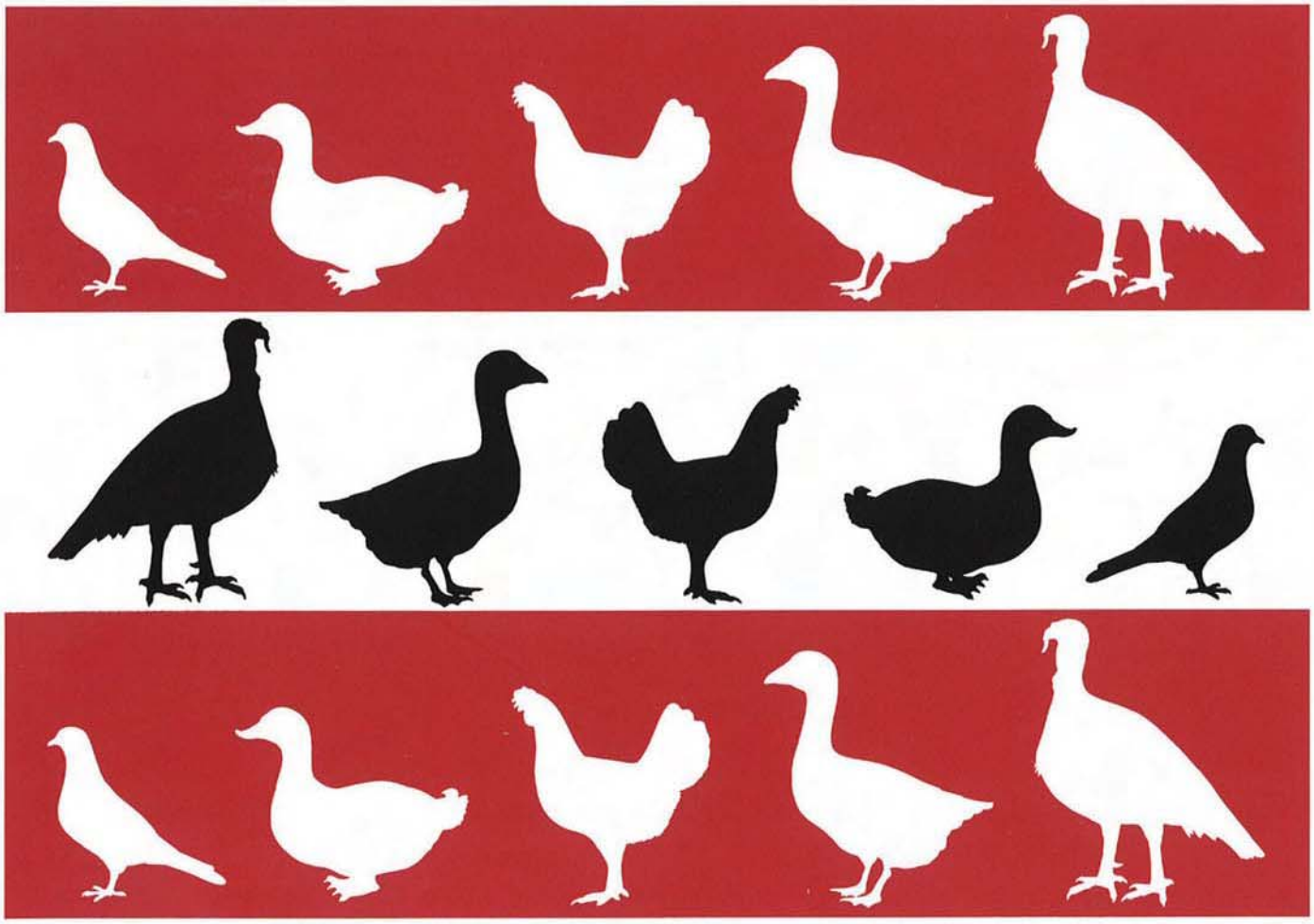
4-H 1520

4-H Poultry Fitting & Showmanship

Member's Guide



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WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF POULTRY FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP

Congratulations on deciding to get involved in fitting and showmanship of poultry! This is an exciting aspect of working with birds that allows you to show some of the skills that aren't highlighted in other poultry contests that focus more on the birds. In fitting and showmanship, equal emphasis is given to both the bird and the person showing the bird.

You may have many reasons for wanting to participate in fitting and showmanship contests. Perhaps you have a special interest in all aspects of raising poultry. Maybe you like the opportunity to compete in contests where sportsmanship is valued. Maybe you want to use your involvement to help educate those in the audience about different breeds and species of poultry. Whatever your reason, keep in mind that your main reason should be to have fun while learning!

As stated above, poultry fitting and showmanship contests focus on the bird and you. The judge will look at your ability to select and care for the bird you show in the contest and your ability to demonstrate your knowledge of handling, posing and examining the bird, and, in some contests, walking the bird. Throughout the contest, the judge will evaluate your skills, attitude and appearance. Fitting and showmanship contests also generally include a quiz as part of the competition.

Keep in mind that fitting and showmanship contests can vary from county to county. Some contests will divide contestants according to their age (for example, junior, intermediate and senior). Other contests will divide contestants according to the number of years they have spent in the poultry project. Be sure to check with your leader before a contest so you know what to expect.

This book focuses on fitting and showmanship contests for 4-H'ers who work with chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese and pigeons. Perhaps you have an interest in only one of these species. Who knows? Maybe by reading about fitting and showing the other species, you'll decide you want to get involved in showing those birds, too! This book is your guide to what you need to know for fitting and showing these birds. If you want to know more about the different types of chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese or pigeons, or if you're interested in learning more about how to raise them, contact your 4-H leader. He or she can guide you to other helpful resources.

Good luck in your fitting and showmanship efforts!

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FITTING

Fitting is a word used to describe how you select a bird for showing and how you care for the bird before the contest—how you feed, groom and train it. Fitting also applies to your general appearance. The information in this section is designed to give you a good overview of what you need to know and do to be successful in the fitting part of a contest. Check the scorecards included at the end of each showmanship section to see how much emphasis is placed on the fitting part of the contest.

Choosing a bird for fitting and showmanship

Whether you plan to show chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese or pigeons, there are some common points to keep in mind when you choose your bird:

1. Check with your 4-H leader to see which breed is best for you. Your leader will help you consider which size bird is best for your size, age and experience. Your leader will also help you think about the effects of a bird's temperament or age on showmanship contests.

2. When possible, don't choose birds that have obvious defects or disqualifications. Check the **Standard of Perfection** for your bird's breed or variety to find out more about these defects or disqualifications. (Ask your leader how you can get a copy of this information.) But keep in mind that if you have only one bird to work with, you should not get overly concerned with its defects, disqualifications or age.

3. Choose your bird about 8 to 12 weeks before the contest so you have ample time to train it for showmanship.

Most importantly, keep in mind that you are looking for a bird that will help you demonstrate your knowledge about birds and your ability to handle them.

The following are some specific things to keep in mind for the different species of birds.

Chickens

✦ Any breed of chicken is acceptable for showmanship, but stay away from breeds that tend to be very flighty.

✦ If possible, choose an older chicken to work with. Younger birds tend to get excited more easily than older ones. However, meat-type birds can be shown anywhere from age 1 to 2 months and over depending on what class they belong to (Cornish game hen, broilers, roasters, etc.).

✦ You may show either a hen (female) or a rooster (male). Select a hen if you want to determine past egg production performance.

Turkeys

✦ Any variety of turkey is acceptable for showmanship. The most common varieties shown at county fairs are Broad Breasted Bronze and Broad Breasted Whites.

✦ A turkey used in a showmanship contest should be at least 8 weeks old. Younger 4-H members may want to select birds that are between 8 and 12 weeks old, but older members may choose birds that are up to 20 weeks of age. Adult birds (those 1 year and older) may be shown, but they may be difficult for younger 4-H'ers to handle.

✦ You may show either a hen (female) or a tom (male).

Ducks

✦ Any domestic breed of duck is acceptable for showmanship. Ducks are classified into four classes according to weight:

Class	Breeds
Heavyweight	Muscovy, Pekin, Aylesbury, Rouen
Medium weight	Cayuga, Crested, Swedish, Buff
Lightweight	Runner, Campbell, Magpie
Bantam	Call, East India, Mallard

Each of these breeds includes a number of different varieties of ducks.

✦ Keep in mind that some breeds can be very flighty and difficult to train, while others are very easily trained.

✦ The duck you show should be at least 2 months old, but you can show older ducks.

✦ You may show either a duck (female) or a drake (male).

Geese

✦ Many breeds of geese are acceptable for showmanship. Like ducks, geese are classified into classes according to weight:

Class	Breeds
Heavyweight	Toulouse, Embden, African
Medium weight	Sebastopol, Pilgrim, American Buff, Saddleback, Pomeranian

Lightweight	Chinese, Tufted Roman, Canada, Egyptian

It's important to choose a breed that is tame enough to work with.

✦ Your goose should be at least 2 months of age.

✦ You may show either a goose (female) or a gander (male).

Pigeons

✦ There are more than 300 varieties of pigeons for you to choose from for showmanship contests. The main thing to look for when selecting a breed should be the breed's temperament and flight habits. If you choose a performing breed, such as a Racing Homer, Tippler or Roller, you will need to pose it in the cage so the bird doesn't fly away from the show table. The Parlor Tumbler is an excellent breed for showmanship because it cannot fly away. Other breeds you might consider are Fan Tails, Jacobins, Kings, Pouters and Modenas.

✦ Avoid selecting a pigeon that is less than 2 months old, but do keep in mind that it's easier to train a younger pigeon than an adult pigeon. Avoid birds that are sitting on eggs or feeding young because they tend to be nervous and want to get back to the nest.

✦ You may show either a hen (female) or a cock (male).

Caring for your bird

Once you decide which bird to enter in the contest, it is very important to give special attention to that bird in the areas of care and feeding. The first thing you may want to do is to separate the bird from any other birds to a place where you can give it extra attention and where it receives more exposure to people. (You may even want to play loud music around the bird to get it used to noise.) By handling your bird often and providing exposure to other people, you may ensure a better performance during the actual contest.

As with any birds you own, be sure to provide the bird with a balanced diet so it is in good overall condition. If you need information on the proper diet for the types of birds you own, refer to your 4-H leader or to your county 4-H office.

Next to training (which is described on page 4), the grooming of your bird is probably the most important thing for you to be concerned with. Be sure to do the following grooming tasks before the show.

8 to 12 weeks before the show:

✦ If your bird has any broken or damaged feathers, pull them out carefully so new feathers will grow into their place by the date of the show. Keep in mind that sometimes it may take longer than 12 weeks for replacement feathers to grow back.

✦ Frequently check your bird for lice and mites so you can treat it ahead of time. Check around the vent area, on the legs and back, and under the wings. If you find lice or mites, treat the bird with a recommended dusting powder or spray (check with your local feed store, farm supply store or 4-H staff for the type to use). **Be sure to follow the directions on the label.**

3 to 5 weeks before the show:

Check again for external parasites and treat the bird if there is a problem.

3 to 5 days before the show:

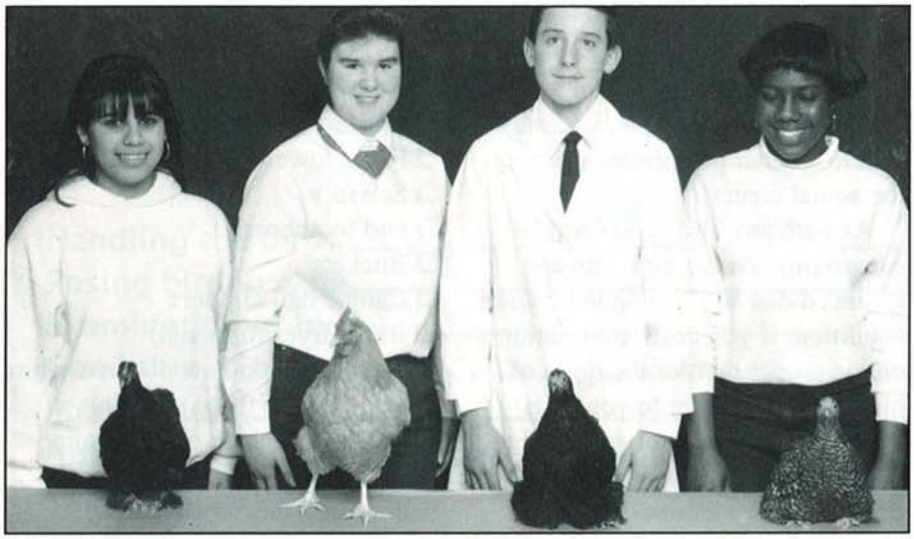
Clean and groom your bird. To do this cleaning, you will need the following materials:

- ❑ Cornmeal (for use with white birds only)
- ❑ Mild soap
- ❑ Warm water
- ❑ Paper towels and soft cloths
- ❑ Scissors
- ❑ Old toothbrush
- ❑ Buckets
- ❑ Canine nail clippers
- ❑ Blow dryer (optional)

Depending on how dirty your bird is, you can use these materials to either give it a bath or to do some spot cleaning. Giving your bird a bath is probably a better idea! Remember that ducks and geese that are allowed to swim in a pond will stay fairly clean, but those kept in cages will probably need to be cleaned. Keep the following points in mind as you clean and groom your bird:

✦ To give your bird a bath, use a laundry tub or two buckets (one should contain lukewarm soapy water and the other should contain lukewarm rinse water). Make sure the water level is below the bird's ears so the water doesn't get into its ears. Use a soft cloth to wash the feathers and a toothbrush to scrub the bird's shanks, toes and feet. Be sure to rinse the bird thoroughly! Remember that by giving your bird a bath ahead of time, the bird has time to recondition its feathers by preening. During the winter, keep the bird in a warm area to dry. You may want to use a blow dryer to dry the bird. **Caution: Keep the blow dryer away from any contact with water.**

✦ If the bird is not really dirty and doesn't require a bath, you may just need to clean some of its feathers. You can clean the feathers of white birds by gently working cornmeal through the feathers from the bird's head to its tail. To clean the feathers of colored birds, use mild soap and warm water. **Do not go against the feathers!** Be sure to rinse the bird thoroughly.



✦ Dry the bird's feathers with a soft cloth or paper towels and a blow dryer. Use the cloth or towels to remove most of the water before you begin blow drying. After you finish drying the bird, keep it in a warm place until it is completely dry.

Chickens: If a chicken has tight feathers (for example, Leghorns), blow dry in the direction of the feathers. If a chicken has fluffy feathers (for example, Cochins), blow dry against the feathers.

✦ Use the toothbrush and warm soapy water to scrub the bird's feet, toes and shanks. Rinse and dry all parts thoroughly.

Chickens: Wash the comb, wattles and beak with a soft cloth.

✦ If necessary, lightly trim a few of the feathers on the abdomen or near the vent area.

✦ Clip the bird's toenails if they are too long, but be careful not to cut them too short. Trim only the transparent part of the nails and do a little at a time; otherwise, the nails might bleed.

One day before the show:

Take the time to apply a few final touches to make your bird look even better. Place a little mineral oil or petroleum jelly on a soft cloth and apply it to the bird's beak or bill, shanks and toes. Be very careful not to apply too much oil or jelly or to touch it to the bird's plumage.

Chickens: Also lightly apply the oil or jelly to the bird's comb and wattles.

Pigeons: For pigeons with "clean" legs (that is, with no feathers on the shanks or on the toes), apply the oil and jelly on the shanks and toes. For pigeons with booted legs, apply the oil or jelly on the toes and a little on the beak. Be careful not to get the oil or jelly on the feathers.

After you're finished with cleaning, be sure the bird's pen is kept clean so the bird doesn't get dirty again.

Training your bird

As stated earlier, it's important for you to work with your bird before the show for two reasons. First, it gets the bird used to the procedure, so it shouldn't be so nervous during the contest. Second, it helps you improve your showing skills. Try to begin training about 6 to 8 weeks prior to the contest.

To train your bird, provide a small table by the bird's cage. Each day, remove the bird from its cage and place it on the table for training. Don't feed the bird before this training. Instead, use food as a "reward" for its cooperation and posing each day during or after the exercises. During each training session, be sure to run through the posing steps (refer to the "Showmanship" section for each species of birds to see these steps) and try to get the bird to pose for a little longer period each time. You should also work through the handling and examination steps as well (and the walking steps if walking the bird is part of your contest) so you and the bird become comfortable with this part of the contest.

Transporting your bird to the show

Transporting the bird to the contest in a proper carrier is very important. Make sure the carrier you use allows for plenty of ventilation, and put some litter in the carrier to keep your bird clean. Place the carrier on the floor inside the car so it doesn't bounce around during the ride to the contest.

Your appearance at the contest

Most fitting and showmanship contests have a dress code for contestants. This code can vary from county to county or from state to state, so be sure to check with your leader ahead of time so you're dressed appropriately. The proper attire may include neat pants and a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt or a show coat over casual clothing or neat pants. Some contests may even require that boys wear a tie and girls wear a scarf. Even if these are not mandatory, you may want to wear nice clothes to give a good impression to the judges. The primary rule is to be neat and clean.

Make sure your hair is properly combed and that you are wearing appropriate shoes. Refer to the section on "Your Attitude and Behavior" on page 5 to learn more about how to conduct yourself.

SHOWMANSHIP

The showmanship part of the contest focuses on your ability to demonstrate your knowledge of handling, posing and examining your bird, and, in some contests, walking your bird. Throughout the contest, the judge will evaluate your skills, attitude and appearance. A quiz may also be part of the contest.

The steps for showing chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese and pigeons are included on pages 6 to 26. Notice that each section includes a diagram of the particular bird that is labeled with the parts of the bird. This diagram should help you follow the various examination steps. Pictures of some of the steps are also included in these sections. The section on showing chickens includes the most photos. If you are interested in showing other species, you may want to refer back to some of the pictures included in the chicken section.

Each section ends with a scorecard that could be used with the contest. Check with your leader ahead of time to learn about the point system being used in your county. The points given for the different parts of the contests may vary depending on the species being shown. The total points for all contests regardless of species is 100.

Your attitude and behavior

During the contest, every eye will be on the participants, so it's absolutely necessary for you to act properly. Be alert and smile as you complete the various steps of showmanship. Look at the judge from time to time to make sure you have his or her attention. It's also important that you are courteous during the contest. If the judge asks you questions, answer them politely. Use the word "sir" or "ma'am" when asking or answering questions. Be sure to display sportsmanship and congratulate your peers after the contest—no matter who wins.

Keep in mind that if all the contestants know what to do and how to perform the various steps of showmanship, the judge will really have to consider things like your attitude and behavior when scoring the contestants.

The poultry quiz

As stated earlier in this book, a quiz may be part of the fitting and showmanship contest. A quiz is usually given to each participant at the end of the contest to test his or her knowledge about the particular species of poultry being shown and his or her general knowledge of poultry. The number and type of questions will depend on things like contestants' age division and the amount of time available.

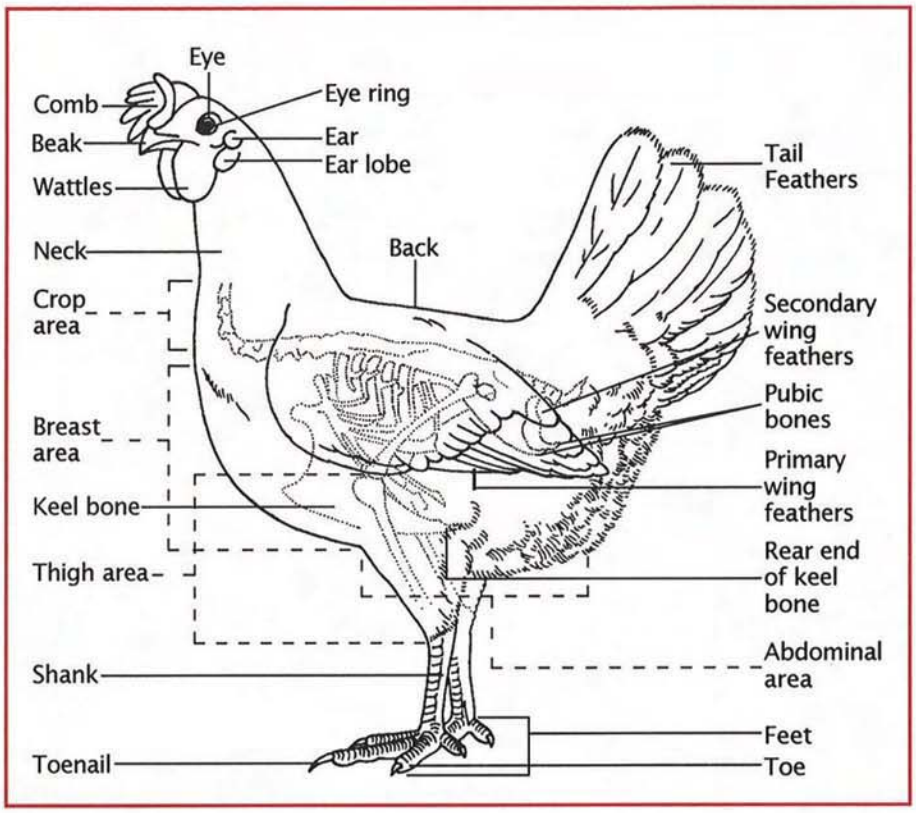
If there are only a few contestants in a division, the judge may decide to call each one to an area to answer a set of questions on a one-to-one basis. The judge will select an area to quiz you near the audience so they can hear the questions and answers. During the questioning, the other contestants will be kept in an area where they cannot hear the questions and answers. All the contestants will be asked the same questions.

To prepare for the poultry quiz, you should spend some time learning what you can about the species of your bird and about poultry in general. Check with your 4-H leader or county 4-H staff for information on resources that would be helpful to you.

SHOWING CHICKENS

In the showing part of the competition, you will be asked to get your chicken from the carrier and take it to the assigned area. Remember that you and the bird are being judged from this point on.

All the directions for showing are for right-handed contestants. Left-handed contestants should use the opposite hand from that noted in the steps.



Handling and posing the chicken

Step 1. Entering the bird in the cage:

✦ Hold the chicken in front of you so the bird's head is facing you *(figure 1)*. Your right palm should be under the breast area of the bird so that one thigh rests between your thumb and index finger and your remaining fingers wrap around the other leg and extend up the side of the body. Place your left hand on the bird's back to provide additional support.

✦ When you reach the cage, release your left hand from the top of the chicken to open the cage *(figure 2)*.

✦ Turn the bird 180 degrees so that the bird faces the doorway of the cage *(figure 3)*.

✦ Slowly place the bird in the cage head first. Then turn the bird toward you for posing *(figure 4)*.

Step 2. Posing the chicken in the cage.

Make sure the bird is in a position facing you before you begin posing the bird. Use your training stick for

HANDLING AND POSING THE CHICKEN

Figure 1

Figure 2

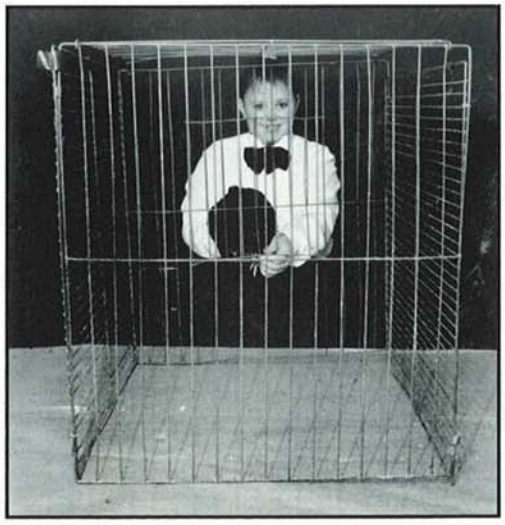


Figure 3

Figure 4

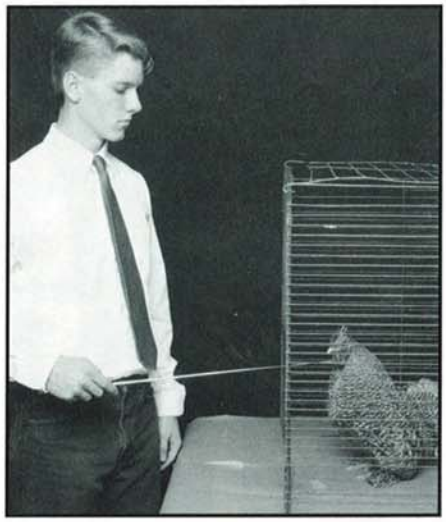


Figure 5

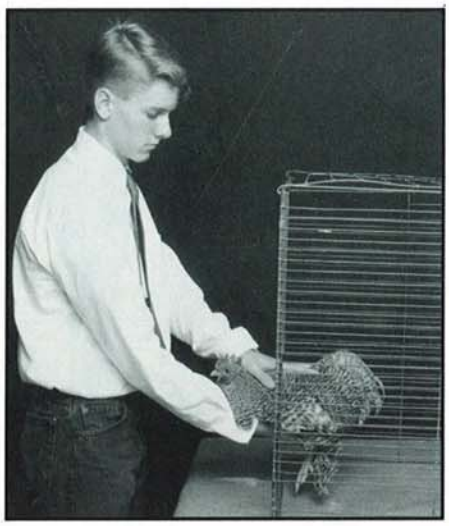


Figure 6

HANDLING AND POSING THE CHICKEN (continued)

posing the bird *(figure 5)*. Touch the stick under the head area touching the wattles. The bird's head should be up and its neck should be fully stretched. The feathers should be tight and smooth. Keep the bird in this erect position for 1 or 2 minutes. If you are using a stick, pose the bird with the stick to maintain the position. When the judge says "Attention," take a step back and stand at attention with your arms at your sides. If there is a lot of competition, the judge may request a longer pose.

Step 3. Remove the chicken from the cage.

When removing the chicken from the cage, always remove it head first *(figure 6)*. Your left hand should be over the bird's back and your right hand should be under the breast, with your fingers grasping the thighs.

Step 4. Final pose.

When you have removed the chicken from the cage, turn to the right 180 degrees and stand at attention. Keep your legs together and stand steady with your left hand straight down at your side. The bird should face you while sitting in the palm of your right hand *(figure 7)*. The judge will release you from this pose after a proper examination.

Posing the chicken on the table

Step 1. You will be asked to move to the area where the tables are placed for posing the chicken. Once you reach this judging area, be

HANDLING (cont.)

Figure 7

POSING THE CHICKEN ON THE TABLE

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

POSING THE CHICKEN ON THE TABLE (continued)

ready to pose your bird when your identification number is announced. This part of showmanship is done by a group of participants at one time, and you will be expected to move to a specified area on the table.

Step 2. Place your chicken on the table facing away from you and stand at ease behind the chicken *(figure 8)*.

Step 3. When you hear the command to pose, immediately set up the bird's legs and properly pose it with the training stick *(figure 9)*. The chicken should not sit down, walk or fly away. It should assume a stationary pose as it did in the cage. You should take a step back and stand at attention facing the judge *(figure10)*.

Step 4. The judge may require that your chicken stand on the table for 1 or 2 minutes at ease (without moving). If your bird moves both legs, then immediately pick it up and step back without disturbing other birds in pose. Do this automatically without the judge's command. You should **not** try to pose the bird again.

Examining the chicken

The examination section follows posing the bird on the table. The bird should be standing on the table. When the judge gives the command to examine your bird, perform the following steps in sequence to determine defects, disqualifications and the condition of your bird.

If your bird is a hen, be sure to examine it to determine its past egg production (pigment loss, handling

EXAMINING THE CHICKEN

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

EXAMINING THE CHICKEN (continued)

quality, abdominal capacity and molt). If you would like more information on how to evaluate past egg production characteristics, check with your 4-H leader or county 4-H staff.

Step 1. Step back from the table 2 to 3 feet and take an overall look at the chicken for general appearance.

Step 2. Examine the head area. Let the bird rest in your left hand while you use your right hand to examine the bird.

✦ Look at both eyes to make sure they are not blind *(figure 11)*. Point your index finger at the eyes. (The bird should blink or move when pointed at.) Notice the pigment around the eye-ring.

✦ Look for defects on the comb *(figure 12)*. Point your index finger at the comb. Also feel the condition (texture) of the comb by holding the comb between your thumb and index finger.

✦ Feel the texture of the wattles and look for any apparent abnormalities *(figure 13)*.

✦ Examine the condition of the feathers on the head area for any sign of molting *(figure 14)*.

✦ Look at the beak for any defects such as crookedness *(figure 15)*. Point your index finger at the beak. Also examine the pigmentation of the beak.

✦ Examine the color of the earlobes to see if they are true to the breed *(figure 16)*. (Refer to the **Standard of Perfection** for guidelines.) Point your index finger at the earlobes. Then locate the ear and point your index finger at it.

Step 3. Run your fingers over the neck area to feel for smoothness

EXAMINING THE CHICKEN (continued)

Figure 17

Figure 18

Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22

EXAMINING THE CHICKEN (continued)

(figure 17). Also notice the feather condition for any sign of molting.

Step 4. Examine the back area. Run your hand over the back area to feel for any abnormalities. Use your hand to measure the length and breadth of the back area to check the conformation of the bird *(figure 18)*. Look at the undercolor of the feathers on the back and check for any sign of molting.

Step 5. Run your hand down the bird's tail. Press the tail feathers toward you and examine the condition of the feathers *(figure 19)*. You may want to count the tail feathers to determine any sign of molting.

Step 6. Examine the vent area. As the bird rests on your left hand, raise your palm toward your head so that the bird's head is facing the ground and the vent area is toward you *(figures 20 and 21)*. Look for lice and mites. If your bird is a hen, examine the condition of the vent to see if the hen is in laying condition. Also look for pigmentation loss. With the bird in the same position, check the "handling quality" of the bird. This is one way used to determine past egg production. This is determined by feeling the skin of the abdominal area for thickness or thinness. Pinch the skin below the vent area and roll it between your fingers to examine this *(figure 22)*. Also, at this time, feel the tip of the pubic bones for thickness and flexibility.

Step 7. If your bird is a hen, measure the abdominal capacity. (Abdominal capacity is another way used to determine the hen's past egg production.) Use your fingers to estimate the distance between the

EXAMINING THE CHICKEN (continued)

Figure 23

Figure 24

Figure 25

Figure 26

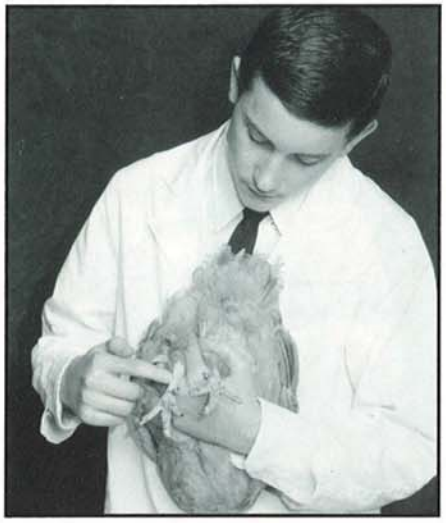


Figure 27

Figure 28

EXAMINING THE CHICKEN (continued)

two pubic bones *(figure 23)* and the distance between the end of the keel bone and top of the pubic bones *(figure 24)*. These measurements will indicate past egg production. If the distance is 1½ inches or less, the bird is not laying at present and has probably not laid many eggs in the past. A distance of over 1½ inches indicates that the bird has laid eggs in the past and may be laying now. A distance of 2 inches or more indicates the chicken has laid many eggs in the past.

Step 8. Check the abdomen. If your bird is a hen, use your fingers to grasp the abdomen to determine its hardness or softness *(figure 25)*. This will further indicate the bird's condition of egg production. A soft, pliable abdomen indicates the bird is currently producing eggs. A hard abdomen indicates that the bird is not producing at present or that the bird is a poor producer. Also check the abdomen for any sign of molting and for the condition of the feathers in this area.

Step 9. Examine the thighs to determine the amount of meat present *(figure 26)*. The thigh area is especially important in meat-type chickens.

Step 10. Examine the shanks to see if they are clean and whether there are mites present *(figure 27)*. A crusty condition indicates that mites are present. Look at the pigment condition on the front and back of the shanks.

Step 11. Examine the toes *(figure 28)*. Check the number of toes present. Remember that certain breeds have five toes. Look for defects on the toes and examine

EXAMINING THE CHICKEN (continued)

Figure 29

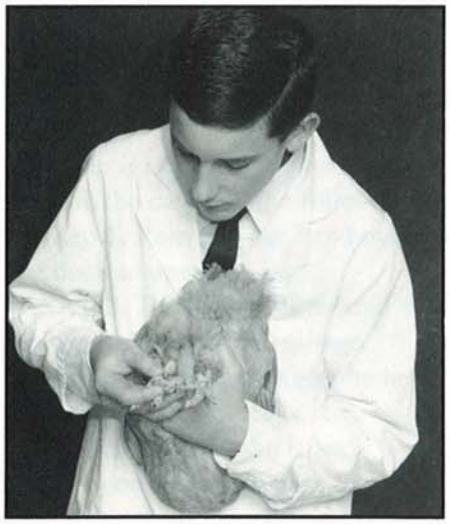


Figure 30

Figure 31

Figure 32

Figure 33

EXAMINING THE CHICKEN(continued)

their pigmentation and the condition of the toenails.

Step 12. Examine the feet *(figure 29)*. Look at the feet of a hen for pigment loss. Also examine the feet for any defects.

Step 13. Examine the breast. In meat-type chickens, the breast is the most important meat area. Use your right palm to feel the length of the keel bone and the meat on it *(figure 30)*. Check the straightness of the keel bone and look for any abnormalities such as indentations. Feel and look at the breast area to determine if there are any breast blisters or other defects on it.

Step 14. Examine the wings. Open and stretch the left wing of the bird with your right hand *(figure 31)*. Tilt the bird slightly away from you. Check the primary and secondary feathers for signs of molting. Take a closer look at the skin on the inside of the wing for lice and mites. Transfer the bird to your right hand. Follow the above directions using your left hand to examine the right wing.

Step 15. Examine the crop area. Feel it with your hands for any abnormalities *(figure 32)*. It is better **not** to feed your bird on the morning of the showmanship contest so you avoid feed in the crop. If there is a great deal of feed in the crop, the bird will "throw up" when turned upside down.

Step 16. Return the bird to the upright position resting on your left hand (*see fig. 33*). Give support on top with your right hand if necessary.

Walking the chicken

If your state includes walking the bird in the showmanship contest, the judge will ask contestants to walk their birds on the table one at a time. The others in the group will step back while holding their birds to wait their turn. Use a lightweight tether around one of the bird's legs and a show stick to direct it on the walk along the table. When the judge tells you to stop, pick up your chicken and step back away from the table.

Condition of the chicken

The judge will also consider your bird's condition, which refers to its production characteristics (meat or egg), feather condition, freedom from defects and general health. The breed characteristics should also be considered. The judge will examine each bird on the table in a general way. This may not be a very detailed examination due to the time factor. However, the judge will thoroughly examine the fitting of the bird to determine how well you have cared for it.

CHICKEN FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Not including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling and posing the bird	**30**
• Holding prior to entry (3)	
• Entering bird in cage (3)	
• Posing bird in cage (15)	
• Removing bird from cage (6)	
• Final pose (3)	
Posing bird on table	**20**
Examination of bird	**20**
Condition of bird	**10**
Poultry quiz	**10**
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	**10**
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	**100**

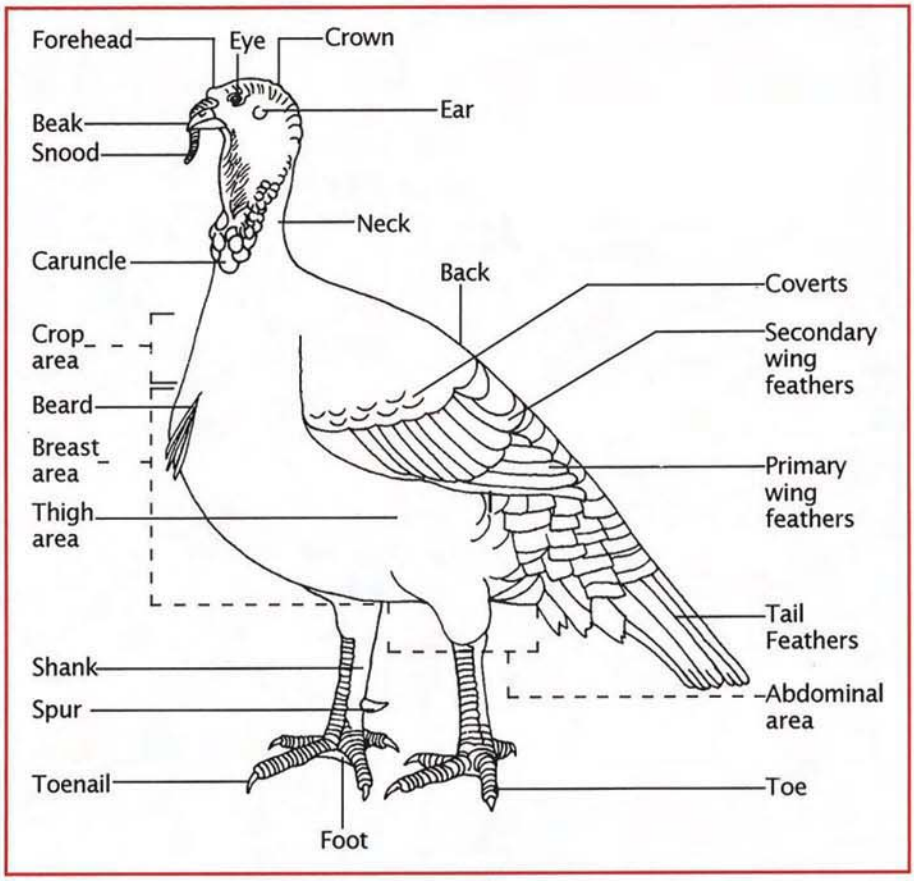
CHICKEN FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling and posing the bird	**25**
• Holding prior to entry (3)	
• Entering bird in cage (3)	
• Posing bird in cage (10)	
• Removing bird from cage (6)	
• Final pose (3)	
Posing bird on table	**15**
Examination of bird	**20**
Walking the bird	**10**
Condition of bird	**10**
Poultry quiz	**10**
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	**10**
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	**100**

SHOWING TURKEYS

This section of the competition starts from the time you are asked to take your bird from the carrier to the show area. Remember that you and the bird are being judged from that point on.

All the directions for showing are for right-handed contestants. Left-handed contestants should use the opposite hand from that noted in the steps.



Handling the turkey

Handling a turkey is not an easy task. Work with your bird on a regular basis. The size of your bird in relation to your size is important. There are several ways to handle a turkey when moving it from one place to another, but the following method is recommended.

Step 1. Open the door of the cage.

Step 2. Turn the turkey sideways so it stands with its head to your left side.

Step 3. Hold both legs firmly at the shank area with your right hand.

Step 4. Put your left hand over the bird's right wing and under its breast area.

Step 5. Bring the turkey against your chest and walk toward the show table.

Step 6. Slowly place the bird sideways on the table where you are assigned. Stand back while controlling the turkey. Your bird should stand with its head to the left. Look at the judge for any instructions.

Posing the turkey

You will be given instructions by the judge to pose your turkey. Posing the turkey on the table is done on an individual basis or as a group. You should begin by standing behind the table with your turkey already placed on the table in a sideways posture.

Step 1. Hold the turkey by placing one hand under its breast area near the body center. Use the other hand to hold the right leg.

Step 2. Turn the turkey to the right so its head is to the front of the table and pointing away from you.

Step 3. Set the legs of the turkey about 6 to 9 inches apart (depending upon the size and age of the bird) on a straight line, when looking from the side.

Step 4. Use a training stick or your left index finger to touch the area beneath the lower beak to obtain proper carriage. At this time, the turkey should stretch out its neck as high as possible.

Step 5. Set the wings properly over the body and tail.

Step 6. Use the stick to set up the tail. Simply touch the stick under the tail feathers so the turkey will hold the tail tight and display a nice tail carriage.

Step 7. Lightly run the show stick over the back of the bird's neck and continue the stroke downward. Continue to stroke the stick over the tail area. Use one gentle stroke from the neck to the tail area.

Step 8. Use your left pointing finger or show stick under the beak and the right palm of your hand under the tail carriage to set the bird's position.

Step 9. Stand behind the table slightly turned to the right and pose along with the turkey while watching the judge. Tilt your head to keep the judge in view at all times.

Step 10. When the judge gives the command "attention," slowly remove your hands from the bird

and turn a step to the left so you are right behind the bird facing the judge. Stand in an attention posture and look confident. The bird should remain in the "pose" position. If your bird moves a leg, then immediately pick up the leg and set it back without disturbing the other birds in pose. If your turkey moves both of its legs, then you should pick up the bird, step back from the table and wait for further instructions. You should **not** try to pose the bird again.

Examining the turkey

This part of showing takes place after you have posed the turkey on the table. When the judge gives the command to "Examine your bird," perform the following steps in sequence to determine conformation, fleshing, defects, disqualifications and overall condition of your bird. The examination steps begin with the turkey standing on the table.

Step 1. Stand back 2 to 3 feet away from the table and look the bird over for its balance and carriage.

Step 2. Examine the bird's head area. Hold the bird in the standing position with your right hand over its back. Use your left hand to examine the bird's head area.

✦ Examine the eyes. Check both eyes to make sure they are not blind. Point your index finger at the eyes. Notice the color and check for any signs of discharge.

✦ If the bird has a snood, examine it by feeling it. Check the texture and whether the snood is long or short. (Young birds may have a small snood.)

✦ Use your left index finger to point at the beak. Check the top and lower beak for crookedness.

✦ Examine the forehead area (the space on the top of the head between the snood and the position right above the eyes). Check the color and development of the caruncles.

✦ Examine the bird's crown (the area between each eye and ear). Also point to each ear. Check for the development of caruncles.

Step 3. Examine the bird's throat area to see if the throat wattles are developed. Feel the texture with your fingers. Also check the development and color of the caruncles.

Step 4. Examine the neck area for length, erectness and signs of molting.

Step 5. Run your right palm along the bird's back to feel the feathers and for any abnormalities. Check for hunched back, the undercolor of the feathers and signs of molting. Use your hand to measure the length and width of the back. (This is important in regard to conformation.)

Step 6. Examine the tail to see if all tail feathers are present, to check the condition of the feathers and to look for signs of molting. Examine the tail carriage.

Step 7. Examine the abdomen area. Check to see if the vent is visible, if there are signs of lice or mites, and the condition of the fluff feathers. Use your finger to feel whether the abdominal area is soft or hard.

Step 8. Examine the thigh area to determine its size and how much meat is on the thighs and drumsticks. Keep in mind that the turkey is a meat bird.

Step 9. Examine both legs for defects such as bowed legs or crooked toes. Examine the shank area for cleanliness, mites and spurs. Count the number of toes, and examine the nails and the feet for defects.

Step 10. Examine the breast for size and to determine if it is entirely covered with meat and well-rounded or if the breast bone sticks out. Check to see if the keel (breast) bone is straight and long or short, dented or curved. Check the condition of the plumage on the breast and whether the breast plumage is molting. Check the length, width and depth of the breast.

Step 11. Examine the left wing and then the right wing. Open and spread the wings one at a time. Examine the primary and secondary feathers for signs of molting or for any damage. Check the condition of the covert feathers. Look under the wings for signs of lice.

Step 12. Check the size of the turkey's rib cage. Count the number of ribs and check to see if they are placed well apart. Check the overall balance of the turkey.

Step 13. Feel the crop to see if it is full or empty. Check for signs of a pendulous crop and crop infections.

Step 14. Check to see if the turkey has a beard on the breast area.

EXAMINING THE TURKEY (Various Steps)

Check the beard's color and length.

Step 15. Step back so the judge can examine your bird for its condition.

Walking the turkey

If your state includes walking the bird in the showmanship contest, the judge will ask contestants to walk their birds on the table one at a time. The others in the group will step back while holding their birds to wait their turn. Use a lightweight tether around one of the bird's legs and a show stick to direct it on the walk along the table. When the judge tells you to stop, pick up your turkey and step back away from the table.

Condition of the turkey

The judge will also consider your bird's condition. The condition of the turkey refers to its production characteristics (fleshing and conformation), feather condition, freedom from defects, general health and fitting. The judge will examine each bird on the table in a general way. This may not be a very detailed examination due to the time factor. However, the judge will thoroughly examine the fitting of the bird to determine how well you have cared for it.

TURKEY FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Not including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling the bird	10
Posing bird on table	20
Examination of bird	30
Condition of bird	20
Poultry quiz	10
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	10
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	100

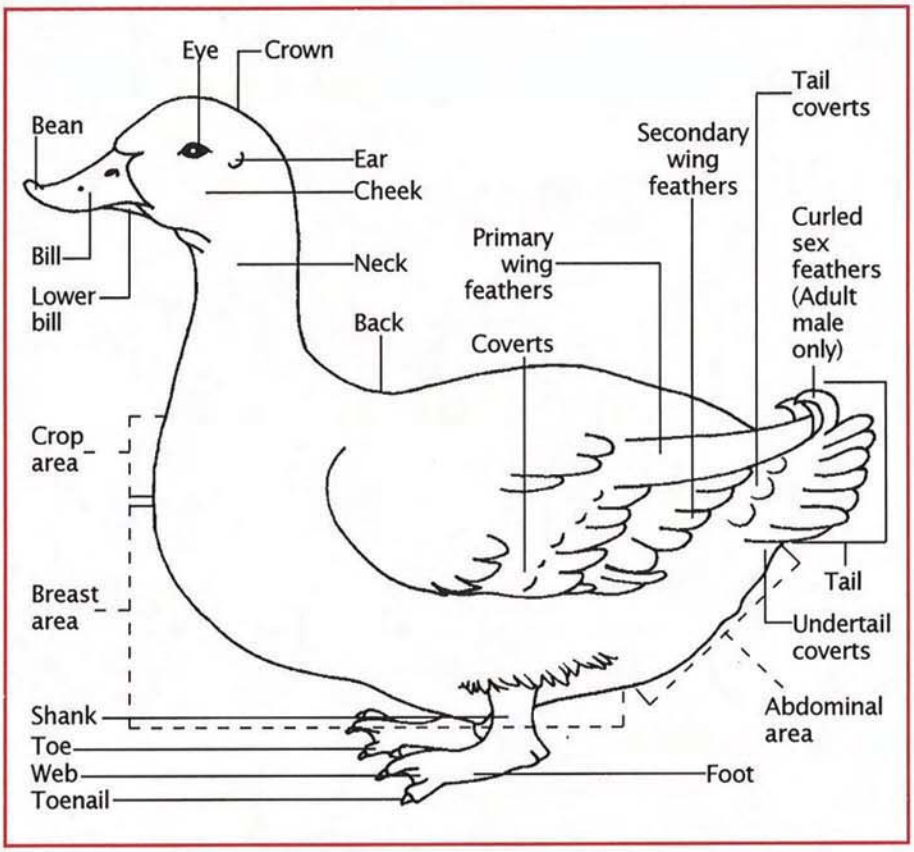
TURKEY FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling the bird	10
Posing bird on table	20
Examination of bird	20
Walking the bird	10
Condition of bird	20
Poultry quiz	10
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	10
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	100

SHOWING DUCKS

In the showing part of the competition, you will be asked to get your duck from the carrier and take it to the assigned area. Remember that you and the bird are being judged from this point on.

All the directions for showing are for right-handed contestants. Left-handed contestants should use the opposite hand from that noted in the steps.



Handling the duck

Step 1. The legs of waterfowl should be handled with extreme care. Hold the duck with one hand under the breast giving support to its weight and at the same time grasping the legs together. Your thumb should be outside one leg and your index finger should be between the duck's legs. Use your remaining fingers to grasp the other leg of the duck at the thigh area.

Step 2. Hold your other hand over the back of the duck to prevent it from trying to escape.

Step 3. Hold the duck right in front of you. Do not hold it sideways so the crop of the duck is touching your belly. The head of the duck should be close to your body, with its tail away from your body.

Posing the duck in the cage

When it is your turn to pose the duck in the cage, do the following:

Step 1. Release your hand over the duck to open the cage.

Step 2. Turn the duck around 180 degrees to place it in the cage. Remember to always place the head of the duck into the cage first.

Step 3. Turn the duck back toward you and try to pose the bird. Use a training stick under the duck's lower bill so the duck will stretch out its neck. Make sure the legs are spread apart on a straight line and that the bird stands erect in this pose for one or two minutes.

Step 4. Stand with your duck in the pose position. When the judge says "Attention," take a step back and stand at attention with your arms at your sides.

Removing the duck and the final stand

When the judge gives the command to "remove your duck," reach into the cage and remove the duck properly.

Step 1. Place one hand under the duck's breast so your fingers can grasp the legs together. Place the other hand on the duck's back.

Step 2. Remove the bird head first and take a step backward.

Step 3. Stand at attention with the bird in your hand. When the judge gives you the command "release," move from this area to the area where the duck will be judged on the table.

Posing the duck on the table

You will be asked to move to the area where the tables are placed for posing the ducks. Once you reach this judging area, be ready to pose your bird when your identification number is announced. This part of showing is done by a few participants at one time, and you will be expected to move to a specified area on the table.

Step 1. Place your duck on the

table facing the judge. Stand at ease behind the duck.

Step 2. When you hear the command to pose, immediately set up your duck properly and pose your bird with a training stick or your finger (the stick or your finger should make contact with the bird). The duck should not sit down, walk or fly away. It should assume a stationary standing pose as it did in the cage.

Step 3. The judge may require that the duck stand on the table for one to two minutes at pose (without moving) while you stand behind the table at attention facing the judge. If your duck moves both legs, immediately pick up the duck and step back without disturbing the other birds in pose. Do this automatically without the judge's command. You should **not** try to pose the bird again.

Examining the duck

The examination section follows posing the bird on the table. The duck should be standing on the table. When the judge gives the command to examine your duck, perform the following steps in sequence to determine defects, disqualifications and the condition of your duck.

Step 1. Step back from the table 2 to 3 feet and take an overall look at your duck for general appearance.

Step 2. Examine the duck's head area. Let the bird rest in your left hand while you use your right hand to examine the bird.

Step 3. Look at the duck's eyes to check their size and color and to observe for blindness. Point your index finger at both eyes.

Step 4. Examine the bill to determine its color, shape and whether it's short and wide. Look to see if the color of the bill is true to the breed or the sex.

Step 5. Examine the bird's head to see if it is short, round and wide. Also check to see how prominent the bird's cheeks are and the condition of the head plumage. If the duck has a crest, point your finger at it.

Step 6. Examine the bird's neck area for length and strength (ducks generally have strong necks). Check the arch of the neck. Examine the feather condition of the neck for abnormal coloring.

Step 7. Use the palm of your hand to run over the duck's back to determine its length and width. Meat variety ducks will have a long and wide back. Check the back feathers for the undercolor and for signs of molting or missing feathers.

Step 8. Slowly tilt the duck downward so you can examine the tail area. Check to make sure all tail feathers are present. Also look for curled feathers. (An adult drake will have curled sex feathers in the middle of the tail feathers.)

Step 9. Check the abdominal area and look for the vent opening.

Note: Steps 10 to 12 are important for determining a female duck's past egg production qualities.

Step 10. Use your fingers to examine the spread of the pubic bones.

Step 11. Use your fingers to examine the space between the rear of the keel bone and the pubic bone.

Step 12. Examine the abdomen area for the duck's trimness (leanness) or hardness. Also examine the feather condition in this area.

Step 13. While the duck is still in the tilt position, pull each leg gently to check for straightness.

Step 14. Examine the shanks of the legs for cleanliness, color and abnormality.

Step 15. Examine the toes. Check the toenails for color, length and to see if any are missing.

Step 16. Examine the webs of both feet for damage, abnormalities and parasites.

Step 17. Examine the foot for abnormalities and abscesses.

Step 18. Examine the breast area. Check the length of the keel (breast) bone. Examine this area for any defects such as dented keel bone. Also check the feather condition and the amount of meat on the breast area. (Keep in mind that this is important for meat breeds.)

Step 19. Examine the wings by spreading each one open. Look at the condition of the primary and secondary feathers and coverts. Also check for signs of molting.

Step 20. Examine the crop for fullness and abnormalities.

Step 21. Step back so the judge can examine your bird for its condition.

Walking the duck

If your state includes walking the bird in the showmanship contest, the judge will ask contestants to walk their birds on the table one at a time. The others in the group will step back while holding their birds to wait their turn. Use a lightweight tether around one of the bird's legs and a show stick to direct it on the walk along the table. When the judge tells you to stop, pick up your duck and step back away from the table.

Condition of the duck

The judge will also consider your bird's condition. The condition of the duck in this case refers to its meat and egg production qualities, defects, disqualification points, plumage condition, etc. The judge will examine each bird on the table in a general way. This may not be a very detailed examination due to the time factor. However, the judge will thoroughly examine the fitting of the bird to determine how well you have cared for it.

DUCK FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Not including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling and posing the bird	**30**
• Holding prior to entry (5)	
• Entering bird in cage (2)	
• Posing bird in cage (15)	
• Removing bird from cage (5)	
• Final pose (3)	
Posing bird on table	**20**
Examination of bird	**20**
Condition of bird	**10**
Poultry quiz	**10**
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	**10**
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	**100**

DUCK FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling and posing the bird	**25**
• Holding prior to entry (5)	
• Entering bird in cage (2)	
• Posing bird in cage (10)	
• Removing bird from cage (5)	
• Final pose (3)	
Posing bird on table	**15**
Examination of bird	**20**
Walking the bird	**10**
Condition of bird	**10**
Poultry quiz	**10**
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	**10**
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	**100**

SHOWING GEESE

In the showing part of the competition, you will be asked to get your goose from the carrier and take it to your assigned area. Remember that you and the bird are being judged from this point on.

All the directions for showing are for right-handed contestants. Left-handed contestants should use the opposite hand from that noted in the steps.

Handling the goose

Once the judge calls a section of 4-H'ers to showmanship, the judge will be looking at how you handle your goose. Do the following steps.

Step 1. Hold the goose with one hand under the breast to give support to its weight. At the same time, use your fingers to grasp the legs together. Your thumb should be outside one leg, your index finger should be between the legs and your remaining fingers should grasp the other leg of the goose at the thigh area.

Step 2. Hold your other hand over the back of the goose to keep it from trying to escape.

Step 3. Hold the goose right in front of you. Do not hold it sideways so its crop is touching your belly. The head of the goose should be close to your body with its tail away from your body.

Note: If the goose is too large for you to handle, refer to the steps on page 14 for handling turkeys.

Posing the goose on the table

You will be asked to move to the area where the tables are placed for posing the goose. Once you reach this judging area, be ready to pose your bird when your identification number is announced. This part of showing is done by a few participants at a time, and you will be expected to move to a specified area of the table.

Step 1. Place your goose on the table facing the judge and stand at ease behind the goose.

Step 2. When you hear the command to pose, immediately set up your bird and pose it with the training stick (the stick should make contact with the bird). The goose should not sit down, walk or fly away. It should assume a stationary pose and stand erect with its neck stretched out. Its legs should be placed a few inches apart on a straight line. The judge may require that your goose stand on the table for 1 to 2 minutes at pose (without moving) while you stand behind the table at attention facing the judge. If your bird moves both legs, then immediately pick it up and step back without disturbing the other birds in pose. Do this automatically without the judge's command. You should **not** try to pose the bird again.

Examining the goose

The examination section follows posing the goose on the table. The goose should be standing on the table. When the judge gives the command to examine your goose, perform the following steps in sequence to determine defects, disqualifications and the condition of your goose.

Step 1. Step back from the table 2 to 3 feet and take an overall look at the goose for its general appearance and balance.

Step 2. Examine the goose's head area. Hold the goose by its legs with your left hand while using your right hand for various examination points.

Step 3. Point your index finger at the eyes to examine them for size, color and blindness.

Step 4. Examine the bill for length, width, shape, color and knob (if present). Determine if the color of the bill is true to the breed or sex.

Step 5. Examine the head for size and shape. Check the head plumage. Check the size of the dewlap (if present) under the goose's beak.

Step 6. Examine the neck area for size and strength. Geese generally have strong necks, especially the African and the Chinese breeds. Check to see if the neck is arched, and examine the neck feathers for condition of molting and other abnormalities.

Step 7. Use the palm of your hand to run over the goose's back area. Check the back's length and width. "Heavy" breeds will have long and wide backs. Check the back feathers for their undercolor and for signs of molting and missing feathers. Make sure the color of the plumage is true to its breed.

Step 8. Examine the goose's tail feathers to see if they are all present.

Step 9. Use your fingers to push the tail feathers aside to look for the vent.

Note: Steps 10 and 11 are important in a female goose to determine the past egg production qualities.

Step 10. Use your fingers to measure the spread of the pubic bones.

Step 11. Use your fingers to measure the space between the rear of the keel bone and the pubic bone. Check to see if the abdominal area is hard or soft and pliable.

Step 12. Examine the feather condition of the abdominal area.

Step 13. Examine the amount of flesh on the thigh area.

Step 14. Examine the shank of the legs. Check for cleanliness, color and abnormalities.

Step 15. Examine the toes, and check the color and length of the toenails. Also check to see if any toenails are missing.

Step 16. Examine the webs on both feet for tears, abnormalities and parasites.

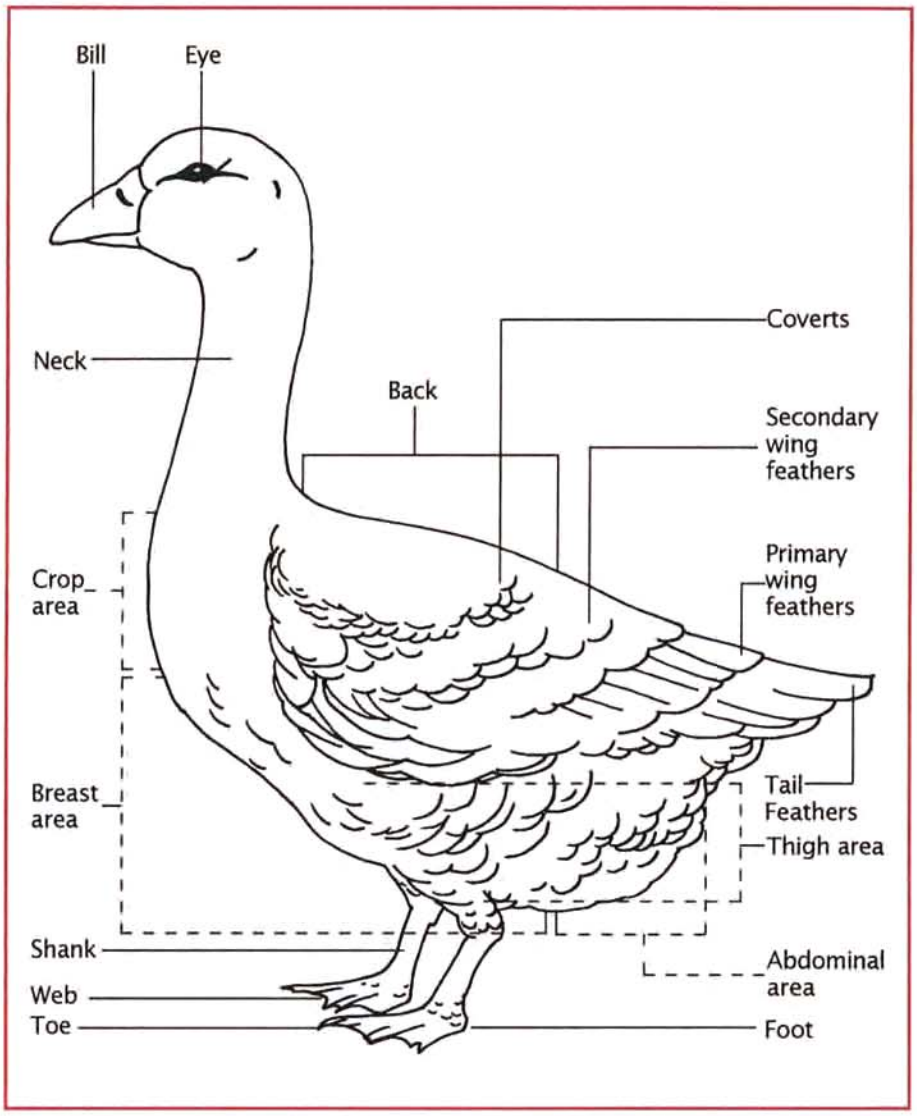
Step 17. Examine the goose's feet for abnormalities and abscesses.

Step 18. Examine the breast area. Check the shape and length of the keel bone. Also check the feather condition and the amount of meat on the breast. Keep in mind that this is an important area for meat breeds.

Step 19. Spread each wing open and look at the condition of the primary and secondary feathers and coverts (the feathers covering the bases of the primary wing feathers) for signs of molting. Look for any external parasites on the skin area of the wings.

Step 20. Examine the crop for size, fluffiness and abnormalities.

Step 21. Step back so the judge can examine your bird for its condition.



Walking the goose

If your state includes walking the bird in the showmanship contest, the judge will ask contestants to walk their birds on the table one at a time. The others in the group will step back while holding their birds to wait their turn. Use a lightweight tether around one of the bird's legs and a show stick to direct it on the walk along the table. When the judge tells you to stop, pick up your goose and step back away from the table.

Condition of the goose

The judge will also consider your bird's condition. The condition of the goose in this case refers to its production characteristics (egg or meat), feather condition, freedom from defects and general health. The judge will examine each bird on the table in a general way. This may not be a very detailed examination due to the time factor. However, the judge will thoroughly examine the fitting of the bird to determine how well you have cared for it.

GOOSE FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Not including walking)

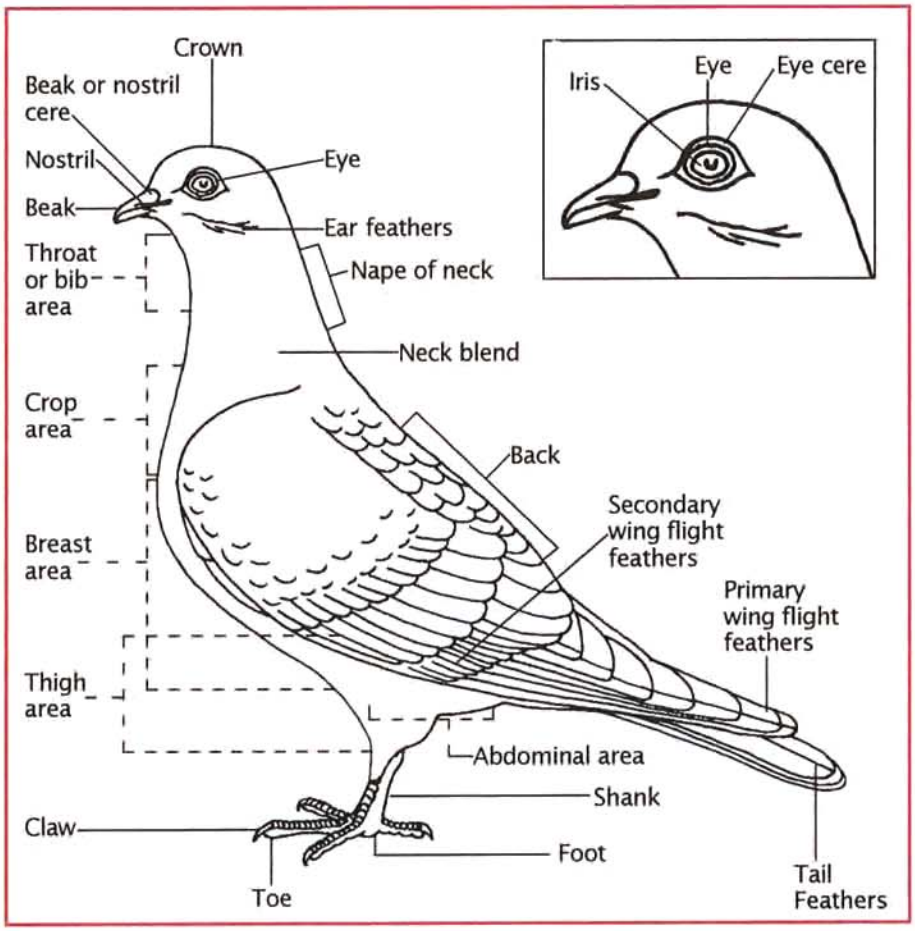
	Points allowed
Handling the bird	10
Posing bird on table	25
Examination of bird	25
Condition of bird	20
Poultry quiz	10
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	10
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	100

GOOSE FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling the bird	10
Posing bird on table	20
Examination of bird	20
Walking the bird	10
Condition of bird	20
Poultry quiz	10
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	10
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	100

This section of the competition starts from the time you are asked to take your bird from the carrying cage to the show area. Remember that you and the bird are being judged from this point on.

All the directions for showing are for right-handed contestants. Left-handed contestants should use the opposite hand from that noted in the steps.



Handling the pigeon

If you are ready to handle the pigeon from the carrier cage, do the following steps.

Step 1. Open the door of the carrier. Slowly put your right hand in the cage and try to place it over the back of the pigeon in a swift move. Always approach from the front side of the pigeon so that when reaching the bird, your palm will prevent the pigeon from flying away from you. Slowly push the pigeon down and try to grasp its back, covering both wings and the body.

Step 2. Slip your left hand in and give support to the bird's breast area while grasping the legs together. Make sure the index finger of your left hand is between the legs, and put your right hand over the bird, covering both its wings and back.

Step 3. Bring both hands toward you together with the pigeon so that it will come out head first. Make sure to take the bird straight out rather than sideways or tail first.

Step 4. Hold the pigeon in the same pose right in front of you so its head is close to your chest and its tail is away from your chest. Your index finger should be between the legs and its wings over the tail feathers (rather than under the tail). (Most pigeon raisers hold the flight feathers under the tail, but this is not necessary if you are holding the bird against your chest.) Make sure you have a good grip and hold the pigeon with both hands as mentioned above, while moving to the cage to pose.

Posing the pigeon in the cage

Step 1. Carry your pigeon and walk toward the pigeon cage which is set for your contest in the same fashion as described above.

Step 2. At the command "enter," use one hand to open the cage. Turn the pigeon toward the cage in a 180 degree angle and place it in the cage. Remember that the bird's head should go in first. Then turn the pigeon toward you and get ready for posing. Close the door of the cage.

Step 3. At the "pose" command, you should use the show stick and touch the pigeon at the breast area near the crop *(figure 34)*. If necessary, touch the wings and the tail area so the pigeon will come to pose. At the pose position, the pigeon should stretch out its neck and be alert with its head straight, wings tight, primary feathers over the tail (except in Fan Tail and Indian Fan Tail breeds), tail feathers tight and legs both on a straight line. If necessary, touch the show stick tc different parts of the body to get them into desired postures. If breeds such as the Jacobin are used for show, the "ornaments" such as the crest and crown should be displayed in such a manner that the bird will distinctly show the different parts.

Different breeds of pigeons have different postures in a "standing" pose that need to be obtained at the "pose posture." The Fan Tail breed will spread its tail well, rather than holding tight. This breed will continuously move by shaking its head in a back and forth motion. You should stand in pose with the pigeon, touching the stick at the breast area.

Step 4. At the command of "Attention," take a step back and stand at attention with your arms at your sides. At this point, the judge will look at both you and the pigeon. Keep looking at the judge in a confident manner. If the judge moves around, turn your head to look at him or her for eye contact. However, do not move the rest of your body.

Step 5. At the command of "remove," open the cage with one hand. Use your right hand to grasp the bird as described previously and remove the bird from the cage. Always bring it out head first. After removing the pigeon, stand at attention, with one or both hands holding the bird as described previously *(figure 35)*.

Examining the pigeon

This part of showing takes place after you have posed the pigeon. When the judge gives the command to "Examine your bird," perform the following steps in sequence to determine conformation, defects, disqualifications and overall condition of your bird.

Step 1. Return the pigeon to the cage and close the door.

Step 2. Stand back with the show stick and look at the pigeon for its overall appearance. If necessary, touch the breast area so the pigeon will come to "pose." This will allow you to evaluate the overall appearance of the pigeon.

Step 3. Remove the pigeon from the coop as done previously.

Step 4. Hold the pigeon in front of you in your left hand making sure both flight feathers are over the tail area. The pigeon's head should be right in front of you and its tail away from you. Both its legs should be folded backwards.

Step 5. Point your index finger at each eye and observe it closely for defects, blindness, swelling, color and signs of disease. Check to see if there is a difference in the colors of the irises and whether the color is true to breed. Pigeon breeders look very carefully at the eyes, which give hints about the quality of the bird, especially in performing breeds such as racing homers. Look for red pigments in the birds with white irises. Pigeon breeds commonly have white irises, but sometimes they are yellow, orange and black, or almost completely black. Check the eye ceres to see if they are normal for the breed. Eye ceres in certain breeds will be large and ornamental.

Step 6. Use your right hand to examine the pigeon's head area. Point your index finger at its beak and look for defects. Look at the size and color of the beak for trueness to breed. Certain breeds, such as owl and frill, have very small beaks. Other breeds have enlarged nostrils, which are one of the "ornaments" of the breed called beak or nostril ceres.

Step 7. Examine the crown (top skull) area of the head. Check its shape and plumage, and look for signs of molting.

Step 8. Check the shape of the back skull to see if it is true to the breed or sex.

Step 9. Check to see if there is a crest ("ornament") on the head and whether the type of crest is true to the breed.

Step 10. Point to the ear opening on each side of the face beneath the eyes. Look for ear feathers.

Step 11. The neck area consists of nape, throat or bib region, and the neck blend (hackle). Feel the neck area by grasping the neck softly with your right hand. Examine the plumage condition to look for any special coloration. In blue-colored pigeons (especially adult cocks), these feathers have a slight greenish sheen, a secondary sex characteristic. Look for them in the neck blend

POSING THE PIGEON

Figure 34

Figure 35

area. Also check for "ornaments" such as dewlap and for signs of molting.

Step 12. Run your palm smoothly along the back region. Check for abnormalities, undercolor and signs of molting. Use your fingers to measure the width and length of the back.

Step 13. Slowly tilt the bird downward so its head is facing down and its tail is up. Count the tail feathers and examine them for signs of molting, damage, lice and cleanliness.

Step 14. Examine the vent area and check for signs of lice. Measure the space between the pubic bones with your fingers.

Step 15. Examine the abdomen area to see if it is soft and pliable or hard. Check the condition of the plumage in this area and see whether the feathers are dry and smooth or soiled and mixed with manure.

Step 16. While the pigeon is facing downward, examine its legs. Pull each leg to observe if it is normal. Examine the thighs, shanks, feet, toes and claws. If the shank area is featherless, observe the color of the shank to see if it is appropriate for the breed. The shank and toes may be covered with feathers such as booted or muffed, one of the ornaments of the pigeon. When the shank and toes are covered with large feathers, it is called "muffed." If the shank area only is covered and the toes are not, it is called "booted." If the area is muffed, observe the feathers for cleanliness and damage. Pigeons will have four toes and a claw on each toe. The color of the claw will depend on the breed. Both white and black color may be observed in pigeons.

Step 17. While the pigeon is still in the downward pose, examine the keel bone. Measure its length and observe any defects such as crooked or dented bone. The length of the keel bone is very important, especially in performing breeds.

Step 18. After examining the keel bone, examine the entire breast area for the muscle, meat quality (especially for utility breeds) and feather conditions.

Step 19. Use one hand to stretch out one of the wings. Look at the condition of the feathers and check for signs of lice on flight feathers or for any holes or damage due to lice. Count the primary feathers and look for signs of molting. There are ten primary feathers, which are also called flight feathers. Examine the secondary feathers and the axial feather. Look for any discolored plumage that is not true to the variety of pigeon.

Step 20. Feel the crop area for signs of pendulous crop and to determine whether there's any feed in the crop.

Step 21. Put the pigeon in the coop and stand at attention.

Walking the pigeon

If your state includes walking the bird in the showmanship contest, the judge will ask contestants to walk their birds on the table one at a time. The others in the group will step back while holding their birds to wait their turn. Use a lightweight tether (at least 10 feet long) around one of the bird's legs and a show stick to direct it on the walk along the table. When the judge tells you to stop, pick up your pigeon and step back from the table. (**Note**: It is not recommended that you use "performing" pigeons in this part of the contest because they tend to be too flighty. The Fan Tail, Jacobin and Parlour Tumbler breeds will work much better.)

Condition of the pigeon

The judge will also consider your bird's condition. The condition of the pigeon in this case refers to its general plumage appearance, flesh condition, defects, disqualifications and diseases. The judge will examine each bird on the table in a general way. This may not be a very detailed examination due to the time factor. However, the judge will thoroughly examine the fitting of the bird to determine how well you have cared for it.

PIGEON FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Not including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling the bird	10
Posing bird in cage	25
Examination of bird	25
Condition of bird	20
Poultry quiz	10
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	10
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	100

PIGEON FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP SCORECARD (Including walking)

	Points allowed
Handling the bird	10
Posing bird in cage	15
Examination of bird	25
Walking the bird	10
Condition of bird	20
Poultry quiz	10
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant	10
• Appearance (5)	
• Attitude (2)	
• Behavior (3)	
Total points	100

CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS!

Once you have participated in poultry fitting and showmanship, you can be really proud of your accomplishments! In fact, you'll probably be excited enough to continue participating in this enjoyable area of poultry.

After your first contest in poultry fitting and showmanship, think about your experiences and how you felt about them. Take a few moments to fill in your responses to these statements.

The most important thing I learned from participating in poultry fitting and showmanship was:

_____

_____

One thing I might do differently the next time I do a poultry fitting and showmanship project is:

_____

_____

One thing I learned about in my project that I would like to explore further is:

_____

_____

Here's how I plan to do this:

_____

_____

One way I could teach others about what I learned in my poultry fitting and showmanship project would be to:

_____

_____

Good luck in your future fitting and showmanship activities!

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