



## Selecting and Preparing Birds for Exhibition

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Four-H members expecting to make creditable showings in poultry shows must prepare their exhibits prior to show time. Birds not properly selected and prepared for the show will not, as a rule, get very far in a competitive show. Good exhibits stand out and are a credit to the exhibitor.

### When to Select Birds

Exhibitors should select the birds early. Select birds at least two weeks before the show's opening date.

### How to Select for a Show

The first selection of show birds is best made when most of the birds are in the house. Of course, you must know breed type, general and specific disqualifications, for each particular breed. In selecting a trio, choose the best seven or eight pullets and two or three cockerels. Then place the birds in a clean, comfortable pen or show cage. Observe body type and showing qualities very carefully for two or three days before making final decision on specific birds to enter in the show. Some of the more important factors to consider are as follows:

- Select best body type for your breed
- Birds must be uniform in color
- Birds must be well developed
- Feathers must be well developed (not worn or ragged)
- Select healthy birds free of diseases
- Select birds free of disqualifications.

### General Disqualifications

#### I. Deformities of shape and plumage

- a. Deformed beaks
- b. Crooked or otherwise deformed backs
- c. A wing showing clipped flight or secondary feathers
- d. A split wing (a definite slit between primary and secondary wing feathers)
- e. A slipped wing (unfolded and hanging down when bird is standing)
- f. Twisted feathers in wing, sickles and main tail feathers
- g. Entire absence of main tail feathers

- h. Wry tails (decidedly askew to one side)
- i. Squirrel tail (tail feathers that project forward over back)

## **II. Comb**

- a. Lopped single comb except Mediterranean breeds & New Hampshire females
- b. Lopped rose comb (hanging to one side to obstruct sight)
- c. Split comb (blade of comb divided perpendicular)
- d. Absence of spike in all rose comb varieties
- e. Slide sprig or sprigs on all single comb varieties

## **III. Head and adjuncts**

- a. Positive enamel white in the face of Mediterranean breeds
- b. Positive enamel white in ear lobes of American or English breeds

## **IV. Shanks and Toes**

- a. Feather stubs on legs or between toes of clean leg breeds

## **V. Color**

- a. Shanks, feet, or toes of color foreign to the breed
- b. Black in quills, primary, or secondary feathers of white varieties
- c. Red or yellow in the plumage of any black variety
- d. Foreign color in plumage of white varieties, except a slight gray ticking

More information regarding disqualification for recognized breeds/varieties is found in the *American Standard of Perfection* published by the American Poultry Association.

## **Care of Birds Before the Show**

The following suggestions will assist in maintaining quality of birds prior to and during the poultry show:

- a. Place birds in cage with clean straw or wood shavings litter.
- b. Locate cage in a clean, dry, and well ventilated house that is free of drafts.
- c. Handle birds once or twice daily during the last ten days to two weeks.
- d. Keep fresh feed and clean water before birds at all times.
- e. Separate birds that are pecking on cage mates.

## **Washing Birds for the Show**

Wash all white birds before shipping them to the show. The feet of dark colored birds are always washed with warm soapy water; however, if the feathers are not showing signs of being dirty, it is not necessary to wash them.

Properly washed birds may mean the difference between a blue or a white ribbon. Wash the birds at least one day before shipping to assure that feathers are dry, and the bird is properly groomed. Beginners may need to do this two days in advance, for if a good wash is not obtained, the bird will have to be rewashed. The outline below is followed when washing birds for the show.

### **I. Equipment Needed:**

- a. Sweet oil, alcohol, or vaseline
- b. Three washing tubs
- c. Bench or table
- d. Scrub brush
- e. Cage (wire-bottom if possible)
- f. Paper
- g. Towels/cloths
- h. Sponge
- i. Liquid dishwashing detergent

## **II. Procedure for Washing Birds**

- a. Maintain the room for washing birds at 80-90 degrees Fahrenheit and free from drafts.
- b. Use three tubs of water. Fill tub 3/4-full with lukewarm water. Add a mild dishwashing detergent for suds. Place bird in tub and sponge clean. Wash downward on feathers from feather base to tip. Do not wash upward on feathers to prevent fraying. Use a soft brush to clean between toes. Pat water from feathers after the bird is clean.
- c. Fill a second tub 3/4-full with lukewarm water for rinsing. Place bird in the water and rinse soap from the feathers. Leave bird in long enough for feathers to float and take shape or fan out. Repeat the rinsing as described to remove remaining residues of soap. Be sure that no detergent remains on the bird.
- d. Remove the bird from the final rinse water and pat water from the bird's body and feathers using a clean, dry towel. Do not rub. Apply mineral oil or vaseline to comb, shanks, and toes very lightly and rub gently.
- e. A portable hair dryer is excellent for drying the feather if a warm (not hot) setting is used. An alternate method is to place the bird in a clean cage with wire bottom, clean straw, or paper.
- f. Maintain the room temperature at 80-90 degrees and prevent drafts . If temperature is too high, feathers will curl. Leave the bird in a cage until thoroughly dry. Place only one bird in each cage.

## **Removing Birds from Cages**

Often feathers are pulled out, broken, or ruffled when birds are removed from cages. It is impossible for a bird receiving rough treatment to show to its best advantage. Avoid damaged feathers by removing the birds properly. Removing birds from cages is not difficult if a few procedures are practiced. The following suggestions are a guide to use by beginners. After practicing this procedure a few times, it become automatic, and removing birds from cages will be much easier.

- a. Reach into cage and turn the bird so its head faces the door.
- b. Place your right hand on the bird's back and grasp the left wing.
- c. Pull the bird toward the door -- head-first.

- d. Place left hand under the breast, grasp the bird's right wing, and remove bird from cage.
- e. Examine bird while keeping balanced on left hand, or keep right hand on bird's back and over wings when moving the bird.
- f. When returning bird to cage, put it in head-first.

### **Shipping Birds to the Show**

After the birds have been properly prepared, it would be a very serious mistake for them not to reach the show in good condition. Caution at this time is one of the most important steps to ensure a quality poultry exhibit. Some important reminders are as follows:

- a. Bring birds to the show in a clean cage, pen, or box that is free of projecting wires.
- b. Provide clean straw or wood shavings in the cage.
- c. Do not overcrowd birds.
- d. Fasten an identification card to cage with name/address of exhibitor, breed/variety of birds, and class in which birds will compete.

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