



# Poultry Publication

Indiana State Poultry Association, West Lafayette, Indiana

## Exhibition Poultry

**Exhibiting poultry is a year-round commitment. Included in this publication are helpful suggestions for raising healthy and competitive exhibition birds while practicing proper biosecurity.**

### **Maintaining an Exhibition Flock**

Exhibition poultry are judged based on breed aesthetic standards. This is not to be confused with commercial poultry that are judged based on meat and/or egg production capability.

Exhibition birds may be raised in enclosed coops or individual cages. The pen should remain clean and free of parasites. Frequently check birds for lice or mites. Ridding birds of these parasites is less difficult if they are caught early. If you do encounter parasites, immediately separate the infected bird(s). Treat all birds multiple times to ensure that they are parasite-free. NEVER transport an infected bird to a poultry show or swap meet. Monitor the food intake of your flock. Decreased appetite can be a signal for birds being overheated or in general compromised health. Going through excessive amounts of food may be a sign of rodent or wild bird infestation.

### **Selecting from the Flock**

Select birds for exhibition about one month before the show. When selecting exhibition birds for show, reference the standard for that breed. The Standard of Perfection is produced by the American Poultry Association and contains descriptions about the characteristics of each breed of chicken, waterfowl and turkey. Exclude any bird that possesses disqualifications as described by the standard. During judging, a uniform scale of points is used to rank birds. This scale is based upon bird's symmetry, condition, body size, and other qualities such as comb, beak, legs and toes. Select birds that exhibit the best combination of these characteristics.

### **Washing Birds**

Wash all birds at least 3 days before the show and separate from the rest of the flock. To prepare the baths, fill buckets with warm water. Use flea and tick shampoo in the first bucket to rid birds of any parasites that may have not been killed by the dust baths and to remove dirt from feathers and skin. Harsh chemicals such as Malathion are not recommended because over-exposure may cause illness for birds and be potentially hazardous to the person washing the bird. A second bucket is often used to rid the bird of any suds that have not been rinsed. Feather conditioner or glycerin in the third bucket will add shine to the feathers. When washing, gently lower the bird into the water and allow the feathers to soak in each bucket for at least a minute. Always keep the bird's head above water. Pat birds dry with a clean towel and allow the birds to dry in a clean pen.

## **Testing Requirements**

All poultry not purchased or hatched from a National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) certified flock or hatchery within a year must be blood tested for Pullorum-Typhoid (PT) Disease before exhibition. Documentation of this test is required before birds are checked-in. The documentation may be provided through a VS 9-2 form or a County Exhibition Form, signed by a certified NPIP blood-tester.

All Indiana counties are encouraged to have at least one PT certified blood tester. Please call or e-mail ISPA for the name and contact information of the nearest certified blood tester. If you are interested in becoming a certified PT blood tester, ISPA offers two blood testing schools during April in addition to an online re-certification course. For more information about Blood Testing School please visit the link: <http://inpoultry.org/classroomBTS.cfm>

## **Transporting to the Show**

To prevent impairment of conditioning, exhibitors must be careful that feathers, combs, and waddles are not damaged during transportation. Using proper cages will reduce the risk of broken feathers. To avoid the potential spread of disease, do not borrow cages from other poultry owners. Metal cages can be disinfected more thoroughly and are suggested over wood cages. Birds feel more comfortable on a solid floor, so try to avoid cages with wire floors. This will also prevent damage to toes. Always provide fresh bedding during transport. Since birds cannot be washed once they reach the show, it is important to keep them clean during transportation.

## **During the Show**

In most poultry shows, it is the exhibitor's responsibly to care for his or her birds. Ensure that the birds are kept in clean and comfortable conditions. Poultry shows will often allow exhibitors to provide their own cage if a bird is clearly too cramped for its assigned cage. Clean pens are the responsibility of every poultry exhibitor. Replace bedding daily for all birds. Waterfowl may demand extra clean-up than chickens. They also require enough water to be able to clean their bills.

Monitor the weather conditions during the show. Excess heat is often a problem during 4-H poultry shows. Frozen water bottles may provide relief for overheated birds. Birds will not drink warm or dirty water; therefore it is crucial to provide fresh water daily for the birds. If birds appear to be in distress during the show because of excess heat or stress, it may be best to take them home.

## **After the Show**

In order to practice good biosecurity, it is vital to keep the returning birds separate from the remaining flock. Physically separating the birds will ensure that the rest of the flock will not be infected if the exhibition birds have contracted a disease. Allow these birds 3-4 weeks before re-introducing them into the flock. When caring for the separate flocks, visit the original birds before caring for the returning birds to prevent potential diseases or parasites to be spread via clothing or supplies.

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