

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION • 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

# CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS!

Once you have participated in poultry fitting and showmanship, you can be 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 minutes to fill in your responses to these statements.

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

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

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

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Here's how I plan to do this:

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

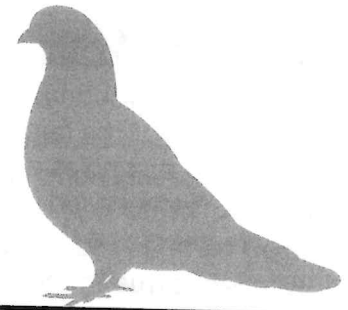
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Good luck with your future poultry project activities!



## Pigeon Fitting and Showmanship Scorecard

### APPEARANCE & ATTITUDE OF SHOWPERSON ..... (10 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Keeps attention focused on bird and judge
- ▶ Follows judge's instructions
- ▶ Handles bird considerately
- ▶ Is considerate of other exhibitors
- ▶ Wears conventional clothing; has clean and neat appearance

### APPEARANCE OF BIRD ..... (10 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Is manageable; has evidence of training
- ▶ Is clean; shows evidence of fitting
- ▶ Has good body condition; appears healthy

### SHOWMANSHIP ..... (40 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Holding bird prior to entry; bringing bird to the judge
- ▶ Caging and removing bird from cage
- ▶ Posing and presenting bird to judge
- ▶ Transferring bird to judge or another person
- ▶ Displaying, examining, finding or naming body parts

### KNOWLEDGE OF BIRD ..... (40 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Age, sex, breed, variety and class of your bird
- ▶ Judge's Discretion - Remainder of questions may include any or all of the following:
  - The preparation of your bird for this show
  - Purpose of breed (exhibition/eggs/meat/dual purpose)
  - Defects and disqualifications for your breed and variety
  - Identification of strong and weak points of your bird
  - Other varieties in your breed; other breeds in your class
  - Your feed program
  - Your poultry health program; common diseases and parasites
  - Avian anatomy, including internal systems
  - Questions about other competitor's birds

### TOTAL POINTS ..... (100 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_



### Step 16:

Use one hand to stretch out one of the wings (**Pigeons: Figure 20**). 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 ten primary, or flight, feathers and look for signs of molting. Examine the secondary feathers and the axial feather. Look for any discolored plumage that is not true to the variety of pigeon.

### Step 17:

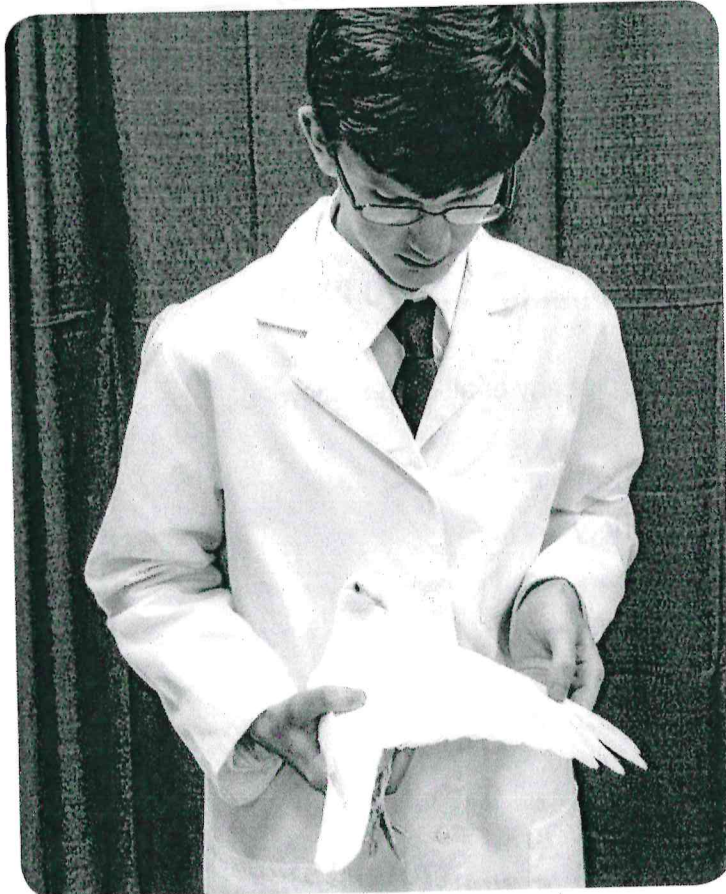
Feel the crop area for signs of a pendulous crop and to determine whether there's any feed in the crop (**Pigeons: Figure 21**).

### Step 18:

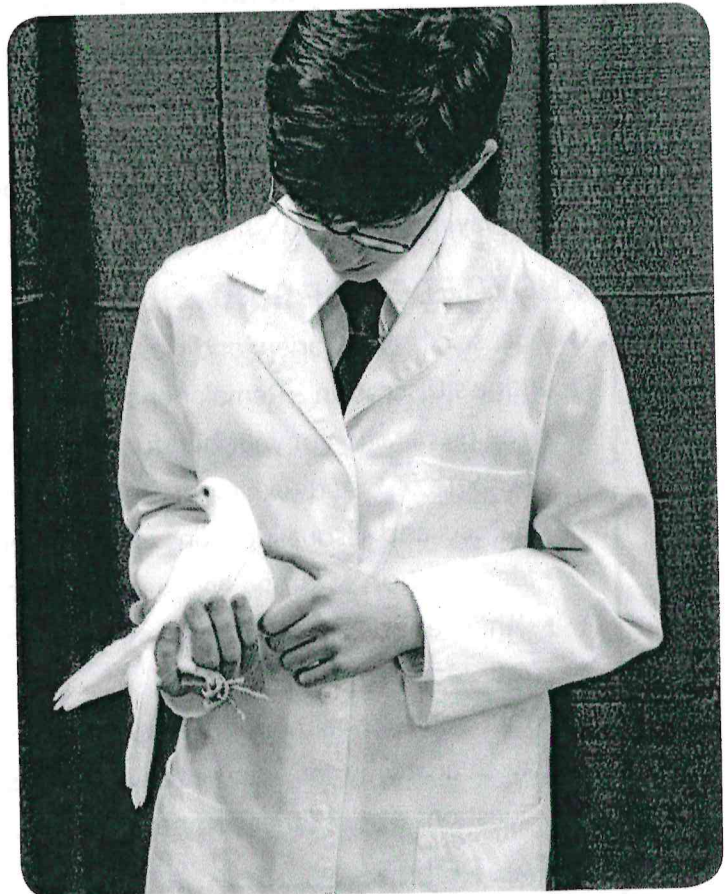
Return the pigeon to an upright position, resting on your hand and stand at attention.

## General Appearance of the Pigeon

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

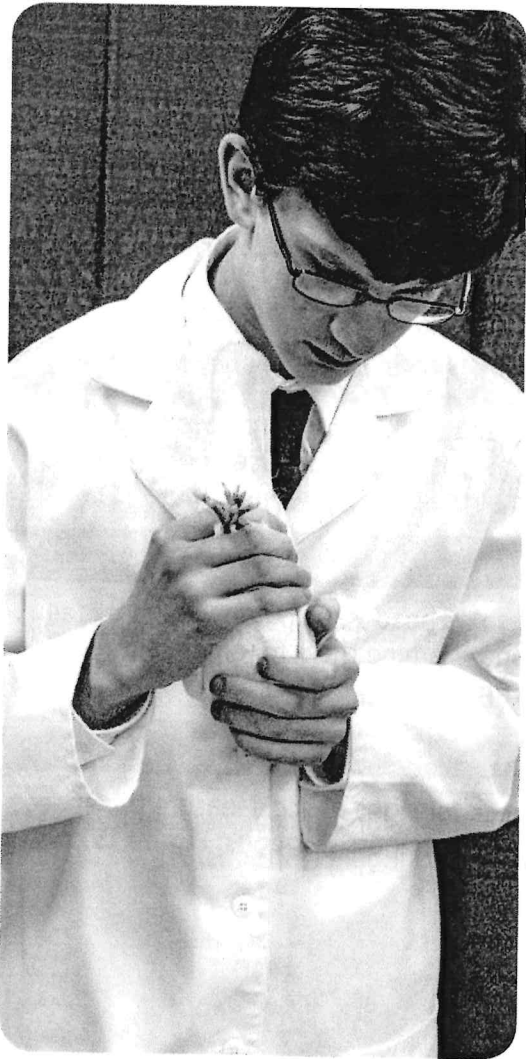


**Pigeons: Figure 20**



**Pigeons: Figure 21**





Pigeons: Figure 16

**Step 12:**

Examine the abdomen area to see if it is soft and pliable or hard (**Pigeons: Figure 16**). 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 13:**

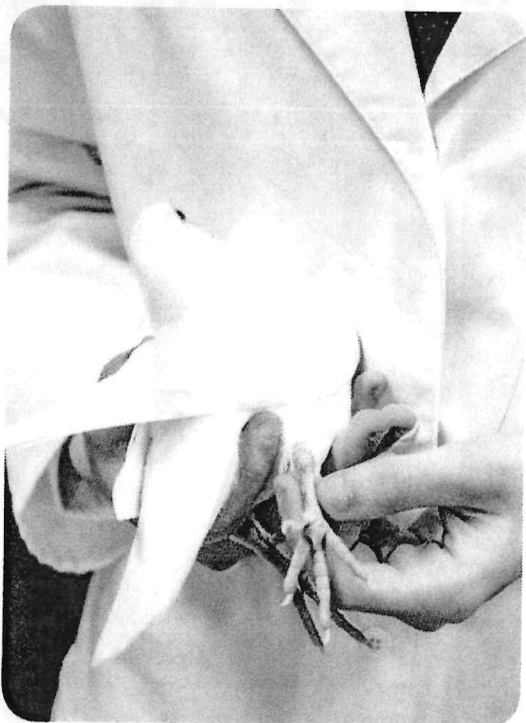
While the pigeon is facing downward, examine its legs (**Pigeons: Figure 17**). Pull each leg to observe if it is normal. Examine the thighs, shanks, feet, toes and claws. If the shank area is featherless, observe the color of the shank to see if it is appropriate for the breed. The shank and toes may be covered with feathers. When large feathers cover both the shank and toes, the area is said to be “muffed.” When feathers cover the shank area only but not the toes, the area is said to be “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. Pigeon claws can be white or black.

**Step 14:**

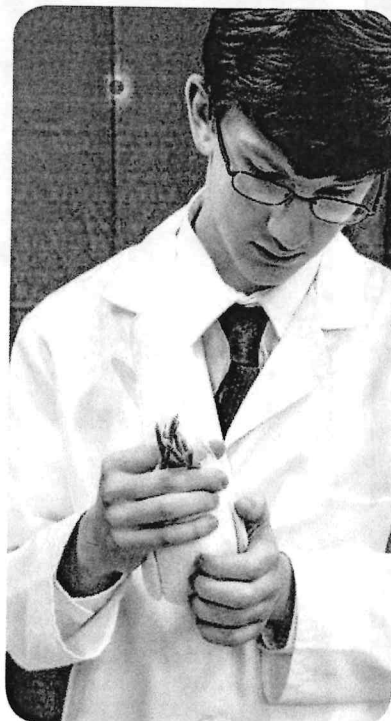
While the pigeon is still in the downward pose, examine the keel bone. Measure its length and observe any defects such as crooked or dented bone (**Pigeons: Figure 18**).

**Step 15:**

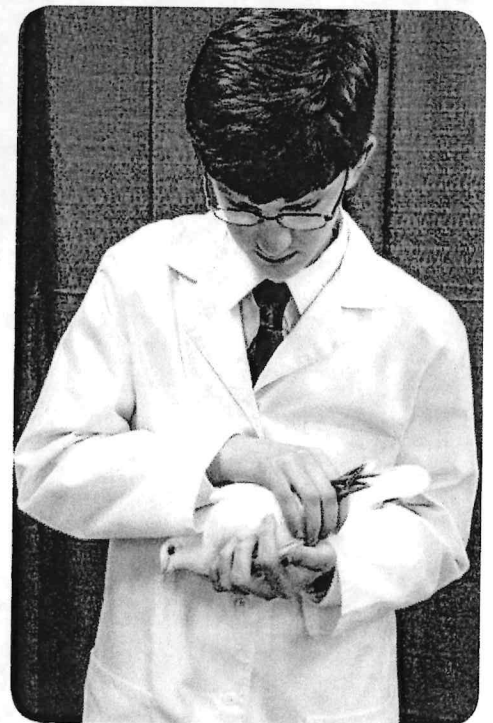
After examining the keel bone, examine the entire breast area for muscle, meat quality (especially for utility breeds) and feather conditions (**Pigeons: Figure 19**).



Pigeons: Figure 17

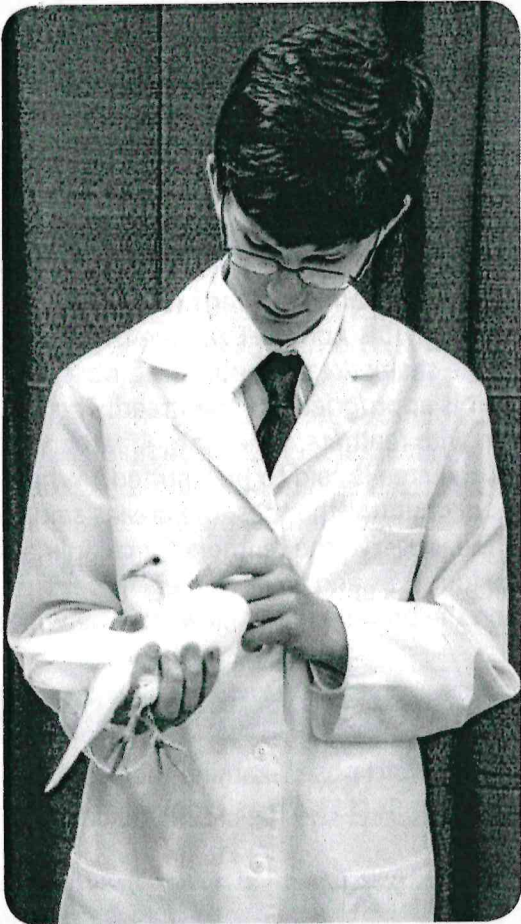


Pigeons: Figure 18



Pigeons: Figure 19





**Pigeons: Figure 12**

**Step 8:**

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 hand. Examine the plumage condition to look for any special coloration (**Pigeons: Figure 12**). 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 area. Also check for ornaments such as a dewlap and for signs of molting.

**Step 9:**

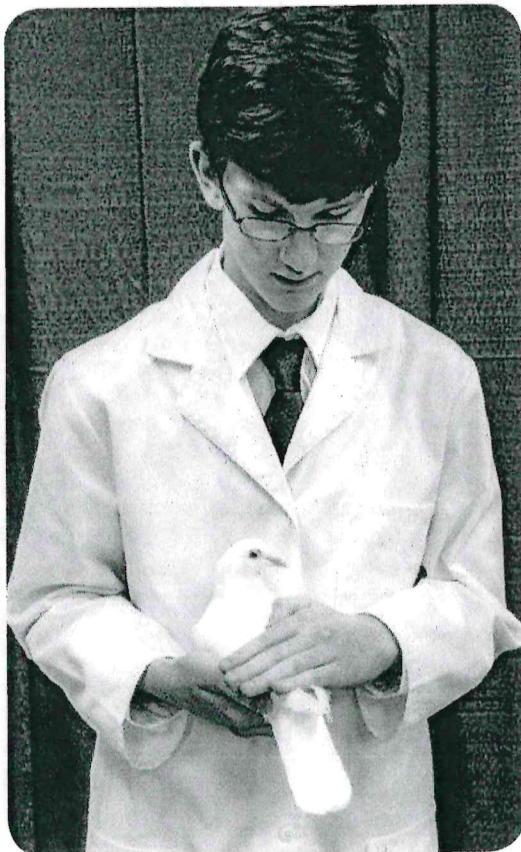
Run your palm smoothly along the back region. Check for abnormalities, under-color and signs of molting. Use your fingers to measure the width and length of the back (**Pigeons: Figure 13**).

**Step 10:**

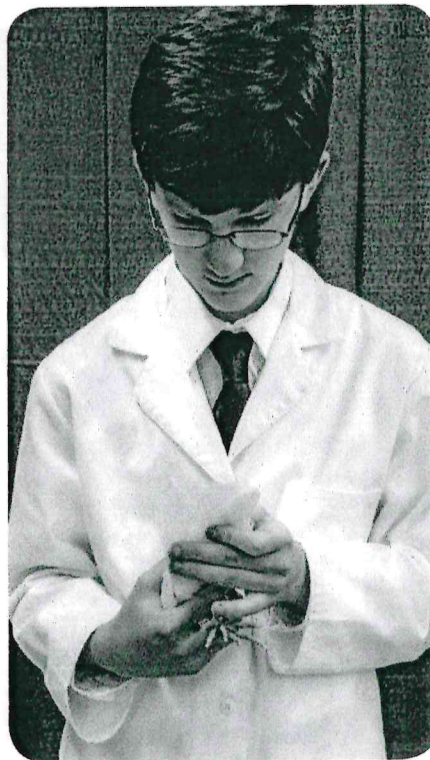
Slowly tilt the bird downward so its head is facing down and its tail is up. Count the tail feathers and examine them for signs of molting, damage, lice and cleanliness (**Pigeons: Figure 14**).

**Step 11:**

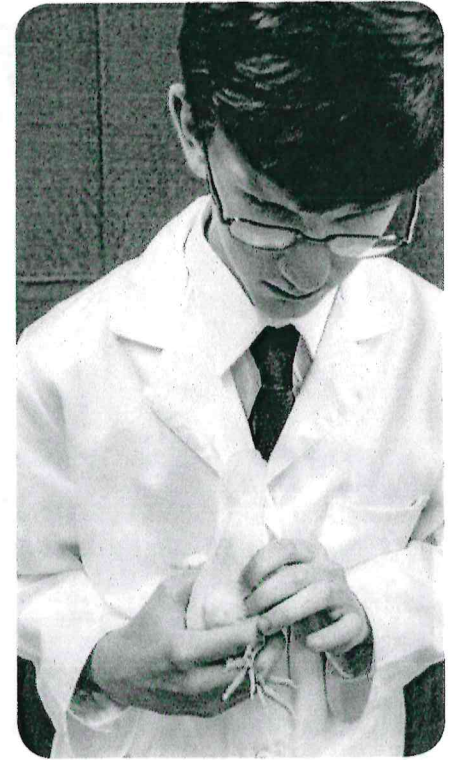
Examine the vent area and check for signs of lice. Measure the space between the pubic bones with your fingers (**Pigeons: Figure 15**).



**Pigeons: Figure 13**

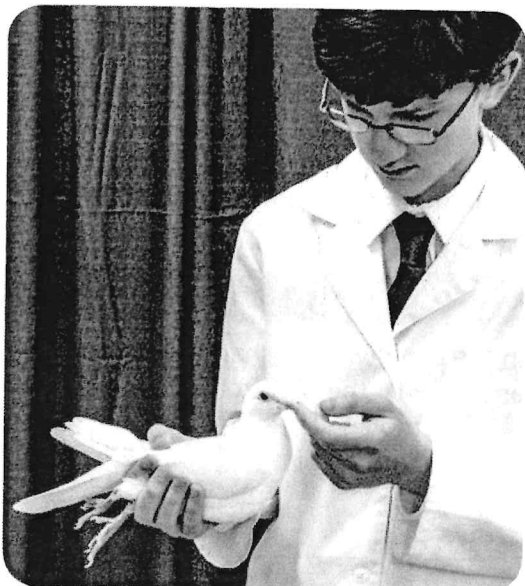


**Pigeons: Figure 14**



**Pigeons: Figure 15**





Pigeons: Figure 8

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 3:**

Use your hand to examine the pigeon's head area. Point your finger at its beak and look for defects (**Pigeons: Figure 8**). 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 4:**

Examine the crown (top skull) area of the head (**Pigeons: Figure 9**). Check its shape and plumage, and look for signs of molting.

**Step 5:**

Check the shape of the back skull to see if it is true to the breed or sex (**Pigeons: Figure 10**).

**Step 6:**

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

**Step 7:**

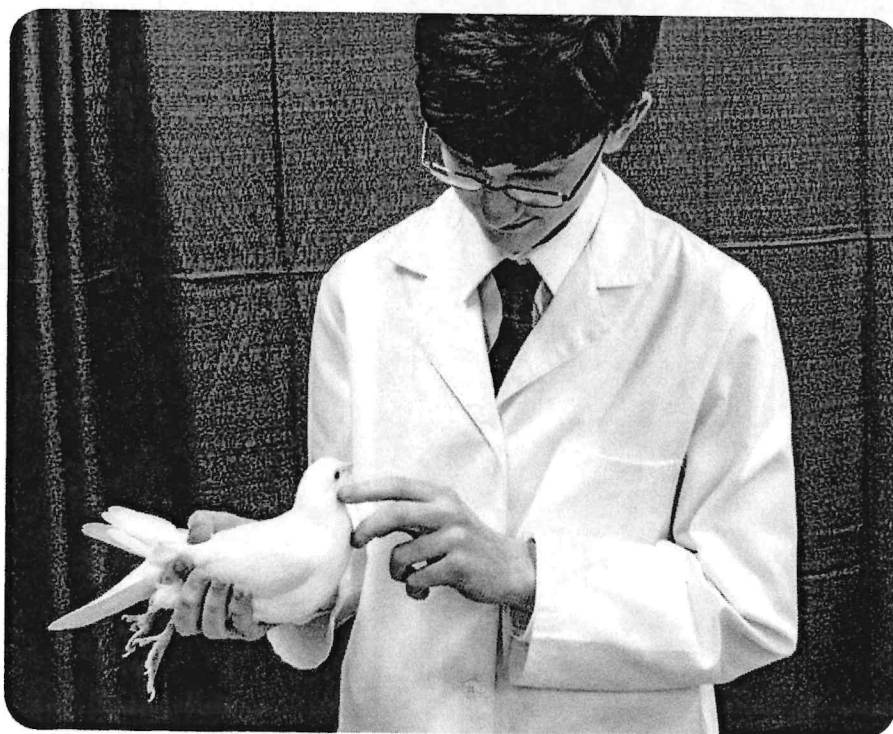
Point to the ear opening on each side of the face beneath the eyes. Look for ear feathers (**Pigeons: Figure 11**).



Pigeons: Figure 9

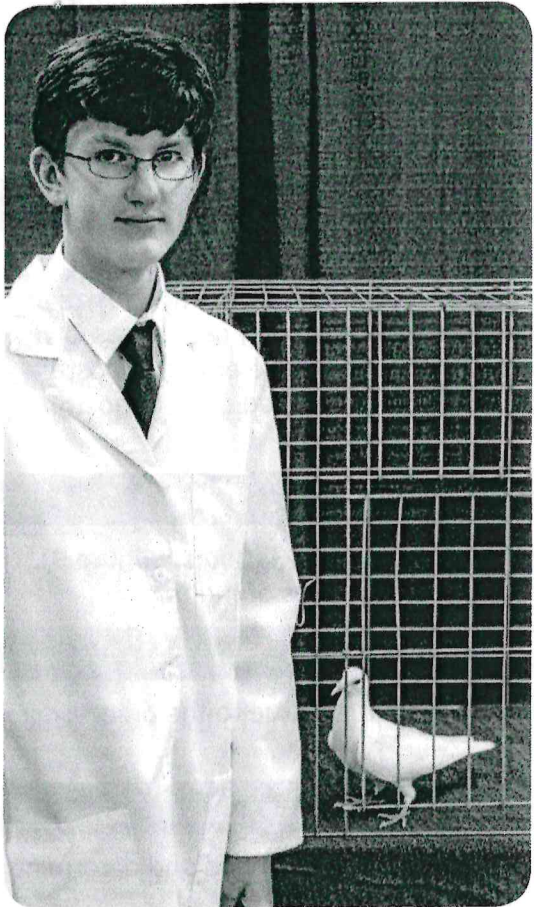


Pigeons: Figure 10



Pigeons: Figure 11





Pigeons: Figure 4

#### Step 4:

At the judge's command, take a step back and stand at attention with your arms at your sides (**Pigeons: Figure 4**). 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 maintain eye contact. However, do not move the rest of your body.

#### Step 5:

At the judge's command, open the cage with one hand. Use your other hand to grasp the bird and remove the bird from the cage. Always bring it out headfirst. After removing the pigeon, stand at attention, with one or both hands holding the bird (**Pigeons: Figure 5**).

### Examining the Pigeon

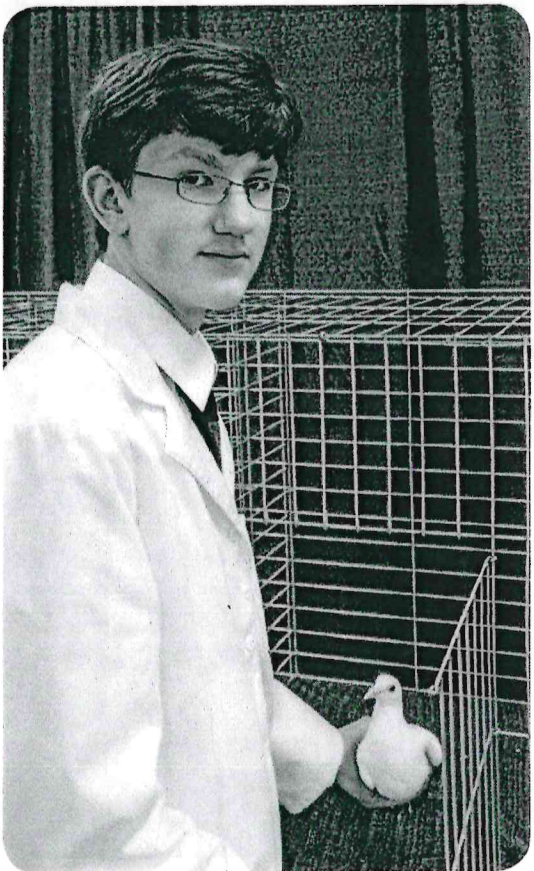
This part of showing takes place after you have posed the pigeon. When the judge gives the command "Examine your bird," perform the following to determine conformation, defects, disqualifications and overall condition of your bird.

#### Step 1:

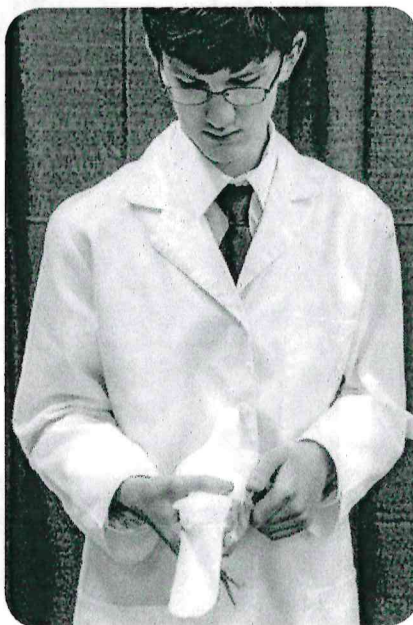
Hold the pigeon in front of you in your hand, making sure both flight feathers are over the tail area. The pigeon's head should be in front of you and its tail away from you. Both its legs should be folded backward (**Pigeons: Figure 6**).

#### Step 2:

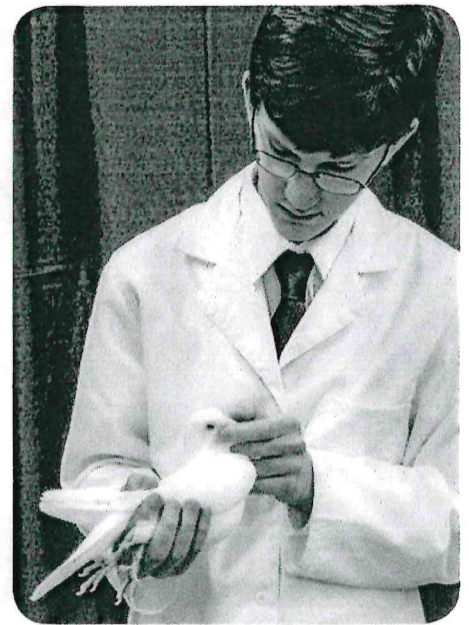
Point your index finger at each eye and observe it closely for defects, blindness, swelling, color and signs of disease. (**Pigeons: Figure 7**). Check to see if there is a difference in the colors of the irises and if the color is true to breed. Pigeon breeders look carefully at the eyes, which give hints about the quality of the bird, especially in performing



Pigeons: Figure 5



Pigeons: Figure 6

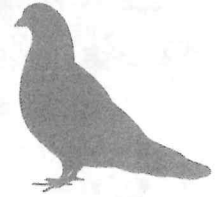


Pigeons: Figure 7



# Showing Pigeons

In the showing part of the competition, you will be asked to remove your pigeon from the carrier and take it to the assigned judging area.



**Pigeons: Figure 1**

## Posing the Pigeon in the Cage

### Step 1:

Carry your pigeon and walk toward the pigeon cage, which is set for your contest (**Pigeons: Figure 1**).

### Step 2:

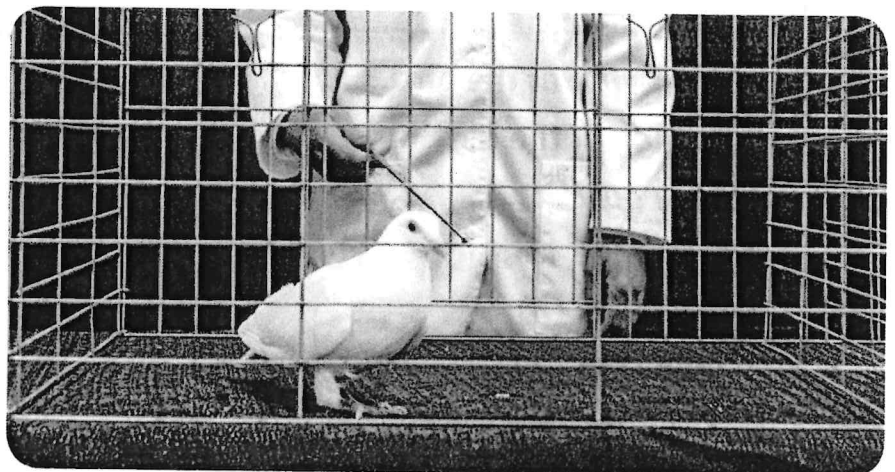
At the judge's command, use one hand to open the cage. Turn the pigeon toward the place it in the cage head first. Then turn the pigeon toward you and get ready for posing. Close the door of the cage (**Pigeons: Figure 2**).

### Step 3:

To pose the pigeon, use the show stick and touch the pigeon at the breast area (**Pigeons: Figure 3**). If necessary, touch the wings of the tail area so the pigeon will come to pose. At the posed position, the pigeon should stretch out its neck and be alert with its head straight, wings tight, primary feathers over the tail (except in Fantail and Indian Fantail breeds), tail feathers tight and legs both on a straight line. If necessary, touch the show stick to 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 Fantail 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 alert with the pigeon, touching the stick at the breast area.



**Pigeons: Figure 2**



**Pigeons: Figure 3**



Geese: Figure 11

**Step 19:**

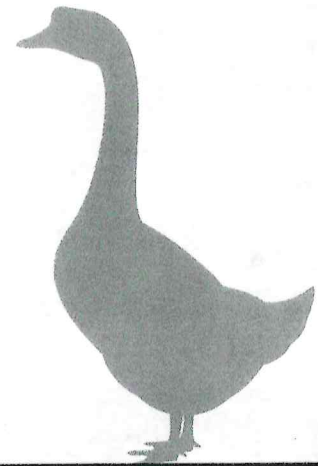
Examine the crop for size, fullness and abnormalities.

**Step 20:**

Step back so the judge can examine your bird for its condition (**Geese: Figure 11**).

**General Appearance of the Goose**

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



<b>Goose Fitting and Showmanship Scorecard</b>	
	<b>Points Allowed</b>
Handling the bird.....	<b>25</b>
Posing the bird .....	<b>10</b>
Examination of the bird.....	<b>25</b>
Condition of the bird .....	<b>20</b>
Poultry quiz .....	<b>10</b>
Appearance, attitude and behavior of participant .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Appearance (5)</b>	
<b>Attitude (2)</b>	
<b>Behavior (3)</b>	
<b>Total points .....</b>	<b>100</b>





Geese: Figure 7

**Step 14:**

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

**Step 15:**

Examine the webs on both feet for tears, abnormalities and parasites (**Geese: Figure 7**).

**Step 16:**

Examine the goose's feet for abnormalities and abscesses (**Geese: Figure 8**).

**Step 17:**

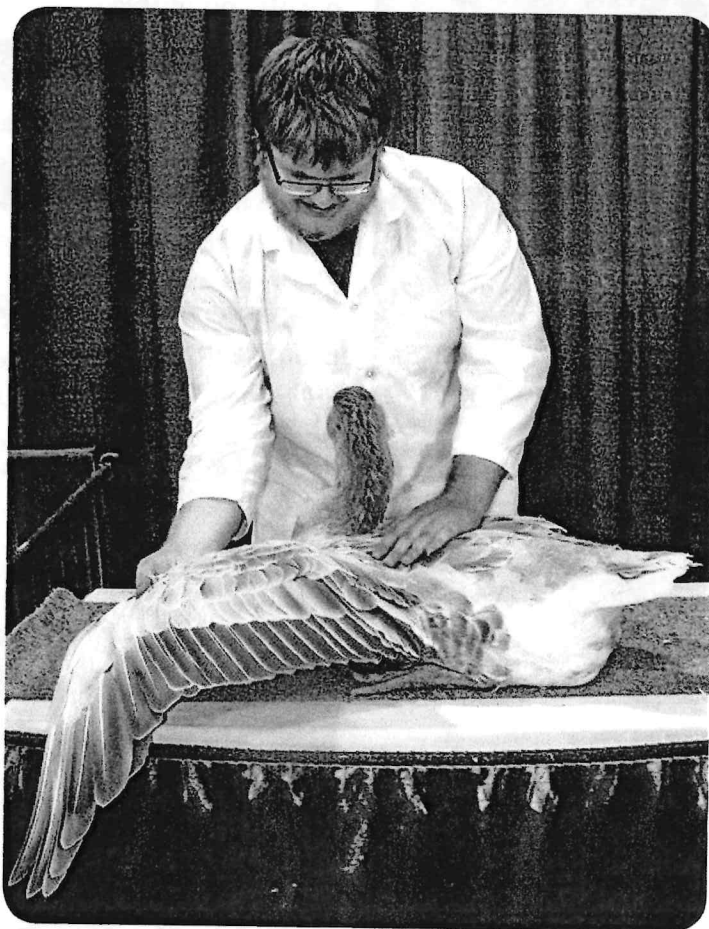
Examine the breast area. Check the shape and length of the keel bone. Also, check the feather condition and the amount of meat on the breast area. Keep in mind that this is important for meat breeds (**Geese: Figure 9**).

**Step 18:**

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 (**Geese: Figure 10**).



Geese: Figure 8

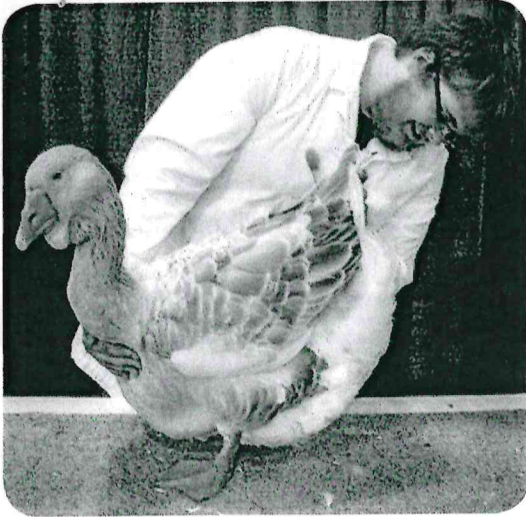


Geese: Figure 10

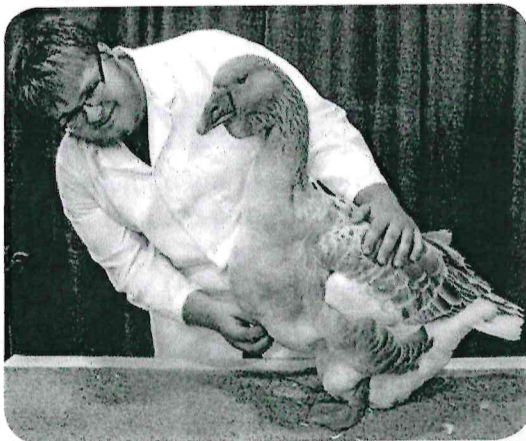


Geese: Figure 9





Geese: Figure 3



Geese: Figure 4



Geese: Figure 5

**Step 6:**

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 the under-color and for signs of molting or missing feathers. Make sure the color of the plumage is true to its breed.

**Step 7:**

Examine the goose's tail feathers to see if they are all present (**Geese: Figure 3**).

**Step 8:**

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

Note: Steps 9 and 10 are important in a female goose to determine the past egg production qualities.

**Step 9:**

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

**Step 10:**

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 11:**

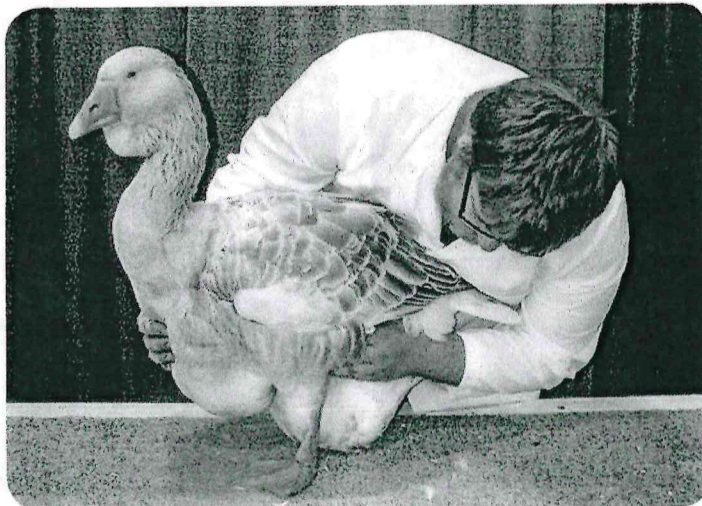
Examine the feather condition of the abdominal area (**Geese: Figure 4**).

**Step 12:**

Examine the amount of flesh on the thigh area (**Geese: Figure 5**).

**Step 13:**

Examine the shank of the legs. Check for cleanliness, color and abnormalities (**Geese: Figure 6**).



Geese: Figure 6



# Showing Geese

In the showing part of the competition, you will be asked to remove your goose from the carrier and take it to the assigned judging area.



Geese: Figure 1



Geese: Figure 2

## Handling the Goose

Since handling a goose is not an easy task, working with your bird on a regular basis can help make it easier. The size of your bird in relation to your size is important because larger birds can be difficult to handle. You can handle a goose in several ways when moving it from one place to another, but the following method is recommended:

### Step 1:

Open the door of the cage.

### Step 2:

Slowly walk the goose to and from the show area. It is not recommended for youth to carry geese to and from the showing area.

## Examining the Goose

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

### Step 1:

Examine the goose's head area (**Geese: Figure 1**).

### Step 2:

Point your index finger at the eyes to check them for size, color and blindness. (The bird should blink or move when pointed at.)

### Step 3:

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 4:

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

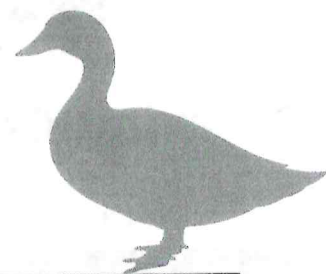
### Step 5:

Examine the neck area for length 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 (**Geese: Figure 2**).



## General Appearance of the Duck

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



### Duck Fitting and Showmanship Scorecard

Points Allowed

#### APPEARANCE & ATTITUDE OF SHOWPERSON ..... (10 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Keeps attention focused on bird and judge
- ▶ Follows judge's instructions
- ▶ Handles bird considerately
- ▶ Is considerate of other exhibitors
- ▶ Wears conventional clothing; has clean and neat appearance

#### APPEARANCE OF BIRD ..... (10PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Is manageable; has evidence of training
- ▶ Is clean; shows evidence of fitting
- ▶ Has good body condition; appears healthy

#### SHOWMANSHIP ..... (40 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Holding bird prior to entry; bringing bird to the judge
- ▶ Caging and removing bird from cage
- ▶ Posing and presenting bird to judge
- ▶ Transferring bird to judge or another person
- ▶ Displaying, examining, finding or naming body parts

#### KNOWLEDGE OF BIRD ..... (40 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Age, sex, breed, variety and class of your bird
- ▶ Judge's Discretion – Remainder of questions may include any or all of the following:
  - The preparation of your bird for this show
  - Purpose of breed (exhibition/eggs/meat/dual purpose)
  - Defects and disqualifications for your breed and variety
  - Identification of strong and weak points of your bird
  - Other varieties in your breed; other breeds in your class
  - Your feed program
  - Your poultry health program; common diseases and parasites
  - Avian anatomy, including internal systems
  - Questions about other competitor's birds

#### TOTAL POINTS ..... (100 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_



**Ducks: Figure 17**

**Step 14:**

Examine the toes. Check the toenails for color and length. Look to see if any are missing (**Ducks: Figure 17**).

**Step 15:**

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

**Step 16:**

Examine the foot for abnormalities and abscesses.

**Step 17:**

Examine the breast area. Check the length of the keel (breast) bone (**Ducks: Figure 18**). Examine this area for any defects such as a 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 birds.)

**Step 18:**

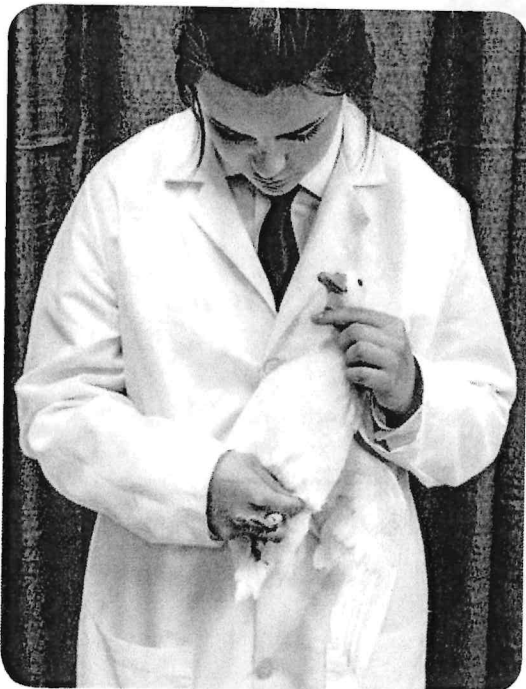
Examine the wings by spreading each one open. Look at the condition of the primary and secondary feathers and coverts (the feathers covering the bases of the primary wing feathers). Also, check for signs of molting (**Ducks: Figure 19**).

**Step 19:**

Examine the crop for fullness and abnormalities (**Ducks: Figure 20**).

**Step 20:**

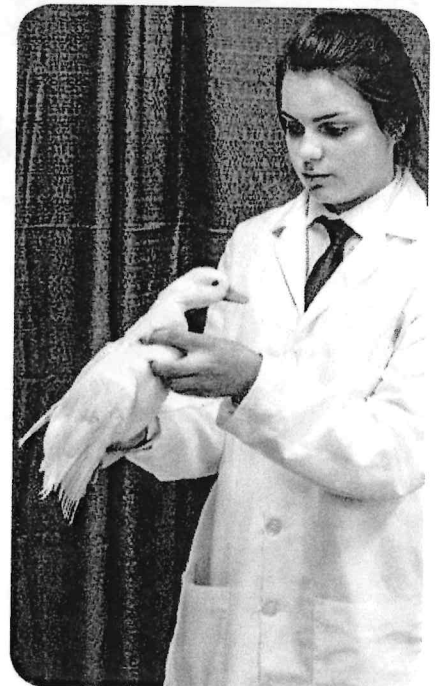
Step back so the judge can examine your bird for its condition.



**Ducks: Figure 18**



**Ducks: Figure 19**



**Ducks: Figure 20**





**Ducks: Figure 12**

**Step 8:**

Check the abdominal area and look for the vent opening. Note: Steps 9-11 are important for determining a female duck's past egg production qualities (**Ducks: Figure 12**).

**Step 9:**

Use your fingers to examine the spread of the pubic bones (**Ducks: Figure 13**).

**Step 10:**

Use your fingers to examine the space between the rear of the keel bone and the pubic bone (**Ducks: Figure 14**).

**Step 11:**

Examine the abdomen area for the duck's trimness (leanness) or hardness. Also, examine the feather condition in this area (**Ducks: Figure 15**).

**Step 12:**

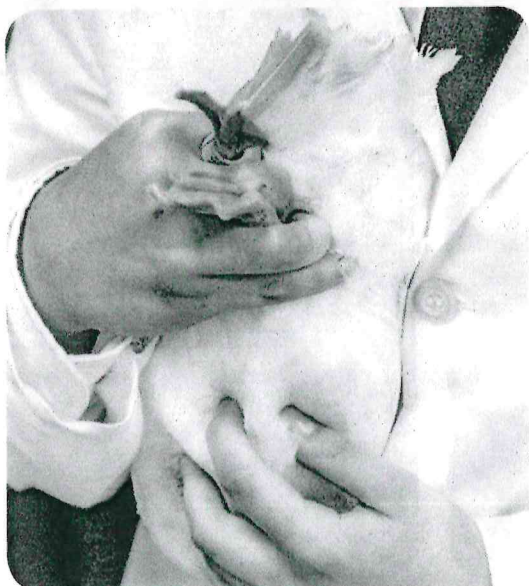
While the duck is still in the tilt position, pull each leg gently to check for straightness (**Ducks: Figure 16**).

**Step 13:**

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



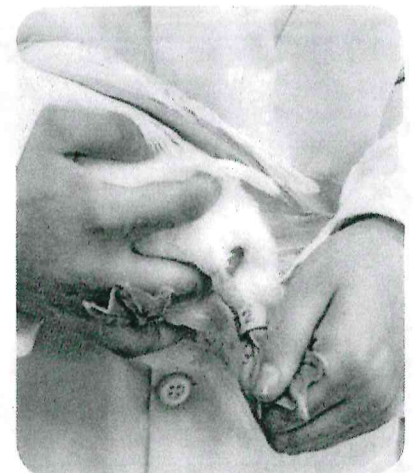
**Ducks: Figure 13**



**Ducks: Figure 14**

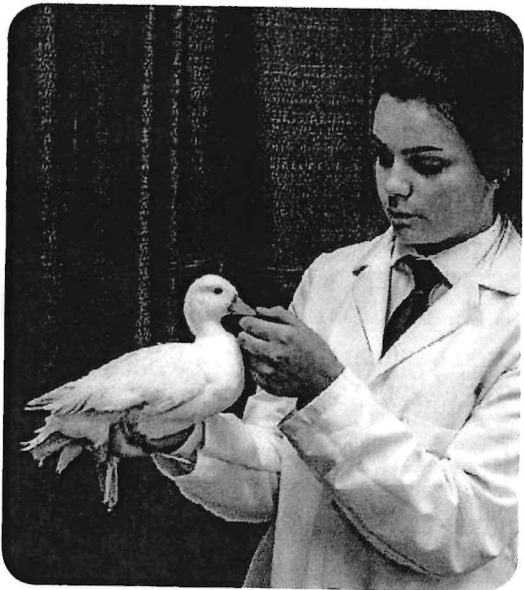


**Ducks: Figure 15**



**Ducks: Figure 16**





Ducks: Figure 7

**Step 3:**

Examine the bill to determine its color and shape. Look to see if the color of the bill is true to the breed or sex (**Ducks: Figure 7**).

**Step 4:**

Examine the bird's head to see if it follows its breed standard. Also, check to see the prominence of the bird's cheeks and the condition of the head plumage. If the duck has a crest, point your finger at it (**Ducks: Figure 8**).

**Step 5:**

Examine the bird's neck area for length and strength (ducks generally have long necks). Check the arch of the neck. Examine the feather condition of the neck for abnormal coloring (**Ducks: Figure 9**).

**Step 6:**

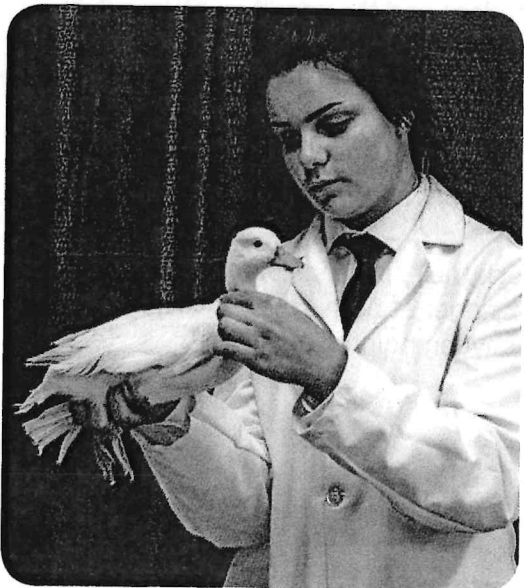
Use the palm of your hand to run over the duck's back to determine its length and width. Meat variety ducks will have a long and wide back. Check the back feathers for the under-color and for signs of molting or missing feathers (**Ducks: Figure 10**).

**Step 7:**

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 (**Ducks: Figure 11**). (An adult drake will have curled sex feathers in the middle of the tail feathers.)



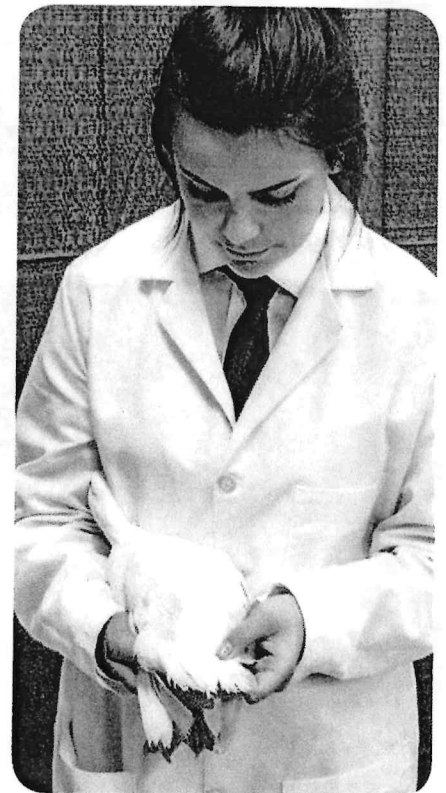
Ducks: Figure 8



Ducks: Figure 9

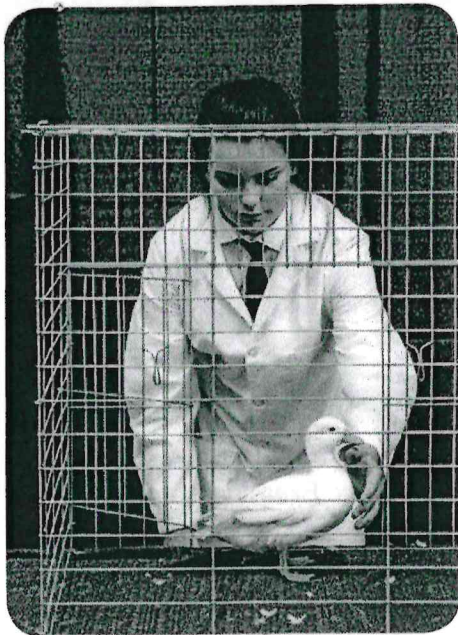


Ducks: Figure 10



Ducks: Figure 11

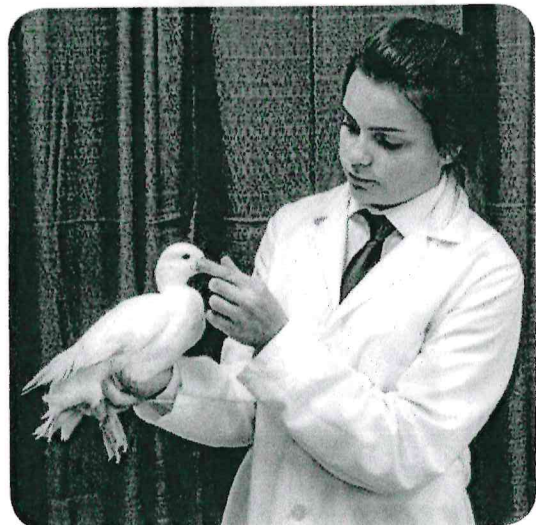




**Ducks: Figure 3**



**Ducks: Figure 5**



**Ducks: Figure 6**

### Step 3:

Turn the duck back toward you and pose the bird in the profile position (**Ducks: Figure 4**). Use a training stick if you wish 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.

### Step 4:

Stand with your duck in the posed position. 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, close the cage door and take a step backward.

### Step 3:

Stand at attention with the bird in your hand. When the judge gives you the command move from this area to the area where the duck will be judged.

## Examining the Duck

The examination section follows posing the bird. When the judge gives the command to examine your duck, perform the following steps to determine defects, disqualifications and the condition of your duck.

### Step 1:

Examine the duck's head area. Let the bird rest in your hand while you use your free hand to examine the bird (**Ducks: Figure 5**).

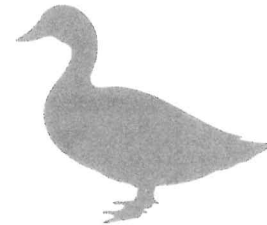
### Step 2:

Look at the duck's eyes to check their size and color and to observe for blindness. Point your index finger at both eyes (**Ducks: Figure 6**). (The bird should blink or move when pointed at.)



# 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 will be judged from this point on. All the directions for showing are from right-handed contestants. Left-handed contestants should use the opposite hand from that noted in the steps.



Ducks: Figure 1

## Handling the Duck

### Step 1:

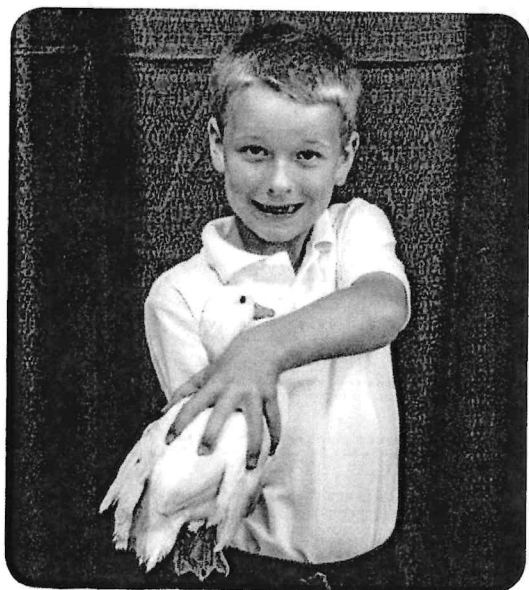
Handle the legs of waterfowl with extreme care. Hold the duck with one hand under the breast giving support to its weight and at the same time grasping the legs together. Your thumb should be outside one leg and your index finger should be between the duck's legs. Use your remaining fingers to grasp 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. (**Ducks: Figure 1**)

### Step 3:

Hold the duck right in front of you. The head of the duck should be close to your body, with its tail away from your body. (**Ducks: Figure 2**)



Ducks: Figure 2

## Posing the Duck in the Cage

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

### Step 1:

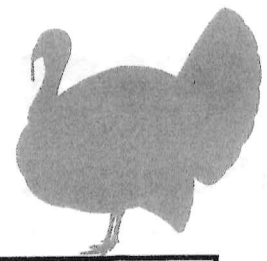
Release your hand over the duck to open the cage.



Ducks: Figure 3

### Step 2:

Turn the duck around to place the head of the duck in the cage first (**Ducks: Figure 3**).



## **Turkey Fitting and Showmanship Scorecard (Not Including Walking)**

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

## **Turkey Fitting and Showmanship Scorecard (Including Walking)**

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





**Turkeys: Figure 13**

**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 (**Turkeys: Figure 13**).

**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. Check the beard's color and length.

**Step 15:**

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

## **Walking the Turkey**

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If the county or competition includes walking the bird in the showmanship contest, the judge will ask contestants to walk their birds one at a time. The others in the group will wait their turn.

## **General Appearance of the Turkey**

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





**Turkeys: Figure 9**

**Step 7:**

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 (**Turkeys: Figure 9**).

**Step 8:**

Examine the abdomen area. Check to see if the vent is visible and if there are signs of lice or mites. Also, check the condition of the fluff feathers. Use your finger to feel whether the abdominal area is soft or hard (**Turkeys: Figure 10**).

**Step 9:**

Examine the thigh area to determine its size and the amount of meat on the thighs and drumsticks. Keep in mind that the turkey is a meat bird (**Turkeys: Figure 11**).

**Step 10:**

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 (**Turkeys: Figure 12**).

**Step 11:**

Examine the breast for size. Determine if it is entirely covered with meat and well-rounded or if the breastbone 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. Determine if the breast plumage is molting. Check the length, width and depth of the breast.



**Turkeys: Figure 10**

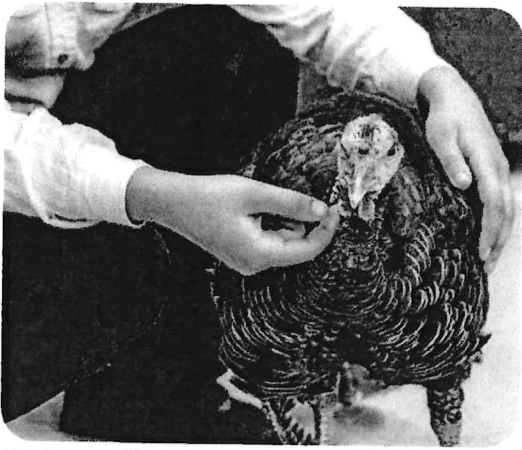


**Turkeys: Figure 11**



**Turkeys: Figure 12**





**Turkeys: Figure 5**

- ▶ Examine the bird's crown (the area between each eye and ear). Also, point to each ear. Check for the development of caruncles (**Turkeys: Figure 5**).

**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:**

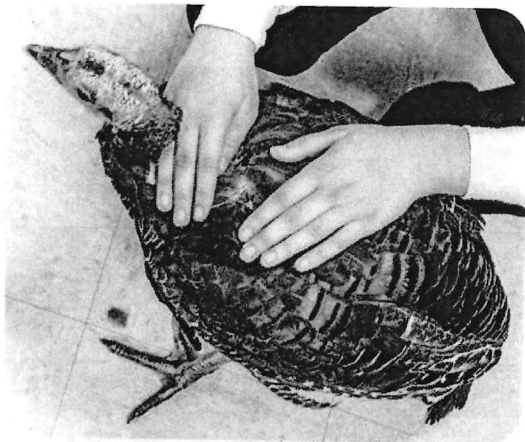
Examine the neck area for length, erectness and signs of molting (**Turkeys: Figure 6**).

**Step 5:**

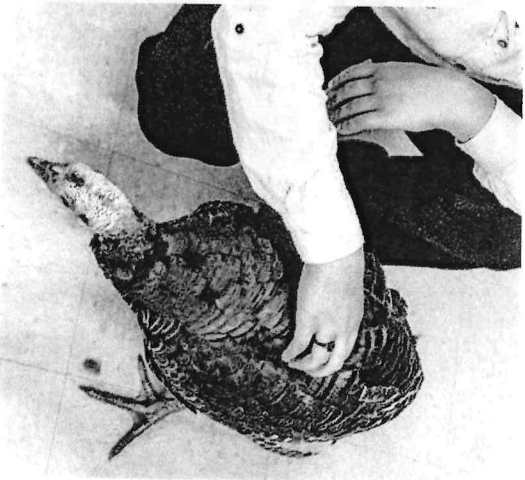
Run your palm along the bird's back to feel the feathers and to check for any abnormalities. Check for roached back, the under-color of the feathers and signs of molting. Use your hand to measure the length and width of the back (**Turkeys: Figure 7**).

**Step 6:**

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 (**Turkeys: Figure 8**).



**Turkeys: Figure 6**



**Turkeys: Figure 7**



**Turkeys: Figure 8**

### Step 6:

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

### Step 7:

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

### Step 8:

Stand behind the turkey slightly turned to the right and pose along with the turkey while watching the judge, keeping the judge in view at all times.

### Step 9:

When the judge gives the command, stand in attention posture and look confident. The bird should remain in the "pose" position. If your bird moves a leg, 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 reset the turkey, step back and wait for further instructions. You should *not* try to pose the bird again.

## Examining the Turkey

The examination takes place after you have posed the turkey. When the judge gives the command to examine your bird, perform the following steps to determine conformation, fleshing, defects, disqualifications and overall condition of your bird. The examination steps begin with the turkey standing posed.

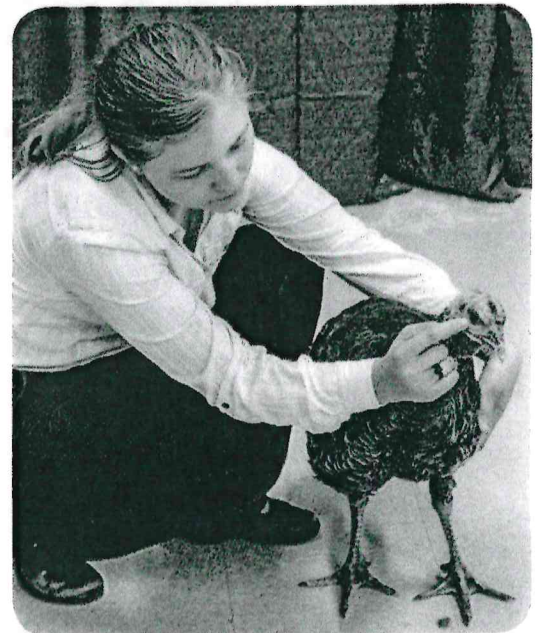
### Step 1:

Stand back 2 to 3 feet away from the turkey and look the bird over for its balance and carriage (**Turkeys: Figure 3**).

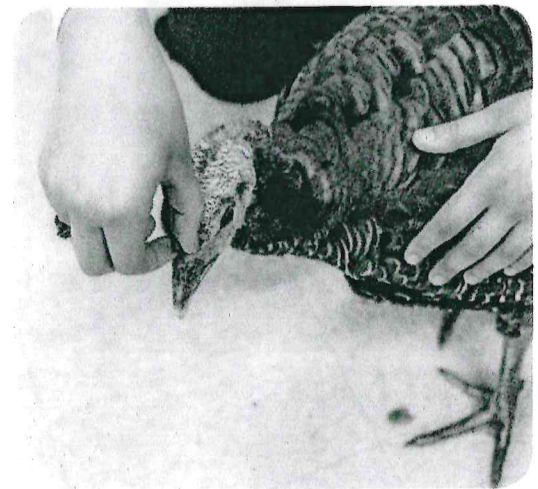
### Step 2:

Examine the head area. Hold the bird in the standing position with one hand over its back. Use your other hand to examine the bird's head area (**Turkeys: Figure 4**).

- ▶ Examine the eyes. Check both eyes to make sure they are not blind. Point your index finger at the eyes. (The bird should blink or move when pointed at.) Notice the color and check for any signs of discharge.
- ▶ If the bird has a snood, examine it by feeling it. Check the texture. Determine if the snood is long or short. (Young birds may have a small snood.)
- ▶ Use your index finger to point at the beak. Check the top and lower beak for any defects such as crookedness.



**Turkeys: Figure 3**

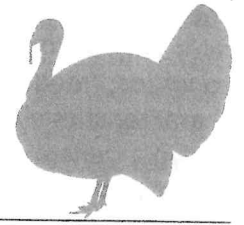


**Turkeys: Figure 4**



# Showing Turkeys

In the showing part of the competition, you will be asked to remove your turkey from the carrier and take it to the assigned judging area.



Turkeys: Figure 1

## Handling the Turkey

Since handling a turkey is not an easy task, working with your bird on a regular basis can help make it easier. The size of your bird in relation to your size is important because larger birds can be difficult to handle. You can handle a turkey in several ways when moving it from one place to another, but the following method is recommended:

### Step 1:

Open the door of the cage.

### Step 2:

Slowly walk the turkey to and from the show area. It is not recommended for youth to carry turkeys to and from the showing area (**Turkeys: Figure 1**).

## Posing the Turkey

You will be given instructions by the judge to pose your turkey. Posing the turkey is done on an individual basis or as a group. You should begin by standing behind with your turkey already placed in a sideways profile (**Turkeys: Figure 2**).

### Step 1:

Turn the turkey to the right so its head is facing the judge and pointing away from you.

### Step 2:

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 3:

Use a training stick, if you wish, or your 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 4:

Set the wings properly over the body and tail.

### Step 5:

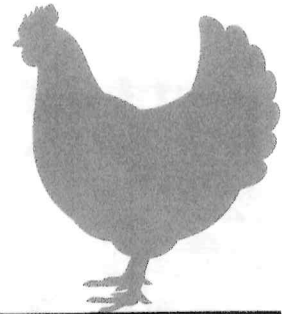
Use the stick to set up the tail. Simply touch the stick under the tail feathers so the turkey will hold the tail tight and display a proper tail carriage as denoted by the American Poultry Association's *American Standard of Perfection*



Turkeys: Figure 2

## General Appearance of the Chicken

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



### Chicken Fitting and Showmanship Scorecard

Points Allowed

**APPEARANCE & ATTITUDE OF SHOWPERSON** ..... (10 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Keeps attention focused on bird and judge
- ▶ Follows judge's instructions
- ▶ Handles bird considerately
- ▶ Is considerate of other exhibitors
- ▶ Wears conventional clothing; has clean and neat appearance

**APPEARANCE OF BIRD** ..... (10PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Is manageable; has evidence of training
- ▶ Is clean; shows evidence of fitting
- ▶ Has good body condition; appears healthy

**SHOWMANSHIP** ..... (40 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Holding bird prior to entry; bringing bird to the judge
- ▶ Caging and removing bird from cage
- ▶ Posing and presenting bird to judge
- ▶ Transferring bird to judge or another person
- ▶ Displaying, examining, finding or naming body parts

**KNOWLEDGE OF BIRD** ..... (40 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Age, sex, breed, variety and class of your bird
- ▶ Judge's Discretion – Remainder of questions may include any or all of the following:
  - The preparation of your bird for this show
  - Purpose of breed (exhibition/eggs/meat/dual purpose)
  - Defects and disqualifications for your breed and variety
  - Identification of strong and weak points of your bird
  - Other varieties in your breed; other breeds in your class
  - Your feed program
  - Your poultry health program; common diseases and parasites
  - Avian anatomy, including internal systems
  - Questions about other competitor's birds

**TOTAL POINTS** ..... (100 PTS) \_\_\_\_\_





Chickens: Figure 19

**Step 10:**

Examine the toes (**Chickens: Figure 19**). Check the number of toes present. Remember that certain breeds have five toes. Look for defects on the toes and examine the pigmentation and the condition of the toenails.

**Step 11:**

Examine the feet. Look at the feet of a hen for pigment loss and correct color. Also, examine the feet for any defects (**Chickens: Figure 20**).



Chickens: Figure 20

**Step 12:**

Examine the breast. In meat-type chickens, the breast is the most important meat area. Use your palm to feel the length of the keel bone and the meat on it (**Chickens: Figure 21**). 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 13:**

Examine the wings. Open and stretch the left wing of the bird with your free hand (**Chickens: Figure 22**). 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 other hand. Follow the above directions using your free hand to examine the right wing.



Chickens: Figure 21

**Step 14:**

Examine the crop area. Feel it with your hands for any abnormalities (**Chickens: Figure 23**). 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 handled.

**Step 15:**

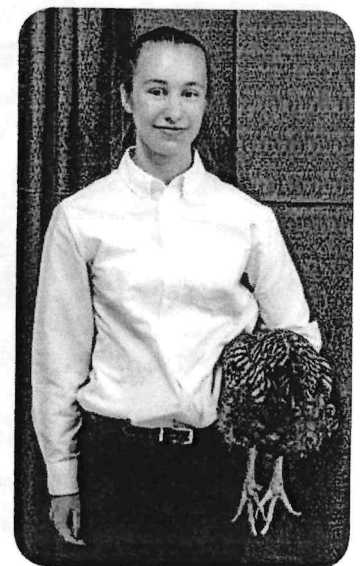
Return the bird to the upright position resting on your hand (**Chickens: Figure 24**). Give support on top with your other hand if necessary.



Chickens: Figure 22



Chickens: Figure 23



Chickens: Figure 24





Chickens: Figure 14

area and roll it between your fingers to examine this. Also, at this time, feel the tip of the pubic bones for thickness and flexibility.

**Step 6:**

If your bird is a hen, measure the abdominal capacity. (Abdominal capacity is another way to determine the hens past egg production.) Use your fingers to estimate the distance between the two pubic bones (**Chickens: Figure 15**) and the distance between the end of the keel bone and the top of the pubic bones. These measurements will indicate the past egg production. In a standard large fowl hen, if the distance is approximately 1.5 inches or less, the bird is not laying at present and has probably not laid many eggs in the past. A distance over 1.5 inches indicates that the bird has laid eggs in the past and may be laying now. A distance of 2 inches or more indicates that the chicken has laid many eggs in the past.



Chickens: Figure 15

**Step 7:**

Check the abdomen. If your bird is a hen, use your fingers to grasp the abdomen to determine its hardness or softness (**Chickens: Figure 16**). 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 the condition of the feathers in this area.

**Step 8:**

Examine the thighs to determine the amount of meat present (**Chickens: Figure 17**). The thigh area is especially important in meat-type chickens.

**Step 9:**

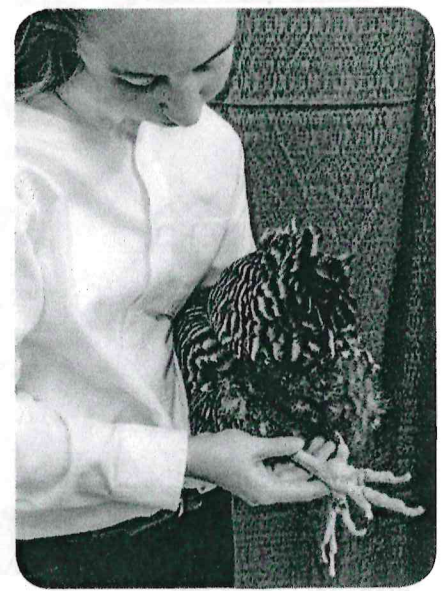
Examine the shanks to see if they are clean and whether there are mites present (**Figure 18**). A crusty condition or upturned scales indicate that mites are present. Look at the pigment condition of the front and back of the shanks.



Chickens: Figure 16



Chickens: Figure 17



Chickens: Figure 18





Chickens: Figure 9

- ▶ Look at the beak for any defects such as crookedness. Point your index finger at the beak. Also, examine the pigmentation of the beak (**Chickens: Figure 9**).
- ▶ Examine the color of the earlobes to see if they are true to the breed. (Refer to the American Poultry Association's *American Standard of Perfection* for guidelines.) Point your index finger at the earlobes. Then locate the ear and point your index finger at it (**Chickens: Figure 10**).

**Step 2:**

Run your fingers over the neck area to feel for smoothness. Also, notice the condition for any sign of molting (**Chickens: Figure 11**).

**Step 3:**

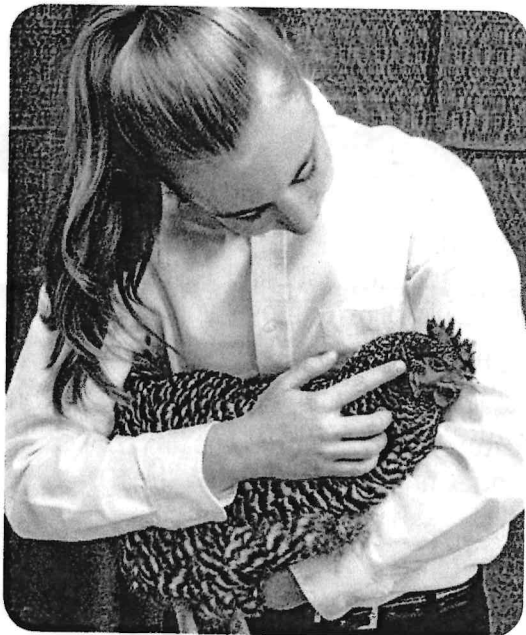
Examine the back area. Run your hand over the back area to feel for any abnormalities. Use your hand to measure the length and breadth of the back area to check the conformation of the bird. Look at the under-color of the feathers on the back and check for any sign of molting (**Chickens: Figure 12**).

**Step 4:**

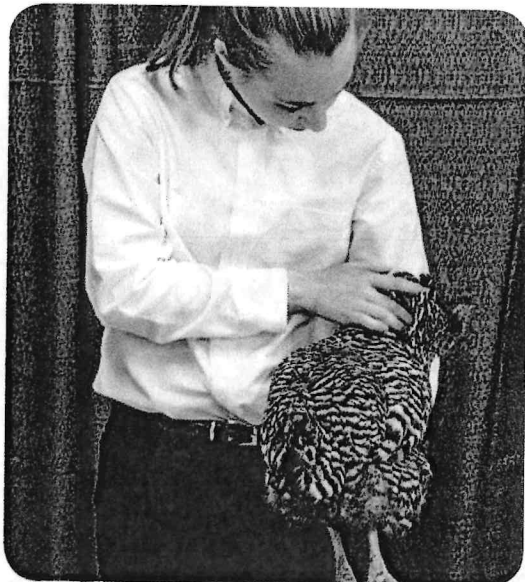
Run your hand down the bird's tail. Press the tail feathers toward you and examine the condition of the feathers. You may want to count the tail feathers to determine any sign of molting (**Chickens: Figure 13**).

**Step 5:**

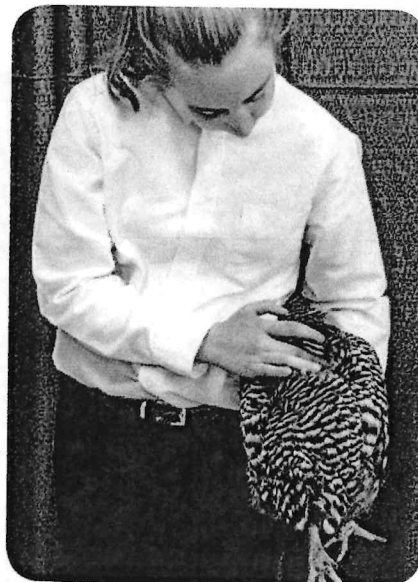
Examine the vent area. As the bird rests on your hand, tilt the bird downward so that the bird's head is facing the ground and the vent area is toward you (**Chickens: Figure 14**). Look for lice and mites. If your bird is a hen, examine the condition of the vent to see if the hen is in laying condition. 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. Determine by feeling the skin of the abdominal area for thickness or thinness. Pinch the skin below the vent



Chickens: Figure 10



Chickens: Figure 11



Chickens: Figure 12



Chickens: Figure 13





Chickens: Figure 4

#### Step 4: Final pose

When you have removed the chicken from the cage, close the door, turn toward the judge and stand at attention. Stand steady with your free hand straight down at your side. The bird should face you while sitting in the palm of your hand (**Chickens: Figure 4**). The judge will release you from this pose after a proper examination.

### Examining the Chicken

The examination section follows posing the bird. When the judge gives the command to examine your bird, perform the following steps 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 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 MSU Extension staff member.

#### Step 1:

Examine the head area. Let the bird rest in your hand while you use your free hand to examine the bird.

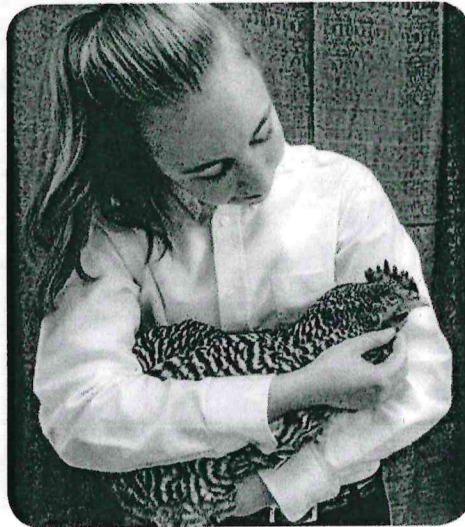


Chickens: Figure 5

- ▶ Look at both eyes to make sure they are not blind. Point your index finger at the eyes. (The bird should blink or move when pointed at.) Notice the pigment around the eye-ring (**Chickens: Figure 5**).
- ▶ Look for defects on the comb. 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 (**Chickens: Figure 6**).
- ▶ Feel the texture of the wattles and look for any apparent abnormalities (**Chickens: Figure 7**).
- ▶ Examine the condition of the feathers on the head area for any sign of molting (**Chickens: Figure 8**).



Chickens: Figure 6



Chickens: Figure 7

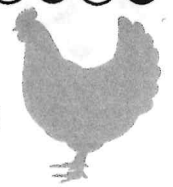


Chickens: Figure 8

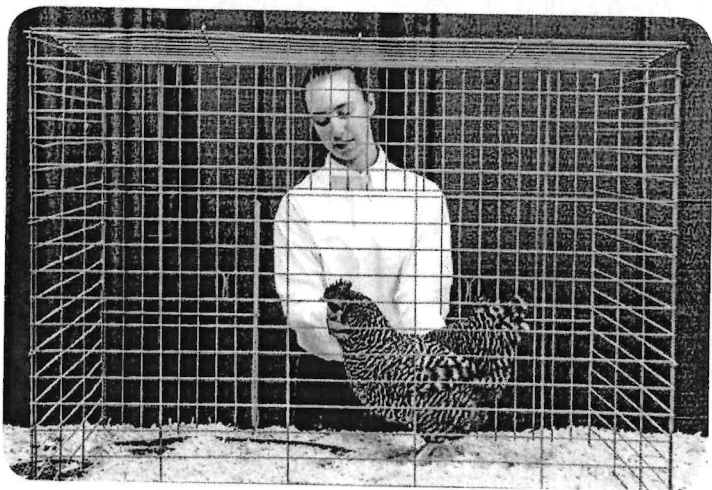


# Showing Chickens

In the showing part of the competition, you will be asked to remove your chicken from the carrier and take it to the assigned judging area. Judging may begin as soon as you are placed in the judging line.



Chickens: Figure 1



Chickens: Figure 2



Chickens: Figure 3

## 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. Your 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 free hand on the bird's back to provide additional support.

When you reach the cage, release your hand from the top of the chicken to the open cage.

Turn the bird 180 degrees so that the bird faces the doorway of the cage (**Chickens: Figure 1**).

Slowly place the bird in the cage headfirst. Then turn the bird in a profile position for posing.

### Step 2: Posing the chicken in the cage

Make sure the bird is in the profile before you begin posing the bird (**Chickens: Figure 2**). You may use a training stick for posing the bird. 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. If you are using a stick, pose the bird with the stick to maintain the position. After your bird is posed, take a step back from the cage so the judge can evaluate your bird.

### Step 3: Removing the chicken from the cage

When removing the chicken from the cage, always remove it headfirst (**Chickens: Figure 3**). Your hand should be over the bird's back and your other hand should be under the breast, with your fingers grasping the thighs.

# SHOWMANSHIP

**T**he showmanship part of the contest focuses on your ability to demonstrate your knowledge and skill of handling, posing and examining 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 10 to 38. Photos of the steps are included in these sections.

At the end of each species section is the Michigan 4-H Poultry Showmanship scorecard that should be used during showmanship contests. Check with your 4-H leader or MSU Extension staff member ahead of time to learn about the point system your county uses.

## Your Attitude and Behavior

During the contest, every eye will be on the participants, so 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. Be courteous to everyone 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 be a good sport and congratulate your peers after the contest - no matter who wins.

If all the contestants perform the various steps of showmanship equally well, the judge must then consider attitude and behavior when scoring the contestants.

## The Poultry Quiz

A quiz may be a part of the fitting and showmanship contest, usually given to each participant at the end of the contest. It tests participants' knowledge about the particular species of poultry being shown and their general knowledge of poultry. The number and type of questions will depend on such things as contestants' age division and the amount of time available. The quiz may be written or verbal. Contestants should be prepared for both.

To prepare for the poultry quiz, spend some time learning about the species of your bird and the breed of your bird as well as general poultry science and management principles. Check with your 4-H leader or county MSU Extension staff member for information resources that would be helpful.



## Training Your Bird

You should work with your bird before the show for two reasons:

- ▶ First, it gets the bird used to the procedure, making it less likely the bird will be 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). 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 so you and the bird become comfortable with this part of the contest.

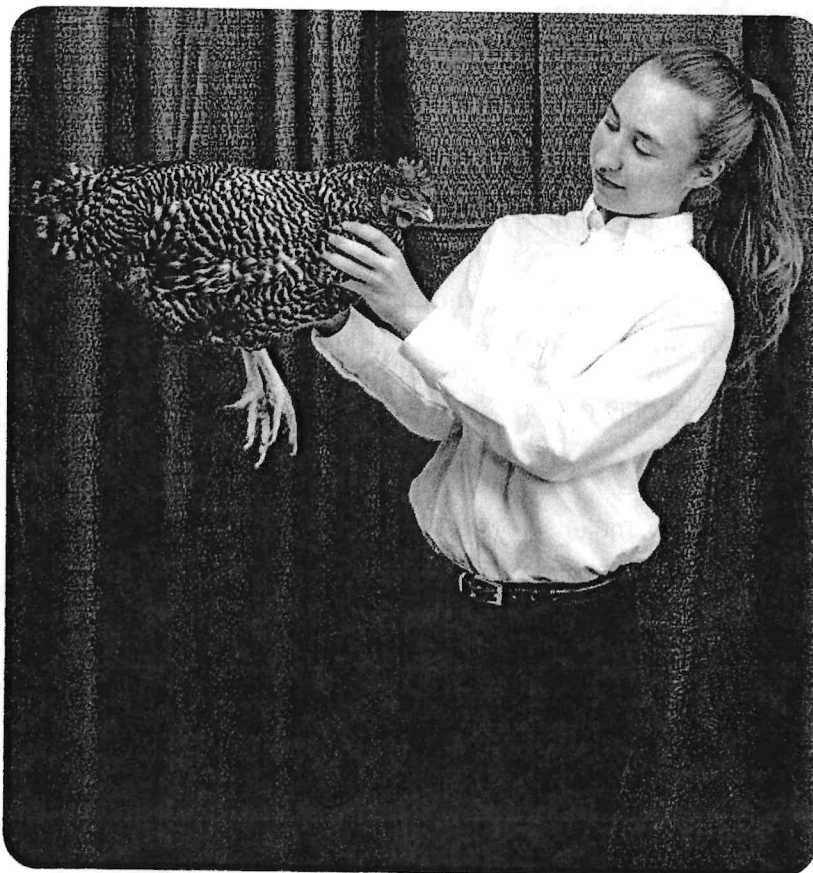
## Transporting Your Bird to the Show

Transport the bird to the contest in a proper carrier. Make sure the carrier you use allows for plenty of ventilation. Put some bedding in the carrier to keep your bird clean. Place the carrier securely in the vehicle to transport 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 review the rules of the show 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. 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 to comb your hair properly and wear appropriate shoes. Refer to the section "Your Attitude and Behavior" on page 9 to learn more about how to conduct yourself.



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 dirty and doesn't require a bath, you may just need to clean some of its feathers. Wash in the natural direction of the feathers lie. *Do not wash against the feathers.* Be sure to rinse the bird thoroughly.
- ▶ Dry the bird's feathers with a soft cloth or 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.
- ▶ Using nail clippers, 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, a little at a time; otherwise, the nails might bleed.
- ▶ Trim the beak as needed by using nail clippers to align the top and bottom of the beak.

## On the day before the show:

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- ▶ Take 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 careful not to apply too much oil or jelly. Do not apply it on the feathers.
  - **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 (that is, with feathers covering the shank area only but not the toes), 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 are finished with cleaning, make sure the bird returns to a clean pen. Continue to keep the pen clean so the bird doesn't get dirty again.





# Caring for Your Bird

Once you decide which bird to enter in the contest, you must 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. Go 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 (body weight). If you need information on the proper diet for the types of birds you own, refer to your 4-H leader or to your local MSU Extension office staff.

Next to training (which is described on page 8 in "Training Your Bird"), the grooming of your bird is most important. Before the show, be sure to do the following grooming tasks:



## 8 to 12 weeks before the show:

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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 head, vent area, on the legs and back, and under the wings. If you find lice or mites, treat the bird with a recommended lice and mite treatment (check with your local feed store, farm supply store or veterinarian for the type of treatment). *Be sure to follow directions on the label.*

## 3 to 5 weeks before the show:

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Check again for external parasites and treat the bird if necessary.

## 3 to 5 days before the show:

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Clean and groom your bird. You will need the following materials:

- ▶ Laundry tub with running water or two buckets
- ▶ Mild soap or whitening shampoo (for use with white birds only)
- ▶ Warm water
- ▶ Towels and soft cloths
- ▶ Old toothbrush
- ▶ Blow-dryer (optional)
- ▶ Nail clippers

Depending on how dirty your bird is, use these materials to either give it a bath or 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, place it in a laundry tub or use two buckets (one filled with lukewarm soapy water and the other filled with 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 an old toothbrush to scrub the bird's shanks,

## Turkeys:



- ▶ Any variety of turkey is acceptable for showmanship. The most common varieties shown in contests are Broad Breasted Bronze and Broad Breasted Whites.
- ▶ A turkey used in a showmanship contest should be at least 16 weeks old.
- ▶ 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:	Breed:
Heavyweight	Muscovy, Pekin, Aylesbury, Rouen, Saxony, Silver Appleyard
Medium Weight	Cayuga, Crested, Swedish, Buff
Lightweight	Runner, Campbell, Magpie, Welsh Harlequin
Bantam	Call, East India, Mallard, Mandarin, Carolina Wood, Mallard

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

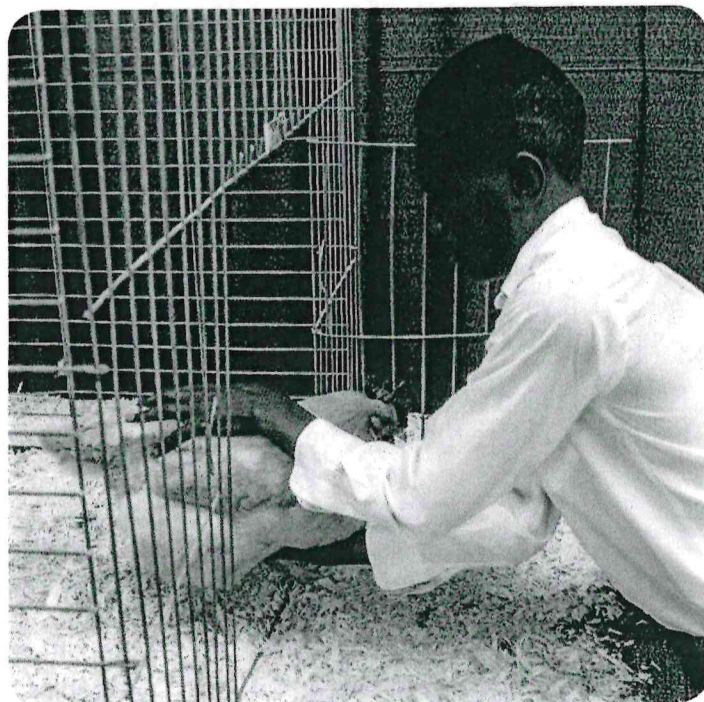
- ▶ Keep in mind that some breeds can be flighty and difficult to train, while others are easily trained.
- ▶ The duck you show should be at least 4 months old, but you may show older ducks.
- ▶ You may show either a duck (female) or a drake (male).



## Geese:

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

Class:	Breed:
Heavyweight	Toulouse, Embden, African
Medium Weight	Sebastopol, Pilgrim, American Buff, Saddleback, Pomeranian, Steinbacher



Class:	Breed:
Lightweight	Chinese, Tufted, Roman, Canada, Egyptian

Choose a breed that is known to have a suitable temperament to work with.

- ▶ Your goose should be at least 4 months old.
- ▶ You may show either a goose (female) or a gander (male).



## Pigeons:

- ▶ You can choose from more than 300 varieties of pigeons for showmanship contests. When selecting a breed to raise, the breed's temperament and flight habits are an important factor. If you choose a performing breed, such as a Racing Homer, Tippler or Roller, you will need to pose it in a cage so the bird doesn't fly away from the show table. The Parlor Tumbler is an excellent breed for any showmanship contest because it cannot fly away. Other breeds you might consider are Fantails, Jacobins, Kings, Pouters and Modenas.
- ▶ Avoid selecting a pigeon that is less than 2 months old, but 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).



**F**itting refers to the selection of a bird for show and the care of the bird before the contest including feeding, grooming and training. Fitting also applies to the general appearance of the person showing the bird. The information in this section gives an 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 the amount of emphasis 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, keep these points in mind when you choose your bird:

- ▶ Check with your 4-H leader or knowledgeable poultry producer to see which breed is best for you. You should consider which size bird is best for your size, age and experience. Think about the effects of a bird's temperament or age on showmanship contests.
- ▶ When possible, don't choose birds that have obvious defects or disqualifications. Check the American Poultry Association's *American Standard of Perfection* for your bird's breed or variety to find out more about these defects or disqualifications. (Ask your 4-H leader or MSU Extension staff person how you can get a copy of this information.) However, if you have only one bird to work with, you should not get overly concerned with its defects, disqualifications or age.
- ▶ Choose your bird about 8 to 12 weeks before the contest so you have ample time to prepare the bird and train it for showing.
- ▶ Most importantly, look for a bird that will help you demonstrate your knowledge about birds and your ability to handle them.

**Note:** Using market poultry in showmanship competitions may have an effect on meat quality and is not advised.

Some specific things to keep in mind relating to each bird species are as follows:

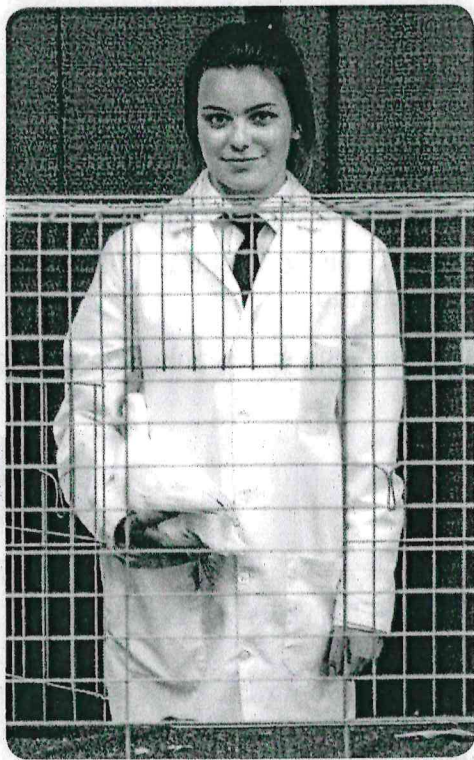


### Chickens:

- ▶ Any breed of chicken is acceptable for showmanship, but stay away from breeds that tend to be 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 the class they belong to (Cornish game hens, broilers, roasters and others). It is advisable to talk with your 4-H leader or show staff to determine if birds entered in a market class are able to be used in showmanship classes at your local show.
- ▶ You may show either a hen or pullet (female) or a cock or cockerel (male). Select a hen if you want to determine past egg production performance.

# WELCOME TO 4-H POULTRY FITTING & SHOWMANSHIP

**C**ongratulations on deciding to get involved in fitting and showing of poultry! This exciting aspect of working with birds allows you to show some of the skills not highlighted in other poultry contests. Poultry fitting and showmanship gives emphasis to both the bird and the person showing the bird.

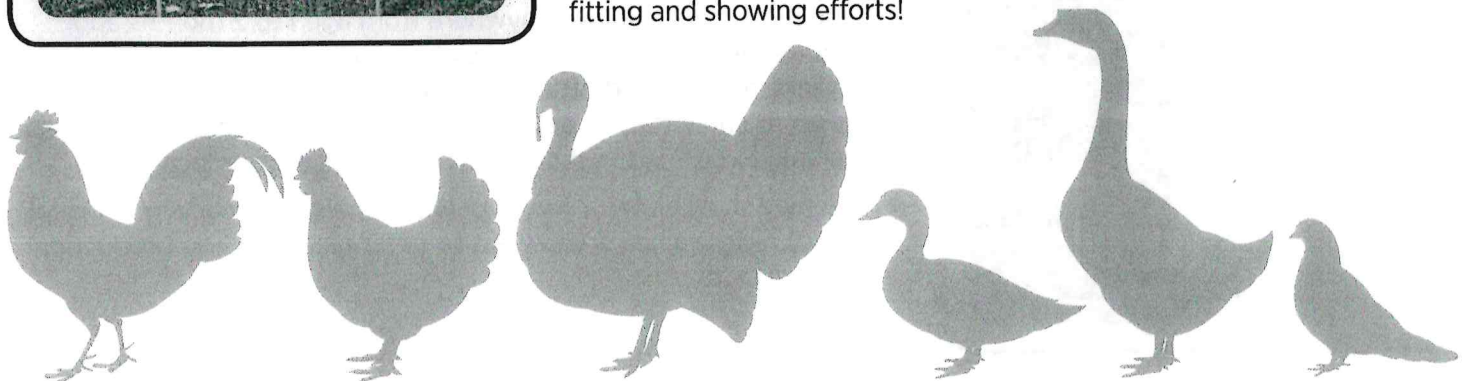


You may have many reasons for wanting to participate in fitting and showmanship contests. Perhaps you have a special interest in all aspects of raising poultry. Maybe you like the opportunity to compete in contests where being a good sport is valued. Maybe you want to use involvement to help educate those in the audience about various breeds and species of poultry. Whatever your reason, your main purpose should be to have fun while learning valuable skills you can use throughout your life.

Since poultry fitting and showmanship contests focus on the bird and you, both will be evaluated. The judge will evaluate your ability to select and care for the bird you show in the contest as well as your ability to demonstrate your knowledge of management, handling, posing and examining 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.

Fitting and showmanship contests can vary from county to county. Some contests will divide contestants according to age levels (for example, junior, intermediate and senior). Other contests will divide contestants according to the number of years they have spent involved in the poultry project. Before competing, check with your 4-H leader, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension staff person or organization hosting the contest so you know what to expect.

This guide 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 learning about fitting and showing other species you'll decide you want to get involved in showing those birds too. This resource is your guide to what you need to know for fitting and showing these birds. If you want to know more about the various 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 or MSU Extension 4-H staff person. He or she can guide you to other helpful resources. Good luck in your fitting and showing efforts!





# 4-H Poultry Fitting & Showmanship Member's Guide

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# 4-H Poultry Fitting & Showmanship

## Member's Guide

