar age together.

### Health care

In order to have a successful poultry project, it is extremely important to start with healthy hatchlings and to maintain the health of the birds throughout the project. Therefore, one must be able to identify the difference between a healthy bird and an unhealthy bird.

A healthy bird will be alert, bright eyed, full breasted, have erect posture, have clean feathers, have a bright and full comb and wattles, and have clean nostrils. A healthy bird will drink plenty of water and eat with frequent eagerness. The stool (manure) will be moist with grayish droppings and a white cap.



An unhealthy bird will have a decreased appetite and will not drink as much. It will also appear listless, depressed, shrunken, and dull eyed. Furthermore, such a bird may have a droopy tail and wings, ruffled or stained feathers, and an off color on the comb and wattles. The stool may be very dry and hard (constipation) or just the opposite – very watery and loose (diarrhea) – and it may also be a different color such as white, green, or yellow.

If a bird appears to be sick, there are two very important steps to follow: tell an adult and separate the sick animal from the other birds. After getting advice from a veterinarian or other professional, follow that advice very carefully.

Many diseases and health problems can affect poultry. Most of these are fairly easy to control once the problem is identified and proper treatment is provided. Furthermore, most health problems can be avoided or kept to a minimum by following these six simple steps:

- Buy only healthy birds from healthy flocks.
- Keep vaccinations up to date.
- Clean coops at least once a week.
- Clean feeders and waterers at least once a week; twice a week is much better.
- Remove and replace bedding that is wet and/or dirty immediately.
- Watch birds closely and on a daily basis for signs of sickness. Inform an adult if a bird appears to be sick.



### Fitting and Grooming

Fitting and grooming does not start at a show or even during the week of a show; it starts the day a bird comes home. Fitting a bird means feeding, watering, and otherwise caring for it so that it achieves and maintains proper condition. Proper condition means that a bird is neither too fat nor too thin. It also means that a bird is healthy, growing, and alert.

Grooming a bird for exhibition is a simple and easy process. However, grooming, like fitting, does not start at a show or even during the week of a show; it starts the day a bird comes home. It is important to have the required supplies and equipment ready for use when they are needed, so prepare and plan for the day when they will be utilized.

Items needed to wash a bird include a tub or something similar to bathe a bird in, a garden hose or some other method for providing water for the tub, warm to hot water (not cold or cool), a mild soap or detergent such as baby shampoo, rags for rubbing (not scrubbing) a bird, and a towel or hand-held hairdryer for drying a bird.

The first step in grooming a bird is to completely wet it. Next, apply the soap and gently (but firmly) rub the dirty and

stained areas of the bird. For the other areas, simply let the bird soak in the warm to hot water. The bird greatly enjoys this process. However, make sure not to get soap in its eyes as it will cause irritation. After a good soaking and the rubbing of dirty or stained spots, completely rinse off the soap and then dry the bird either with a towel or with a hairdryer. Surprising as it may seem, most birds will greatly enjoy a hairdryer. A hairdryer will also provide added fluff and flair to the feathers, which gives a fuller and plumper appearance to the bird. This is something that most judges prefer.

Washing a bird the day before a show or the morning of a show for an afternoon exhibit is recommended. Blow drying against the feathers is recommended only on loosely feathered breeds such as Cochins, Frizzles, Silkies, etc. Using a blowdryer is not recommended on the Mediterranean breeds such as Andalusians, Anconas, Leghorns, Minorcas, etc.

*Grooming note: No amount of grooming can correct or make up for a poor job of feeding, care, and management of a bird.*

## **Showing Poultry**

Showing poultry, like fitting and grooming, does not start at a show; it also starts at home. It begins with the feeding, watering, washing, and other tasks that should be done from the very first day that a bird arrives at its new home. Proper feeding gets a bird to its desired show weight. Proper care gets it in show condition (lean, not fat). Washing, drying, and other grooming techniques make the bird neat, clean, and otherwise presentable to a judge.

Training a bird begins by earning its trust and confidence and by making friends with it. This is accomplished by playing with it, petting it, lifting it, and otherwise spending time with it. The exhibitor must know what is expected of himself or herself and the bird. He or she must also possess some basic knowledge about poultry such as terms, breeds, feeding, and showing. After all, showmanship is an activity in which an exhibitor gets to show that he or she knows how to handle a bird and gets to demonstrate his or her knowledge of poultry and poultry care.

*Showmanship tip: Each exhibitor should know the parts of his or her bird, what breed it is, its sex, how much it is being fed, and the protein percentage of the feed being provided to the bird.*

The first thing for an exhibitor to learn about poultry showmanship is what will be expected of him or her and the bird. The second thing is for an exhibitor to learn the basic information (breed of bird, amount being fed, parts of the bird, etc.) that will be requested by a judge. The third item is for an exhibitor to practice showmanship procedures with the bird. This allows the bird to have some idea of what is expected of it because it will have been shown (several times is recommended) before a contest. Birds may not be the smartest creatures in the world, but practice does make a big difference in their behavior during a contest.

*Training hint: Placing a bird in its carrying crate a couple of times before show day is a good way to train it to be calm when it is in its crate.*



## Poultry Showmanship Score Card\*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Exhibitor's Appearance and Introduction**      **10 possible points**  
 Well groomed and proper attire      5 pts  
 Shares name, age, etc., with judge      5 pts      Score \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. Quality and Condition of Bird**      **10 possible points**  
 Pleasing appearance      2 pts  
 Good, smooth plumage      2 pts  
 Breed and variety characteristics      2 pts  
 Free from diseases and parasites      2 pts  
 Gentle and not flighty      2 pts      Score \_\_\_\_\_

- 3. Exhibitor's Poultry Knowledge**      **20 possible points**  
**a. Poultry Parts**      10 pts  
 Holding bird, identifies the following parts—beak, comb, wattles, eyes, earlobe, ear, hackle feathers (male), neck feathers (female), breast, back—saddle (male), back—cushion (female), tail, tail feathers, wing, flight feathers, covert feathers, thigh, leg hock joint, shank on male, note spur, toes  
 Score \_\_\_\_\_

- b. General Poultry Knowledge**      10 pts  
 The judge will often ask additional questions to test overall knowledge of poultry. These questions are often very helpful to help break a possible tie.  
 Score \_\_\_\_\_

- 4. Examination and Handling of Bird**      **35 possible points**  
 A routine showing these aspects may be in any order and should be smooth:  
 Proper carrying and handling of bird      5 pts  
 Examination of head, wattle, etc.      5 pts  
 Wing color pattern, condition of feathers, check for lice or mite damage      5 pts  
 Show width of back, undercolor      5 pts  
 Check keel bone, breast, feather color, undercolor      5 pts  
 Feet, toes, shank      5 pts  
 Tail, proper carriage, condition      5 pts      Score \_\_\_\_\_

- 5. Placing Bird in a Cage**      **10 possible points**  
 Hold bird in basic hand position      4 pts  
 Open the cage door, turn the bird, put into cage head first      3 pts  
 Place bird gently on the cage floor and close cage door      3 pts      Score \_\_\_\_\_

- 6. Showing Bird in a Cage**      **5 possible points**  
 Stand at relaxed attention facing the judge. Allow the judge to have full view of bird at all times. Listen and follow the judge's directions carefully. The object of this section is to get your bird to "show" or stand alertly and in proper station for its breed. The use of a judging stick is helpful.  
 Score \_\_\_\_\_

- 7. Removing Bird from a Cage**      **10 possible points**  
 Open the cage door. Reach across the bird's back, grasp the far wing, turn the bird so it faces the cage door.      4 pts  
 Slide second hand beneath bird's body, placing one or more fingers between bird's legs and grasping them so the bird, when lifted, can be balanced on the palm of that hand.      3 pts  
 Place first hand on bird's back and remove bird from cage, head first. Come to attention and watch judge for further direction.      3 pts      Score \_\_\_\_\_

**100 Possible Points—Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_**

\* Your local showmanship score card may be different.

The first step in a showmanship contest is getting a bird out of its cage. This is accomplished by opening the door and smoothly putting a hand in the cage and under the bird. Lift the bird and slowly remove it head first from the cage and then close the cage door. It is important to remove it head first so that its feathers do not catch on the cage. The second step is to carry the bird to the judging table. The bird should be carried with it resting on the arm and hand of the exhibitor and against the exhibitor. The exhibitor's other hand should rest on the back of the bird.

The third and fourth steps involve putting the bird gently on the judging table and posing it. The bird should be shown on the table in an alert position with its tail fluffed, head and beak raised, feathers in a smooth and normal stance, and wings in a normal position. Also, during this time exhibitors will be asked to give the judge a front view and rear view as well as right and left side views of the bird. All of these movements will usually be at the direction of the judge or ring master and should be performed smoothly, quickly, quietly, and effortlessly.

The fifth step, which many shows divide into separate steps, includes showing the judge the head of the bird, the wings, the undercolor, the width of the body, the length and width of the breast, the depth of the abdomen, the width of the pubic bones, and the feet and legs of the bird. During each of these steps, the birds can be shown while being held by the exhibitor in the proper position or while being posed in the proper position on the judging table.

The head of a bird is shown by posing the bird and moving its head from side to side

by placing a finger under the beak and guiding the movement of the head. The wings are examined by spreading them so that all of the feathers are exposed for the judge to view. When showing the undercolor, the exhibitor's fingertips should be used to gently pull the tops of the feathers against the direction in which they normally lie. To demonstrate the width of the body of the bird, the exhibitor simply places a thumb and index finger across the back of the bird (directly behind the base of the wings), and the distance between the fingers indicates the width of the body.

All of these procedures can be performed with the bird being posed on the judging table or being held by the exhibitor. Regardless of the method used by the exhibitor, the bird must be posed in the appropriate position for each of the judging aspects.

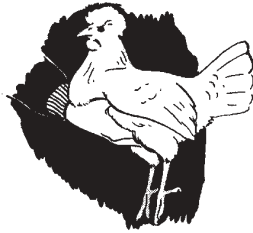
When measuring the breast of the bird, the bird should be held by the exhibitor. Some judges and show officials prefer that the bird be held upside down, and some prefer that it be held upright. This is something that each exhibitor will have to determine from the respective show officials. Regardless of the position, the breast needs to be exposed to the judge so that he or she can check for straightness, thickness, blisters, indentations, or other defects.

In order to accomplish the next two steps, the judge must have a view of the rear of the bird. Therefore, the first part of preparing for these steps involves turning the bird so the judge has the necessary view. This may be done with the bird on the table or being held by the exhibitor. Once the bird

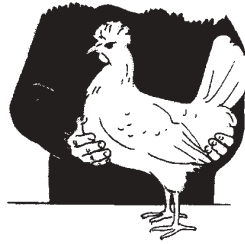
1. Proper Carry



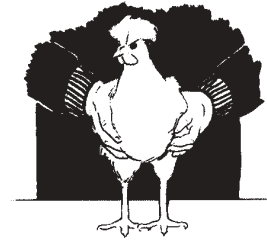
2. Holding Pose



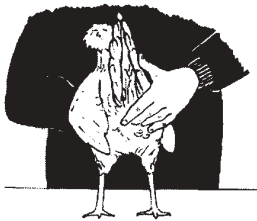
3. Table Pose



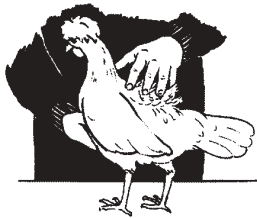
4. Front Pose



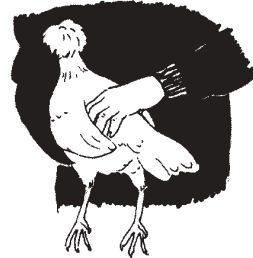
5. Pubic Pose on the table



6. Undercolor/Width-of-Back Pose on the table



7. Width-of-Back Pose holding the bird



8. Inverted Breast Pose



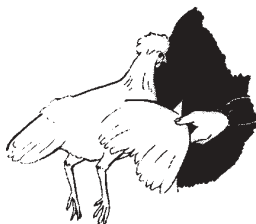
9. Upright Breast Pose



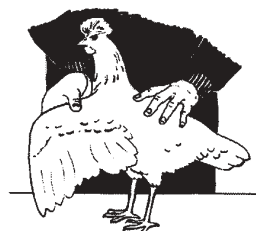
10. Feet and Shanks Pose



11. Wing Pose holding bird



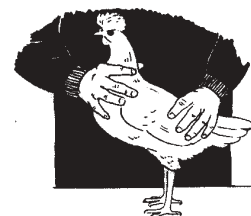
12. Wing Pose on the table



13. Head Pose holding bird



14. Head Pose on the table



is in the correct position, the vent and pubic bones can be shown. To show the vent, simply place as many fingers as possible between the tip of the keel and the pubic bones. To show and demonstrate the width of the pubic bones, place as many fingers as possible between the tips of the two pubic bones.

The next judging step in showmanship is an examination of the feet and legs. This may be accomplished with a front view or a rear view of the bird if the bird is on the table. If the bird is held, it should be positioned with its back against the exhibitor and its head up, thus allowing its feet and legs to be available for inspection by the judge. Either method is acceptable, but the important aspect of this step is that the exhibitor controls the bird and provides the judge with a good view of the feet and legs. Once this step is complete, return the bird to the judging table and pose it in whatever view the judge or ringmaster has requested. For some shows, this step may be incorporated with the step that involves showing the breast. For other shows, this may be the final showmanship step. Other shows might require one additional step of returning the bird to the coop. This is accomplished by holding the bird in the basic hand position and opening the door with the free hand. Place the bird through the door in the same manner that it was removed—slowly, smoothly, and head first—and then set it on the floor of the cage. The final step is to close the coop door.

*Showing tip: Attending showmanship clinics and workshops is a good way to learn more about recommendations and techniques. However, do not just attend – go home and practice what has been learned.*

Training and practicing for showmanship involves preparing oneself as well as teaching the bird. An exhibitor must know what to do and how to do it. To assist in these efforts, a poultry showmanship score card and showmanship illustrations by Tracy duCharme have been provided for review and study. Be mentally prepared. If an exhibitor lacks poise and self-confidence in the show ring, the bird will sense that something isn't right and will become confused and uncomfortable. Consequently, the bird will become excited and hard to control. This will lead to further frustration, and the result is a cycle of confusion and frustration between the exhibitor and the bird.

*Showing hint: Remember, showing involves the appearance and attitude of the exhibitor, the appearance of the bird, and the showing or showmanship of the bird. Also, be on time for the class and be courteous not only to the judge and ringmaster but also to fellow exhibitors.*

#### **To prepare for a show ring:**

- Wear clean, neat, and appropriate clothing.
- Wear boots or hard shoes, not soft shoes.
- Carry a small rag in a pocket to clean the bird or clean up messes caused by it.
- Arrive on time for the appropriate class.
- Know the bird's number (if it has one), weight, breed, sex, and age (hatching date).
- Know other relevant information such as the amount of feed being provided, the protein percentage of the feed, etc.

- Know what the judge looks like and/or is wearing.
- Know what the ringmaster looks like and/or is wearing.

**To prepare a bird for a show ring:**

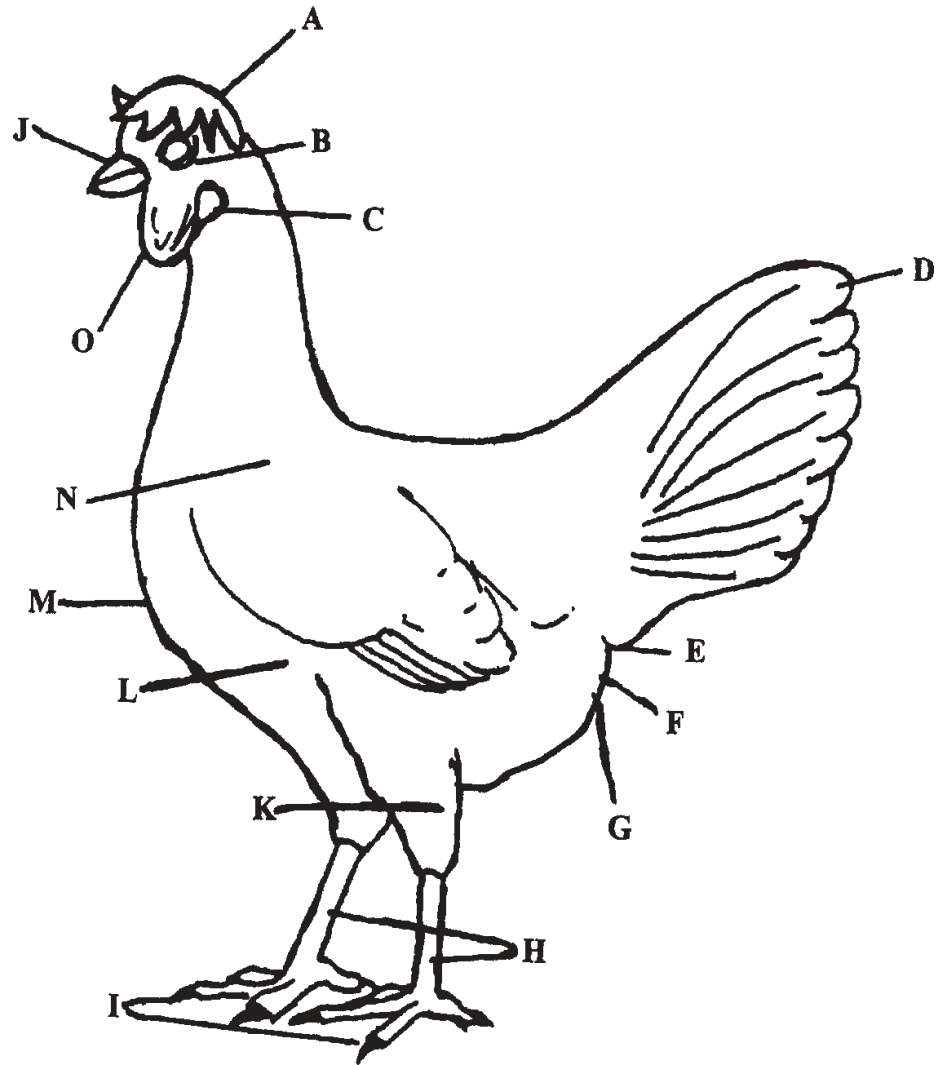
- Wash the bird either the day before the show or the morning of the show if exhibiting in the afternoon.
- On show day, feed the bird at least two hours before show time but only feed approximately half of the usual amount. This keeps the bird attentive and alert.
- On show day, give about half the amount of water usually provided. This prevents the bird from looking overly full and helps keep it active and alert.
- Groom the bird at least twice before show time. This brings out the natural oils as well as removing dust and dirt, resulting in cleaner feathers.
- Before leaving the pen for the show ring, give the bird a drink of water and a final grooming.
- Be calm and gentle with the bird while on the way to the show ring and while in the show ring.



**To work as a team in a show ring:**

- Be aware of the location of both the judge and the ringmaster as well as any instructions they may give.
- Be courteous to the judge, ringmaster, and other exhibitors. Be sure to say “yes sir” or “no sir,” “excuse me,” and “thank you.”
- Know the bird’s location at all times, especially in relation to oneself, other birds, and the judge.
- Maintain the proper distance between oneself and the bird. This distance will change depending on the showmanship step and how one chooses to show the bird (holding it or letting it stand on the table).
- Keep one hand free to open or close doors and to work the latches. Always latch all doors after use.
- Keep a small rag in a pocket; use it to clean the bird if it happens to get dirty.
- Maintain eye contact with the judge.
- Smile, relax, and enjoy the competition.
- Keep cool, calm, and collected; this helps to keep the bird under control.
- Be humble when winning and gracious when losing.
- Remember to thank the judge and congratulate the winners after the final placing.

## Identifying Chicken Parts



- |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|
| A. _____ | F. _____ | K. _____ |
| B. _____ | G. _____ | L. _____ |
| C. _____ | H. _____ | M. _____ |
| D. _____ | I. _____ | N. _____ |
| E. _____ | J. _____ | O. _____ |

## Notes