

Iowa State Fair 4-H Youth Poultry

WHAT IS THE JUDGE LOOKING FOR?

ANSWER: The judge is looking for what he believes is the pen that best represents the class he is judging whether it be a market class, a production class or a class of individual purebred poultry.

The real question is, “How do you, the 4-H’er, select and prepare a pen of poultry that will meet the judges expectations?” We will discuss all three of the basic poultry project areas and how you can prepare your poultry pen.

I. MARKET POULTRY – The meat bird pen

Normally, market poultry is shown in a pen of 3-5 birds. There are three main factors that a judge will be analyzing when he places a market pen.

- 1) Uniformity of the pen
 - a. Uniformity in weight.
 - b. Uniformity in shape and type.
- 2) Fleshing of the birds
 - a. Fleshing on the breast, thighs, legs and back.
 - b. The absence of physical defects that detract or diminish the birds marketability, such as a crooked keel or breast blister.
- 3) General appearance of the birds
 - a. The birds must be washed and clean
 - b. The birds should leave a positive impression of poultry to anyone passing by your cage.

II. PRODUCTION POULTRY – The egg-production pen.

The production class, like the market class is normally judged in a pen of 3-5 birds, and like the market, uniformity is a key element in a good production pen.

- 1) Uniformity of the production pen
 - a. Select a pen of birds with the same weight, shape and type.
 - b. Select a pen of birds that are uniform in their maturity. Do not show a pen with two layers and one non-layer.
 - c. Select a pen of birds that are near entering or are in production.
- 2) General appearance of the birds
 - a. A pen of production birds should be mirror images of one another.
 - b. Be sure that your production pen is free of external parasites.
 - c. Be sure that your production pen is clean and promotes a positive image.

III. EXHIBITION OR PUREBRED POULTRY – Purebred poultry are normally judged by their breed type adherence to the APA-ABA Standard of Perfection. The birds can be judged as individuals or as breeding trios – one male and two females. Only purebred birds should be shown in this class. The following are elements that a judge will consider in placing birds.

- 1) Shape and type – it is imperative that shape and type be considered of greatest importance.
 - a. Head – eyes, beak, wattles, earlobes, comb
 - b. Back – length and width
 - c. Body – abdominal capacity and heart-girth
- 2) Size and Weight
 - a. Each breed has it's own weight and should be as close to that weight as possible.
- 3) Condition
 - a. Vigor – The vigor and health of a bird is of great importance. There should be no evidence of disease, deformities or parasite infestations.
- 4) Color
 - a. It is important to have the correct color pattern in colored varieties. It is also important to have white or black birds that do not have any foreign color in their feathering.
- 5) Feather quality
 - a. The feather type and quality should be suited to whatever breed being shown as specified in the Standard of Perfection.
- 6) Disqualifications and Defects
 - a. Birds exhibited should not have any disqualifying traits and a minimal number of defects.

A Reminder:

Preparation for and care of the birds during transportation to the show is a very important part of having birds that show well. For transporting in groups, make sure the coops are large enough, and never put more than four or five birds per coop. If possible place them in individual, small coops that measure 1 ft. wide X 1.5 ft. deep X 1.5 ft. high. Put about 3 to 4 inches of clean litter in each coop. Doing this will reduce the incidence of bruising and will help keep them clean. Handle the birds carefully, putting them in and taking them out of the coop head first to avoid injury and frayed or broken feathers.